Chapter Three

Consumerism in India: Changing profile of Kolkata

In order to understand the present cultural changes taking place due to the socio-economic changes in India, it is necessary to understand the predominant thought process, which guided her from the ancient times. The growth of the Indian civilization, which traces back to the pre-Vedic ages, right from the existence of the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilisation, itself, indicates the prevalence of a rich cultural tradition, which guided the Indian social life. The coming of the Aryans and their settlement in the Northern plains brought an end to their nomadic life. The Indian economy was predominantly based on agriculture, as a result of which it had a marked influence in shaping the cultural values of her people. Values relating to peace and constructive activity were given greater importance compared to those related to war and destruction. This was in contrast to the western countries, which were influenced by colder and harsher climatic environment and scarcity of resources leading to a development of a materialistic culture where accumulation of resources played a key role. In contrast, economic urges played comparatively smaller role in the evolution of Indian culture (Husain 1956, reprinted in 1961).

India has witnessed onslaughts of invasion from various parts of the world. It was, however, the advent of the Aryans, which brought in major changes in the socio-economic, religious, cultural and political dimensions. The Vedic Hindu culture, which became the basis of the Indian cultural tradition, was a product of the interplay between the Aryan and the non-Aryan cultures. Later on there was an assimilation of various other streams of thoughts into this Indian tradition, like, the Islamic culture and the European culture; the latter being brought in by the British, Portuguese, French and Dutch invasions. Before the infiltration of the influence of the Western culture, the existing Indian culture (which was influence by Vedic culture as well as Buddhism) was based on the principles of self-restraint, and austerity, lacking in the material gains.
3.1 Gandhian principles on swaraj, austerity and self-restraint

The rising importance of India in the global system makes one look back into the developments that the sub-continent has undertaken since its inception as a nation after independence. In its process of development, India has tried to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity and, thereby, it has tried to inculcate the spirit of modernization within the broader framework of its traditional values, institutions and cultures. The result was not always a smooth process. There were contradictions and conflicts that sometimes led to major conceptual and structural changes, which brought in new socio-economic transformations. Some of these changes are so drastic in nature that they have often created a new watershed in India's history. A brief discussion on India's changing politico-economic scenario shows the digression from the Gandhian and Nehruvian philosophy of nation making. India has witnessed a remarkable development in the economic policies from the age of the 'Nehruvian Socialism' to the present globalised economy. However, this work would not focus on understanding the reasons for the abandoning of the earlier policies in favour of a developmental strategy biased towards the private sector, which survives on market-based allocation of resources. Rather, this work would only be tracing the time path of systematic evolution of the growth pattern from a post-independence regulated production structure to the current privatized, market form of industrialisation. This new industrial policy, which was introduced in 1991, shows a radical shift from the Nehruvian policy and was based on the above principles by taking into account the changing global trends. The Nehruvian policy was based on the development and dependence on the public sector which was supposed to provide a framework for the development of a planned economy. The eradication of poverty and redistribution of wealth were considered the two important goals which could be achieved through this planned economy. Indeed such a vision of nation-building was a necessity, which helped in the development and stabilisation of the basic foundation of the Indian society. We are talking of a country which, at that time, had gained freedom from the colonial rule and was in a situation of great political, economic and social turmoil.
In order to understand the ‘new’ developments that occurred in the socio-economic conditions of India, a study of the Indian tradition became a necessity. This was due to the fact that the modern social values, on which the developments were based, were the products of the western philosophy which, to a large extent, deviated from the old Indian traditional values. The Indian traditional values have always been in a flux, as from time to time there has been an amalgamation of various cultures and religious philosophies. Indian tradition professes a universal humanist tradition, which has neither been dogmatized by any particular set of beliefs nor has it glorified any particular cultural pattern or lifestyle. In contrast, it has always emphasized on a pluralistic culture which has led to a complete individual fulfillment. Another view advocated by the Indian tradition, is the insistence on the individual’s embeddedness within one’s own culture rather than inculcating an alien one, which would inevitably lead to a complete fulfillment. Despite the existence of flaws within this tradition, it has managed to survive against the other traditions, which were based on stronger materialistic and militaristic foundations. The resistance to these stronger forces, that has been a historical phenomenon, has gained new dimensions in the recent era. However before discussing these new dimensions, a study of the Indian tradition was a necessity.

Let us enumerate a few of the major assumptions of the Indian tradition, which probably serve as the basic foundation in understanding the Indian society. One being, the concept of a harmonic relationship that exists among man, nature and society and the other being, the origin of man from Infinity and his final dissolution into the same. It talks about this final achievement of self-realization of man through his individual means, which is achieved through the process of ‘simple living and high thinking’. So as per the traditional Indian institution, cultural and spiritual growth gained predominance over material possessions (Naik 1983). It based its traditional ethos on self-control and restraint, which is in direct contrast to the spirit of modern industrialism which dominate the western world. However this age-old Indian traditions underwent radical changes since the advent of the British rule in India. The British colonial rule influenced the Indian socio-economic and cultural spheres by introducing their own value

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64 Values refer to the ethical ideals and beliefs of any society.
65 The spirit of modern industrialism is based on man’s unlimited wants and the consequent control of nature for the unrestricted pursuit of these wants.
systems which emphasized on secularization, westernization and modernization (Naik 1983). The western civilization was based on the blind pursuits of material values, the love of power and the use of the power to exploit the poor. The British incorporated and practiced these values while establishing their authority over the Indians. Thus the old system of Indian values that was based on simplicity of limited wants was replaced by a culture based on consumption—a culture where market expansion became the driving force behind its sustenance. This project of the development of the Indian society under the influence of this new world view, encompassed all areas ranging from the administrative, political, economic, social, cultural, to even religious areas. What transpired was a radical change in the structure of the Indian society, which was based on western values. However with the rise of the national freedom movement, this process of development came under serious attack from the Indian nationalists, who found these developments to be evils of colonialism. They believed, any development of the Indian society was a myth, till there was complete freedom from the colonial rule. As a result, they envisaged various developmental strategies, that were based on indigenous ideas and those borrowed from the western societies. There existed differences of opinions regarding the implementations of the appropriate development strategy, as leaders were divided in their views on this issue. Among the various views which existed, three prominent views came up on which the Indian leaders constructed their models of development. Interestingly, among these three models, the one which gained predominance over the others, was that which was based on western philosophy of consumerism. As per this western philosophy of life, consumerism helped in the attainment of a better lifestyle which was gained through scientific and technological developments and consequently, through the capitalistic mode of production. In contrast to this viewpoint, there were those leaders who talked of a similar theory of unlimited human needs and the use of science and technology to satisfy them, but negated the capitalist mode of production. They professed the Marxian mode of thought and hence, aimed at the creation of a socialist society.

Between these two views there existed the Gandian philosophy of nation building which was not only indigenous but also was based on a very different philosophy of life. The Gandhian philosophy negated the very basis of the theory of
unlimited wants, thereby creating an alternative viewpoint of life (Naik 1983). Though Gandhi, like Marx, talked about the existence of the two classes of people, that is the ‘have’s and ‘have not’s, his concept of development was not based on the same Marxian principles. Unlike Marx, the reasons for which he wanted a reduction of wants by the ‘have’s was different or rather more extended, as he was not opposed to the propertied class. He believed that the reduction of the wants by this class would not only help in a release of those scarce resources which could be utilized by the ‘have not’s, but also primarily help them ('have’s) in not being enslaved by the culture of consumerism (Naik 1983). Gandhi witnessed how the upper and middle classes were slowly encumbered by the consumption-oriented lifestyle, as professed by the developed countries. So he tried to revive the old Indian traditional values of ‘self-restraint’ and ‘simple living’, which he thought would be possible through a moral transformation. Thus Gandhi was strongly against the adoption of the western models of development and stood for the development of a new model which would be based on indigenous Indian traditional values. He felt that the Indian should strive to free themselves from these western materialistic values by dissociating themselves from all symbols of material progress – which involved the modern machine and its products, the modern means of transport, modern medicine and even the modern system of administration of justice. He urged the people to engage in simple living which should be based on austerity and self-control. These would help in the development of moral and spiritual powers, which in turn, would enable them in attaining freedom.

Gandhi was not a system builder, neither was he a professional economist; however, what he possessed was an intuitive understanding of the pulse of the psychology of the people and an ability to understand the imperative of the situation. He emphasized on the harmony between man and nature and was against the incessant use of science and technology to cater to human wants. Gandhi stood for voluntary limitations of wants and as a result, was against the industrial society which was based on the culture of consumption. Thus Gandhi’s philosophy behind the economic progress of India was based on the simple principles of self-reliance and restraint. His philosophy

66 His ideas on the economic planning is brought out in the works of Khoshal and Khoshal (1973) who highlight the Gandhian principles which influence the Planning structure as witnessed in the several Five Year plans.
was thereby based on an amalgamation of the needs, urges and aspirations of the individual and society, of which individual are an inseparable and indivisible part. Thus he advocated production by the masses rather than mass production, and this he termed as “Sarvodaya” which meant the emancipation, the uplift and elevation of all. It is based on the philosophy of primacy and ultimateness of spirit, which does not negate economic satisfaction and requirements nor the importance of material commodities, but only objects to their dominance in human life. So for Gandhi, just as society would be an abstract concept if one negates the role of the individuals, similarly individuals would be the same if there was no society to encompass them. Man, the individual is the core of the Gandhian system of thought. He conceived of the emancipation of man, which would be brought about by a complete spiritual and moral development. He also envisaged the end of injustice and exploitation that existed in society, through the use of non-violence or ‘ahimsa’. The strong negation of Gandhi towards the idea of the “Economic man” was based on his belief that society which bases its development on exploitation cannot be humanistic and egalitarian. Hence if a money economy is sufficiently developed, with the consumer goods priced; a market arises for productive resources, which might become a hindrance to the people if the enterprises are run solely for profit. As a result, he was against that society which based its allocation of resources on the underpinning of capital values. Thus he was not against the process of industrialism; rather against those social disruptions that were the effect of the process. While commenting on the concept of industrialisation that he witnessed in the factory system in the West, in the 19th Century England, he explains how men are: “…enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy” (Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule” cited in Sharma 2003, pp: 5).

The growing flair for material comforts, loss of faith in the time-honoured Indian values, burning zeal for the possession of articles of mass consumption produced by the industrialized west were some of the characteristic features among the Indians during the British Raj which led towards their increasing dependency, both on economic and political front. Thus Gandhi advocated Swaraj which aimed at the termination of British control in the political, economic and cultural spheres. He stressed the concept of swaraj by the acceptance of Swadeshi, which for him meant an end to the British
economic exploitation. The strong aversion towards the capitalist system was reflected in his thoughts, as he witnessed the brutal exploitative nature that the system possessed. Neither was he supportive of the violent expropriation of the private property and collective state ownership principles of communism. So the basic principles guiding Gandhian economic thought aimed at the attainment of complete development, and the upliftment and enrichment of man. Thus in turn, he rejected the superficial developments like higher standards of living, as for him, these developments are devoid of human and social values. So he wanted to elevate the modern economic philosophy from its materialistic base to gain a higher spiritual plane, where human actions were motivated by social objectives rather than individualistic and selfish needs. His emphasis on moral progress overriding the economic progress was brought out in his lectures which he delivered at the Muir College Economic Society, Allahabad where he said:

"By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit, and by real progress we mean moral progress which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may therefore be stated thus: Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress? I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the large one even when we lay down the smaller".


Gandhi defies the basic principles of economics by advocating his own method in solving the economic problem of unlimited wants and limited resources. He urges man to practice wantlessness, as he explains how wants act as a source of pain as there is no end to this process. So for him negation of wants leads to removal of pain, which leads to an emancipation from the pain of unfulfilled wants. This emancipation results in the achievement of a particular pleasure, which gives a spiritual high. This level of wantlessness can be achieved by having knowledge of the things that man needs. So the simple motto for him was "we should not receive any single thing that we do not need" but this is difficult as he says that "we are not always aware of our real needs and most of us improperly multiply our wants and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves....One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants." (Gandhi, cited in Sharma 2003, pp: 17). So for Gandhi, the propensity to accumulate commodities, cramps the soul and degenerates into
morbid desire to make a fetish of external goods of life. The reason behind this is that the accumulation of wealth at any point of time, by individual(s) is based on the dispossession by another, which at any point, is a condemnable act. So the alternative approach to this is renunciation, which becomes the basis of his doctrine on non-possession. He provides this solution to counter the most powerful drive that drives the modern economic society — the drive for multiplicity of wants which is fuelled by the insatiable propensity for conspicuous consumption\(^{67}\).

Gandhi’s perception towards consumption can be viewed from his doctrine on “swadeshi”. The essence of the concept lies in the following propositions as pointed by Sharma (2003, pp165):

1. Gandhi being the proponent of self-austerity and restraint, for him, consumers would have the propensity to reduce one’s ‘wants’. In reducing wants, the utility function will depend on the commodities that are locally made. Meaning thereby that, utility from the imported goods will be kept to a minimum. The reason behind this is that if the utility from the imported item is high, it would lead to a decrease of demand of the local goods which will go against the spirit of swadeshi.

2. Hence following a low utility function of imported goods would advocate a demand for local-made goods and services, provided that the neighbourhood has the ability to make the goods and services. This would result in a cooperative dependence between the consumers and the producers, culminating into cost-effective methods. So there would inevitably be an increase in the demand of the localized goods by the consumers, followed by the reduction in the cost of the production due to the production of the items in the localized areas, which reduces the transportation charges. So Gandhi emphasized on the revival of the Indian textile industries, which indirectly brought in economic empowerment of the masses. This was followed by the boycott of the foreign textile, which was to

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\(^{67}\) This theory on wantlessness emphasising minimizing of wants have been criticized on various grounds explaining how it would result in curbing the economic growth of the nation leading to stagnation of the economy’s progress.
strike at the economic foundation of the British Empire. So swadeshi did not mean buying goods made in India, neither was it only related to the boycott of the foreign products. Swadeshi had a broader meaning, where it required people to give preference of goods made in their neighbourhood rather than some far-away place.

As people failed to grasp this spiritual meaning of swadeshi, hence after independence, swadeshi lost its appeal among the politicians and the masses, as a result of which there resulted in a decline of employment in the villages. This was followed by a pro-industrialisation policy, which was taken up by India during the Nehurvian era. It further extinguished the spirit of swadeshi, which also resulted in extinguishing the age-old vision of self austerity and restraint. Hence after independence, on one hand, one witnessed an increasing acceptance of the western model of development (which is based on technological predominance), while on the other it was followed by a slow waning of the Gandhian ideas of social transformation.

3.2 Nehurvian project of nation-making: Socialism, and collective well being

The project of nation-building attained new dimensions in the post-independence era, which started with the Nehruvian era. This new vision of nation-building was being accomplished by the Five-Year plans, which also tried to inculcate some of those issues which were emphasized by Gandhi. Despite that, there existed a major difference of visions in matters relating to nation-building. For Nehru, the importance lay in making India politically and economically strong, for which he rejected the Gandhian idea of “swaraj”. Hence Nehru commented that:

"I am convinced that rapid industrialization of India is essential... In the context of the modern world, no country can be politically and economically independent, even within the framework of international interdependence, unless it is highly industrialized and has developed its power resources to the utmost".

(Koshal and Koshal, 1973, pp: 324)

These issues were those relating to programs initiated by Gandhi like the basic education, community development, introduction of panchayati raj institutions (local self-government bodies), welfare of the backward castes and the emphasis on cottage and small scale village industries.
This new path of development chosen by the leaders of the nation was not a smooth one, as it required absorption of alien values, which were western in origin and had their roots in a completely different socio-economic and political environment. However, the implementation was done through rigorous planning by various Congress leaders. They were unanimous in their decision, where they felt that India would be able to achieve 'self-reliance' in economic development through a process of planning and industrialization. Nehru was undoubtedly influenced by the rapid pace of development, which took place in the erstwhile Soviet Union. As a result of this Nehru tried to implement the socialist model of planning where he wanted to create a society where there would be

"equal economic justice and opportunity for all a society......for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultural needs". His idea was thus to establish "a socialist economy within a democratic structure, without disturbing the existing social order and multiclass". (Chakraborty 1992, pp: 281-2).

In one of his speeches, Nehru voiced his attraction towards Communism by saying that social construction should be based on an elimination of profit motive. So he says:

"I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in Socialism....I see no way of ending the poverty the vast unemployment the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism....Socialism is for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart". (Nehru 1985, pp: 120-134)

He also goes on to say that though it is theoretically possible to establish socialism by democratic means, there lie great many hurdles in practically establishing it, as it will lead to strong opposition from those whose interests will be curbed in the process. Though a believer of the principles of Socialism, Nehru is not ready to establish its principles by force; rather, he wants to use them in order to understand the problems and seek possible solutions (Pradhan 1989).

Nehru felt that through the state control of ownership of production and nationalization of private sector, it would help in a widening the sphere of state interaction with the common people and hence help in direct dialogue with the masses. So for him, if the system of economy can be so organized that no one gets exploited, even if it contains within itself reasonable amount of private sector, then he has no grievance against that system. However to attain such a system required a change from profit and
acquisition motive to a communal, cooperative one. This change in the philosophy and its adoption by the nation would require time, which was the main hurdle in establishing the principle in the then context (post-independence era). He thus conceived of a state, which would formulate its developmental policies for the collective well being and thus not patronize any particular community or sector. Nehru's strong belief in the success of the planning mechanism came from several aspects, which were grounded on a strong ideological preference. Thus Nehru's confidence rested on the mathematical sophistication of the Indian Planning Commission, the existence of a talented civil service body who had a British training, and most importantly, a conviction that planning and government would accelerate economic growth (Majid 1944, Denoon 1998). Nehru's model of nation building, which aimed at the creation of a democratic socialistic state, came under criticism which referred to the objectives of this innovative model that have not been achieved in India because it failed to counter the forces of growing monopoly capitalism in India. Moreover the measures introduced by Nehru were criticized as they were found to be compatible with the maintenance of capitalist relations of production and the preservation of middle class hegemony.

3.3 Neo- liberal stage of India's political economy: from state centric welfarism to market driven economy

Indian economy in particular and society in general, witnessed several changes in the economic scenario, of which the major one included a shift from the state centric welfarism to a market driven economy. As discussed earlier, during the early decades of the post-independence era, the Indian economy had been concentrating its development through the process of self-reliance which was being achieved through a minimal dependence on external foreign aids. However, as India underwent several internal and external pressures, which were created by political, economic and social crises 69 both at international and national front, there resulted in a shift in its economic policies.

69 These crises came in form of several aspects either striking the economy like the food crisis of 1957-58, and the foreign exchange crisis in late 1950's or military crises like the Indo-China war in 1962 and the
The process of globalisation affected India in every sphere—be it economic, social, political or cultural. The rapid economic growth, coupled with an expansion of the middle class and the spread of the global culture, has led to the development of a culture of consumption. Consumption ceased to remain a mere act of appropriation of goods and services and was seen as consumption of signs and symbols (Featherstone 1991). The study of this culture of consumption or consumerism, in the context of a developing country like India, needs to be understood in correlation with several factors, which include globalisation, rise of excessive materialism, and westernisation. Consumerism in India developed in the latter part of the twentieth century, especially after the era of liberalization and the opening up of the market to Western products. With the opening up of the economy from 1990s onwards, there was not only an inflow of western products, but also an infiltration of the new culture which was based on the values of the Western society. As the capitalists seek new sources of meaning and value for the quest for growth, cultures become subject to redefinition and appropriation. The intermingling of this new culture with the traditional culture, led to the birth of the new society where consumption was seen as a new way of life. It is this changing society that the present study tries to capture, vis-à-vis the study of the new culture as represented in the new sites of consumption, which include the shopping malls. Thus the new concept of the ‘global village’ or the ‘world system’ that has come up will be sociologically meaningless, until it is analysed in the context of the realities of everyday life and some ordinary experience. The study will try to understand the triangular relationship that exists between globalisation, modernity and consumerism.

These new economic policies aimed at a more liberal stance towards the inflow of foreign capital, which was achieved by the ‘opening up’ of the economy...
through the process of liberalization. The process of liberalization was not a sudden one; rather, it had started from 1966-68 onwards, which finally led to the culmination in the 1990s. There were actually three distinctive periods in this liberalization process - 1966-68, 1985-87 and 1991-94 - of which the first two were restricted in nature, resulting in their consecutive ineffectiveness. However the third phase of liberalization, which started from 1990s onwards, witnessed some radical changes in the economic policies which were more complex in nature and thus resulted in creating a greater impact than the earlier two. The move was towards creating an 'open economy', thereby limiting the governmental role or control over the economy. Some of the far-reaching reforms were carried on in the areas of industrial policy and trade, which included changes like the abolition of the import-licensing system, the scaling back of the industrial licensing act from all sectors (excluding eighteen ‘core’ sectors which later were reduced to ‘five’ sectors which included areas like arms and ammunitions, atomic substance, narcotics, distillation of alcoholic drinks, and tobacco industry), strengthening and refinement policies relating to capital mobility, along with some relaxation in the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act allowing a growth of private sector investment and corporate restructuring. This was also followed by changes leading to additional reforms in the taxation system, role of share markets, foreign joint ventures and development in the infrastructural facilities. Another major change was the liberalisation of the foreign direct investment up to 51 per cent or more in some of the listed industries and 100 per cent in all the manufacturing activities in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which started an inflow of multinational companies in India. Also sectors like banking and telecommunication have open up for the foreign investment leading to the entry of several national and multinational players (Jenkins 1999, Panagariya 2004). Thus this transition, from a tightly controlled to a market-oriented economy, involved more than just some changes in the macroeconomic policies and regulations. The proper use of this new transition would have been possible only when it is backed up by the effective use of

70 Liberalisation is the process by which a country’s economic, social and political systems are opened up to the global influences.

71 Open economy is the one where the country’s economy is open to global competition with no restrictions to buyers and sellers (Dictionary of Economics and Commerce: Hanson, J.L., Macdonald & Evans Ltd, London, 1974)
market data by the public, and most importantly, when the legitimacy of the ‘discipline of the market’ (Denoon, 1998) is accepted.

Liberalization along with globalisation brought in new changes in every sphere of the society - be it economic, social, political or cultural. The rapid economic growth, coupled with an expansion of the middle class, with the spread of the global culture has led to the development of a rise in the culture of consumption. While talking about consumption, it must be taken into account that there resulted in an expansion in its definition. Thus consumption ceased to remain a mere act of appropriation of goods and services and was seen as consumption of signs and symbols (Featherstone, 1991). The study of this culture of consumption or consumerism in the context of a developing country like India needs to be understood in correlation with factors which include globalization, rise of excessive materialism, and westernization. Consumerism in India developed in the latter part of the twentieth century, especially after the era of liberalization and the opening up of the market to Western products. With the opening up of the economy from 1990s onwards, there was not only an inflow of western products, but also an infiltration of a new culture which was based on the values of the western society. By opening up its door to the global forces, India too, became a part of the ‘global village’ or the ‘world system’. Indian economy witnessed new changes which were brought along with the spread of the market economy, established by the multinational companies. There was a rise and spread of a new culture, which was based on consumption of a common standardized image that was created by the advertisers. It would not be wrong to point out that the barriers of the global, national, and local forces are the lowest in the consumer goods market. The Indian society has witnessed a sea change in the recent decades. Since 1990s, India has observed a period of high growth in its economy; a growth that is urban-centric in nature. The process of liberalization which resulted in the opening up of the market to the multinational companies has brought in fierce competition within and between the domestic companies. This new “emerging market” (Rajagopal 1999) brought with itself the promise of a new future, where the dominance of consumerism was on the rise. This change is well brought out from the following excerpt, which was written at the time when India was witnessing the second attempt of liberalization.
Ten years ago, the political rhetoric centred on abolishing poverty; today it looks forward to the 21st century. Then it was a question of reining in monopoly capital; now the government talks of industrial modernization and opening up the economy. Then the goals were more food, water, steel, aluminum, hospitals. Now, it is all that plus telephones, TV sets, scooters, cars, refrigerator. Then it was a question of taxing "luxury" goods, find money for the basics; now the government has reduced the taxes on these so that more people can buy the things that make for a better life.

(Ninan, cited in Dutta, unpublished MPhil dissertation 2003, pp: 64)

This was written at the time when India was experiencing the second onslaught of the liberalization process. It clearly captured the changing aspirations of the people and most importantly, the governmental initiatives in encouraging consumerism among the masses in general. Thus it would not be wrong to comment that the drive towards the market centric economy was a planned strategy taken up by the state.

3.4 Growth of the new middle class and the changing patterns of consumption

The sector which received the maximum impact from this emerging market was the urban, upwardly mobile middle class which comprised those individuals who are involved in high professional, white-collar jobs. With the rise of consumerism, the society witnessed a behavioral change in the nature of this middle class, as these affluent consumers exercised their choices through consumption. Contrary to this view, the critics of liberalization pointed out the negative social and cultural effects of consumerism, which the middle class was said to have adapted in its lifestyle. Ignoring the oppositional viewpoint between their ideologies, a common aspect which was seen in both the discourses was that both of them acknowledged the middle class as the site of commodity consumption and recipient of the effects of liberalization. Now, whether these effects are negative or positive, are again a matter of ideological contention. The prevalent public discourse on India reflects the positive effect of economic reforms on the middle class. One of the positive effects is providing the consumers with more choices. This is effectively felt in the urban metropolitan India. The print media, coupled with

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72 As per the NCAER definition, middle class includes anyone whose family income is between INR 200,000 and INR 1,000,000 p.a.,2001-02. As per this definition the current estimate is around 92 million; this class is estimated to be around 153 million by 2010.
television, advertisements and public discourses validate the rise of the culture of consumption through data, which proclaim the rise of the wage levels of the managerial staff in the multinational companies. Thus the urban individual's rise in income in a quantitative aspect brought several ramifications that were reflected in the socio-cultural aspects. As fallout, there was a consequent expansion of the market of consumer products like cell phones, cars, washing machines, colour televisions, and there was also a gradual rise in the credit card system. All these emphasised an image of the rise of consumerism among the new middle class in the post-liberalised India. In an issue in the journal Asia Now, a study of the rising consumption in Asia was conducted and the findings emphasized India's rising level of consumption along with that of China (See Chart 1). The multinational companies, therefore, saw India as a major destination for their investments in the near future. This study however, tries to understand the actual material effect on the Indian middle class vis-à-vis the process of liberalization, in contrast to the idealized image fashioned by the media.

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73 For further read, refer to Cavalier (2006) where he talks about the strong credit growth rate in India which is in accordance with India's higher potential growth.
3.4.1 Definition of the middle class

Before conducting further discussions on the emerging relationship between consumerism and the middle class, a clarification of the concept of middle class becomes a pre-requisite. In order to understand the concept, it is advisable to situate the same in the larger framework of class economy where there exists an uneven distribution of power and prestige. Middle class can be seen as a constantly negotiating cultural space—a space of amalgamation of ideas, values, goods, practices and embodied behaviour.
Although the concept of the middle class has had been an area of study by the Classical thinkers like Marx and Weber, the present study draws mainly from the Weberian concept of the same. Weber had based his work on the critique of the Marxian 'materialistic' concept of the middle class, which had failed to adequately understand its social dynamics. However, it is true that the Weberian theory had also certain flaws in the understanding of the middle class. For example, his theory failed to understand the inner political dynamics of interclass conflict. Nevertheless, one of the major contributions of the Weberian theory in this issue was its factual observation that the middle class relates to economic processes, more in the form of consumer of goods in the market, rather than the seller of labour or owner of capital. This can be interpreted to say that the position of the middle class is determined less directly by its relation to the 'means of production' (selling labour or owning capital) and more by its relation to the market or the ability to consume. Contrary to the expectations and futuristic predictions of the earlier thinkers, the middle class multiplied at an increasing rate, thereby negating all the predictions of their disappearances. For Mills (1956 reprinted in 1969), the new class was the result of the demise of entrepreneurial capitalism, coupled with the rise of corporate capitalism with its army of managers, technocrats, marketers and financiers. According to Mills, the classic formulation of a definition of middle class in the United States involved all those who were the white-collar professionals having a distinct lifestyle of their own. To quote his views on the issue:

"The white-collar slipped quietly into modern society. Whatever history they have had is a history without events; whatever common interest they have do not lead to unity; whatever future they have will not be of their own making...Internally they are split, fragmented; externally they are dependent on larger forces, ... As a group they do not threaten anyone; as individuals, they do not practice an independent way of life..... By their rise to numerical importance, the white collars have upset the nineteenth-century expectation that society would be divided between entrepreneurs and wage workers". (Mills 1956 reprinted in 1969, pp: ix)

Middle class is a complex heterogeneous division which is based on socio-economic and cultural stratifications. This indicates the existence of the internal sociocultural dynamics (of competing lifestyles and consumption practices) within the middle class, which leads to vibrant and forceful evolutions in the cultural nature of the class. Consumption is thus seen as one of the key dynamics of middle class life. Theories have been recurrent in relating class formation to goods; similarly, goods have always been
infused with social meanings. So it would definitely need a deeper reading of the treaties on consumption, in order to understand the complex relationship that exists between the class and its consumption.

As mentioned earlier, the middle class consumers are seen as the primary beneficiaries of the culture of consumerism; however, it must be pointed out that the effect is not unidimensional, as middle class is composed of various categories. So to understand this effect, it is important to classify the middle class. Broadly speaking, the middle class can be categorized into three parts:

a) the ‘new rich’\(^\text{74}\) who have benefited from the new employment opportunities and rising salaries in the multinational companies (especially they who are engaged in high paying jobs in the service sector\(^\text{75}\) like the Information Technology firms.)

b) the marginalized, such as traditional public sector employees in industries like banking and insurance which are in a continuous process of retrenchment and restructuring and

c) the third section includes those of the middle class who are in a constant process of adapting and acquiring various strategies and resources for obtaining skills leading to employment (these include those who are engaged in several call centre jobs as in Business Process Outmodelling/Outsourcing etc).

### 3.4.2 Rise of the middle class in India

The specific conditions of contemporary globalisation distinguished the process of the invention of the new Indian middle class in significant ways. The distinctiveness of this new middle class lies largely in its discursive construction, as a sign of the potential promise of India’s integration with the global economy. In contrast to Mill’s classic formulation of the concept of the middle class in the United States, it

\(^{74}\) This categorisation was developed by Robinson and Goodman, 1996 in The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonalds and Middle Class Revolution, New York, Routledge, cited in Fernandes, (2000).

\(^{75}\) For further reference see, Rohit Saran article on “Growth Engine”, India Today, February 2001, where he explains: “The service sector dominates the Indian economy today, contributing more than half of our national income. It’s the fastest growing sector, with an average annual growth rate of 8 per cent in the 1990s. ...An INDIA TODAY-ORG-MARG poll shows that the majority of middle class families want their children to work in service sector”.

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takes a new meaning in the Indian context. Hence in India, the new middle class becomes a sign of the promise of a new national model of development, having a global outlook that adheres to the larger processes of economic globalisation. Possibly the growth of this class and its aspirations can be related to the changing self-perception of India’s political economy. As discussed in the earlier sections, it was seen that the post-colonial Indian state was engaged in, what social scientists would describe as, ‘left of the centre broadly socialistic Nehruvian agenda of nation making’ (Dutta, unpublished Mphil dissertation, 2003, pp: 57). This state sponsored modernity was definitely giving birth to a new professional class, situated in what Nehru described as ‘temples’ of modern India, that is industries, modern institutions, science laboratories and universities.

With the growth of industrialization and urbanity, this class also grew in size. But then, because of a broadly self-reliant economy under the shadow of certain kind of socialistic experiments, the social aspirations of the middle class were primarily nationalistic, which was aimed at creating and building the new nation and leading it along the path of progress. In a way, there was continuity with how Desai (1998) described these middle class, as those nationalist bourgeoisies who grew in the colonial era out of new education and were engaged in the struggle for India’s independence. (Dutta unpublished dissertation 2003, pp: 45). However with the demise of the Nehruvian era and the grand consensus, one witnessed materializing of a changing perception of the politico-economic condition. The mid 1980s witnessed a paradigm shift from the Nehruvian socialism to a liberalized economy. India thus welcomed the global market and capitalism. With the steady entry of multinationals, transnational corporations, new information, and technologies a new social milieu was created that began to alter the aspirations of the fast growing middle class. As Kulkarni described: “Whether by design or default, a series of government economic policies has helped to give birth to [a] generation of Indian who have money to spend” (Kulkarni cited in Dutta unpublished dissertation 2003, pp: 45). Public discourse in India through their reports produced an image, which depicted the urban middle classes getting opportunities due to the new economic reforms. The rise of this new middle class brings along with it, the consumerist culture. Thus the policies of economic liberalization initiated in 1990s produced a debate which centred on the role of the urban middle classes in the culture of consumption. The
availability of a varied range of products, ranging from cell phones to other consumerist products, has led to the creation of a particular social standard which this middle class always aspires to reach. In this process, the new (urban) Indian middle class becomes the central agent for the re-visioning of Indian nation in the background of globalisation.

While talking about the rise of the middle class in India, one comes across the contradictory viewpoints that exist among the various theorists regarding the centrality of the concept. On one hand, there are those theorists for whom the middle class in India has gained a central focus in the development of the Indian society (Mankekar 1999; Fernandes 2000); while on the other hand, there are others who regard the middle class as the uncooperative class in the development of the nation (Kothari 1991; Varma 1998). However, both these theorists agree on the issue that consumption plays a significant role in shaping the middle-class structure and identity. As Fernandes (2000) points out, the policies of economic liberalization that were initiated in the 1990s have produced a significant debate on the role of the middle class in the culture of consumption. Market researchers say that a sharp change has been realized in the need basket for the Indian middle class. The discursive boundaries of the new middle class are thus constituted by a shift in their aspirations, standards and direction. This class is however not homogeneous in nature.76

3.4.3 Historical growth of middle class in India.

Diverging from the western society, where the rise of the middle class was accorded to the time of World Wars and Revolutions, where there was an expansion of the business, the Indian middle class has a very different historicity. The rise of the new middle class in India can be traced back to the colonial era, which took place with the introduction of the English education. Though the seed of its growth was planted in the British era, its growth and expansion was sustained at a gradual pace so as to make the presence of the middle class felt in the Indian society. This growth of the middle class

76 Mankekar’s understanding of the cultural construction of the middle classes in India draws on and departs from the Marxian and Weberian understanding notions of it. The Indian middle class is a heterogeneous group having different access to relations of production, status and political power. What is also included is the discourse of gender, domesticity and sexuality to further enrich the notion of middle class.
was no doubt an urban centric phenomenon, as the jobs that were created were mostly city based. However, there was a major structural difference between the middle class of that era and the one of recent times. While the middle class at the time of the colonial era was defined along educational, intellectual and cultural lines, the recent definition is based more on economic criteria. After independence, there was substantial development in the economic sector, which resulted in their further expansion. The advancing technology and the continuous restructuring of the occupational structure of the economy demanded an increase in the number of higher level educated and trained professional. Jobs were created, which gave high economic rewards and status, thereby increasing the middle class stratification. However, it is not the economic criteria for distinction of the new middle class that has been the focus of the study. The focus is on the new cultural standards that have been projected into the urban middle class, standards which are not only related to the new policies of liberalisation, but also to the increasing inculcation of the western culture of consumption. Thus the present new middle class is seen as a social group, which is distinguished on the basis of both cultural and economic terms. In cultural terms, its definition is based on socio-symbolic practices of consumption; while in economic terms, it is seen as a beneficiary of the material benefits of the new jobs, developed with the emergence of new economy.

Unlike the earlier times, where the new middle class was composed of the professional bureaucrats and teachers, the composition of this class has undergone changes with the inclusion of the service sector. The percentage belonging to this sector is so high that one finds their predominance over the others. With multinational companies flooding the economy, new knowledge-specific jobs are being created, which demand young, talented professionals having the expertise of the same. As a result, the service sector is said to breed a new class of entrepreneurs with a spirit of fierce competition, innovative ideas and a global outlook. A study of the middle class in this context needs to focus on an understanding of the shift in aspirations, standards and

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77 As Partha Chattejee rightly puts it, "...the middle class was not a fundamental class...nor were its intellectuals organic to any fundamental project to social transformation or conquest of hegemony" in his work 'A Religion of Urban Domesticity: Sri Ramkishna and the Calcutta Middle Class', cited in Fernandes, 2004, pp: 91.

78 The estimated middle class was around 10% of the population till around 1985. This was revealed in the study conducted by NCAER in 1984 & 1985.
direction that this class has undergone. This shift in the hegemonic social standards of the Indian middle class to a great extent conforms to that which was being witnessed by the new middle class in the advanced industrialized countries. A reference of the same is reflected in the classic works of Mills (1956, reprinted in 1969), where he defines the emergence of the new middle class in the United States, as the rise of the salaried white-collar professionals having a distinctive lifestyle.

While talking about the new middle class in India, we must remember that it is located specifically in the context of the macro processes of globalisation and liberalization. Refuting Mills’ construction of the new middle class, Lakha (1999)79 states that in Indian context, this class became a sign of promise for a new model of development, constructing an image of global economic process. Statistics too support this aspect, stating that the middle class in India is increasing at a very fast pace. According to the report by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, based on a study conducted between 1986 and 1994, there has been a sweeping rise in the middle class in recent years. From being a mere 10 per cent of the total population, this class has increased to become the largest in the world. As per the NCAER definition the current estimate is around 92 million; this will rise to around 153 million by 2010. Following this class is the ‘Aspires’, whose annual income range is between INR 90,000 –200,000 and they are also included as part of India’s ‘consuming middle class’. This is mainly because study has revealed that there is a fast shift in the aspiration level and the consumption level of this latter class. The mid-range of figures presented in a 1991 survey article by analyst Dubey (cited in Fernandes 2000) showed the middle class to be approximately 150 to 175 million, which is somewhat around 20 percent of the population (although other observers suggest different figures). This fast booming of the middle class has been the outcome of the economic boom that India witnessed in recent times, since the opening up of the economy.

There has however been some skewness in the process of the rising salary structure among the young urban middle class professionals. On one hand, we have the new rich young urban professionals, who have been able to reap the benefit from the

sharp rise in salaries of the multinational and Indian companies, while on the other hand, we have the regular salaried professionals who are engaged in the lower level of the white collar jobs and are not the recipients of the benefits of perks and steep salaried structure. It creates a distinctive dichotomous social structure with distinctive social differentiations within the new middle class, resulting in a difference in the consumption pattern. This has lead to the development of a critical view, with regard to the existence of the actual consumer class within this new middle class. So questions like: 'What happened to the 200 Million Consumers?' (Fernandes 2000), 'Who are these consuming class?' or the 'Myth of the Middle Class Spending' have urged critics to ponder whether it was presumptuous to overestimate the increasing consumerism among the new middle class. This study thus tries to understand the truth of the rising consumerism among the urban middle class located in the metropolitan cities of India with special reference to Kolkata. Before undertaking the study of consumerism with respect to Kolkata, it becomes a necessity to understand the image of city as a space for symbolic consumption.

3.4.4 Changing attitude towards 'consumption'

The reasons accorded for this sudden rise were, mainly, a rise in disposable income, increasing number of dual income nuclear families, and a changing attitude towards consumption. Individuals are prompted to consume objects not only for their utility, but also for the consumption of intrinsic meanings that these objects signify. In the context of consumerism, a third world country, like India, "imports" ready-made commodities or concepts (Sahini and Shankar 2006). The underlying meanings of these concepts are already assigned and established in the world of their origin, which is the developed world. So products come with specific pre-assigned meanings, leaving no space for the third world to produce any meaning of its own. The rapid speed of

80 In contrast to this viewpoint, Wessel (2004) develops a different viewpoint, whereby he claims that consumption has to be understood in moral terms. For him present day consumer culture is seen as debased materialism, as it is seen as a condition in which people seek self-realization through consumption of goods. However what Wessel feels is that a country like India, which has the influences of thinkers like Gandhi and where roots of asceticism has such a strong foundation, such kind of overemphasis of individual identity through materialistic possession becomes cliché in nature. He draws out the contradiction saying that while centrality of consumption is seen in the collective social lives, however there is a negation of the same while referring to individual selves.
urbanization coupled with the speed of globalisation, resulted in the paucity of chance for the third world nations like India to evolve their own patterns. As a consequence, direct transfer of meanings with symbols inherited from the West act as a benchmark for consumption standards, by working as a force of standardization of urban culture and consumption. In India, consumption is identified at two levels: first, at the ideological level where it develops the awareness and acceptance of the concept; secondly, there is consumption of the concept through objectification. The former does not involve any monetary aspect, unlike the latter, but rather prepares the ground for the latter.

Theoretically, there exists two different effects which occur in the consumption pattern; feasibility of both will be looked at in the Indian context. The first effect is called the *cascading bandwagon effect* (Featherstone cited in Sahni and Shankar 2006), where a commodity or an idea is first introduced into a niche section and from there, it progresses on to become an item for mass consumption. This is not much effective in case of India, where it is difficult to grasp the entire market, as it is diverse in nature. Consequently, an effort to make the price affordable to the general masses was called for, in order to create an awareness of the product, thereby creating a demand of its own. The idea is to make the mass aware of its symbolic significance, which exposes the latent demand of the product, thereby deepening its market. Even if the product or the idea per se is unaffordable, the demand can be tapped by the cheaper substitutes. In this course of action, it is the acceptance of the lifestyle that gains prominence. So for example, in the world of branded clothing, products like Nike or Reebok have specific price ranges, which cannot be afforded by some sections of the society. However, the market is flooded by cheaper versions of these items. Even though these are locally made, they use these brand names to sell their products. This shows the extent of the influence of the brand within the masses, which indicates that fashion statements do not get restricted within class boundaries.

The second effect in the consumption pattern is the *creolisation effect* (Howes cited in Sahini and Shankar 2006), where a commodity or an idea is inherited, and then an indigenous set of meanings are added to the concept while moving out to capture the market. This adaptation of the foreign product to the indigenous culture helps
in gaining quick acceptability among the masses. If one takes the example of the Mac Donald Burgers, we find that before introducing their products, they modified or spiced them up to suit the Indian palate. So a paneer tikka burger or pizza with tandori toppings was easily acceptable among the masses.

There has been a gradual infiltration of the culture of consumption among the masses in a slow and steady manner so much so that it is reflected in the shopping activities of the consumers. Shopping is no longer seen as an activity that needs to be experienced, rather people shop for experience. What resulted was the development of an image of a 'new' Indian middle class, based on the inculcation of new tastes and lifestyles; a product of a global image of consumption. With the opening of its doors to the broader processes of globalisation, the Indian middle class became exposed to a new standard of living, which was of a global character. Conscious effort was made to create and aspire for this new lifestyle so that the urban middle class would embrace it. This projection did meet with a lot of oppositions from the intellectual critics. However, despite their opposition, this new culture of consumption began spreading its tentacles in the Indian society at a very fast pace. The manifestations of the changes are witnessed not only in the lifestyle of the people, but also within the socio-politico and economic structure of the country. As a result, one can witness the gradual shift from the tenets of Gandhian and Nehruvian vision of nation-building, towards embracing a consumerist philosophy in the development of the nation. This is explicitly portrayed in the excerpts from Varma's work where he says:

*Material wants were suddenly severed from any notion of guilt. In a sense, it was the collective exorcism from the nation's psyche of the 'repressive' and life-denying nature of Gandhi's idealism, an exultant, exuberant escape from his emphasis on an austerity that could not be ignored but was inherently unemulatable. Liberalization provided the opportunity to make a break from the attitudes and thinking of the past, the moment to bring out in the open desires long held back, and to say: 'Now, at last, we can do what we had always wanted to do', without a sense of guilt, and, indeed, claim public approval for it.*

(Varma 1998, pp: 175)

It is this new tenet that constructs the image of the middle class. Thus it can be said that the construction of this 'new' image of the middle class is not just based on socio-economic factor, but it has its roots in shifting ideological paradigm.
3.5 Composition of the background of the respondents

While undertaking the fieldwork, special focus was maintained to have a proportionate representation of people belonging to these various segments, so as to have a representational view from all segments. Hence, the survey included representations from Engineers/Technical professionals, Government officials, Educationalist like Teachers/Professors, people having their own Business, and those engaged in Private Companies. The pie chart indicates these representations in a graphical form (Pie Charts 1.1 and 1.2 refer to the employment background of the correspondents). The study had been conducted in two market areas: the shopping malls and the major market places in Kolkata (Gariahat and Esplanade marketplaces). Among the respondents, it was seen that a major portion included those who were engineers/technical professionals, followed by those, who were engaged in the private limited companies having specialized expertise. A major segment also consisted of those who had their own business enterprise. The analysis thus tries to provide an empirical basis on which the image of the new middle class can be accessed, so as to understand how each of the segments tries to locate itself in the consumption circle, in order to live up to the image projected by the new culture of consumption.
Pie Chart: 1.2

**Employment background of correspondants at the Shopping Malls**

- Teacher/Professors: 26%
- Engineers/Technical professionals: 4%
- Doctors: 30%
- Government officers: 0%
- Researchers/Scientists: 0%
- NGO: 0%
- Private employers: 0%
- Business: 26%

*Source: Primary data from Interview Conducted by Researcher*

Pie Chart: 1.2

**Employment background of the working respondents at Gariahat and Esplanade shopping areas**

- Teacher/Professors: 20%
- Engineers/Technical professionals: 20%
- Doctors: 2%
- Government officers: 15%
- Researchers/Scientists: 0%
- NGO: 30%
- Private employers: 4%
- Business: 9%
- Others: 0%

*Source: Primary data from Interview Conducted by Researcher*
3.6 Kolkata and its changing scenario

This section will focus on the changing scenario of Kolkata since its days of inception till the recent times. The focus will be on the understanding of these changes which are being witnessed as the growth and development of various structural changes.

3.6.1 The origin and evolution of the city from ‘Calcutta’ to the present day ‘Kolkata’

Calcutta, which started as the epicentre of the British Empire in India, has witnessed a long history of its own. The city has been seen to oscillate between various stages of development and stagnation. These changing images of the city has made one comment on the radicalness of her fluctuations from being ‘a city of palaces’ to being ‘a city of hell’ (Banerjee 1990). The other images associated with this city encompass various emotional responses from its lovers. These reflective and criticized images combine to form a global multifaceted image of Calcutta as perceived by the social scientists. In the month of August, 1960 Job Charnock set up his tabernacle after his return from Madras. Calcutta, or what we understand by Calcutta in the present day, comprised three villages namely Kolikata, Sutanuti and Gobindpur. Among these, Sutanuti extended from Chitpur to Old Mint House; while Kolikata was the area between Old Mint House and Chandpal Ghat and Gobindpur extended from the site of the new Fort William including the racecourse. Sutanuti developed as the principle site for commercial activities and industries, and Kolikata and Gobindpur were the places of residence. Thus, situated on the eastern bank of river Hooghly, Calcutta fast developed first, as a trading town and then, to become the capital of the British Empire in India. With the East India Company establishing its hegemony both in the political and economic fields, the city rose into prominence by becoming the hub of cultural, economic and political reforms (Chaudhuri 1986; Banerjee 1990; Mitra 1990). During the European administration in Bengal, it witnessed the introduction of railway system, modern universities, social developments, modern economic systems and infrastructural developments in the region. Calcutta continued to retain the same position in the
industrial and commercial dimension even after the transfer of the capital to New Delhi till the 1920s of the last century. However from 1940s onwards, the city received several jolts from the socio-economic and political aspects as a result of which there was a gradual decline in the overall development of the city. It should be nevertheless kept in mind that all the developments of the city in the economic and political sphere was not inherent to her nature; these changes were all imposed from outside, by the British (Banerjee, 1990). Thus with the gradual shifting of the capital, the city could not keep up with the development progress which it had witnessed while being the capital. Moreover, the influence of various other factors also resulted in the city’s decline which will be discussed below. Before moving on to a discussion on the reasons behind Calcutta’s frail conditions, one small issue that needs to be mentioned involves the origin of the city. Though it has been an established fact that Job Charnock was the founder of the city, the existence of the city can be traced way back to the seventeenth century, in the work of the famous poet Krisharam’s ‘Manasa-Mangal’ (Chaudhuri 1986). But the popular conception of the city’s origin is said to have begun with the re-discovery of the same by Charnock. Since then, the city shot to limelight. The city, which originated as the trading post, later became the centre of the economic, political, educational and social activities. These same factors which helped in the development of the city later became the reasons for its decline. As Calcutta metamorphosed into a hub of activities, its developments attracted migrants who were attracted by the glamour, lifestyles and opportunities which the city presented. As a result, the city witnessed an intense population pressure that broke down the infrastructure of the city resulting in its fast decline. Along with migration, there were several other factors which subsequently restricted the growth of the city. These were factors like the famine in 1943 leading to a major food crisis followed by the political turmoil that culminated in the partition of Bengal in 1947. Ironically, much of Bengal’s glory dimmed post independence and, for a good three decades, the State remained in the shadows, for reasons complex and mostly manmade. Even Calcutta, since renamed Kolkata, seemed to be in a decline overtaken by Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai. Marxism, the Naxalite movement, and trade unionism dominated West Bengal’s economic and political systems for many decades which in turn paved the way towards economic stagnation and poverty.
3.6.2 The socio-political changes in Kolkata - Partition and the refugee crisis

Calcutta has often been described after independence, by various persons in authority, as a 'night-mare city', a 'city of processions' or even as 'a dying city' (Chaudhuri 1986). However before according such a harsh metaphor, the point is to understand the reason behind the decline of a city which had been at its zenith of cultural, political and economic development. It should have been kept into account that no other city in India had to bear the brunt of such a huge burden of refugee influx, which Calcutta had to face. Even before partition, Calcutta had always witnessed an inflow of migratory workers from surrounding areas, attracted by the job opportunities which the city created. Then there was the partition in 1947, which resulted in a major re-location of people in both parts of the country. During partition Bengal was the major state (apart from the Punjab) that was affected by the refugee crisis; however, it was Calcutta which bore the highest concentration of refugee influx in and around its urban fringes (Chaudhuri 1986; Markovits 2003; Ghosh 2004). Such a massive inflow of population created a major pressure in the civic and other amenities of the city. Though the government had taken steps in rehabilitating these migrants, the ratio of the facilities provided to the number of migrants was very small. Thus there resulted in a major upheaval in the economic foundation of the state, resulting in the breakdown of the system. The trajectory of the Hindu refugee from East Bengal witnessed a comparatively worse situation than those who migrated from Pakistan. This was mainly because the support which the latter received from the Centre was more expansive in nature than the ones in West Bengal. Further the migrants in West Bengal involved those who belonged to the urban lower-middle class. So when they left East Pakistan (now called Bangladesh), more progressively from 1950s onwards, they were driven more by considerations of economic opportunities than political allegiance. In reaching West Bengal, they realized the difficulty in making a place for themselves, despite having similar linguistic and cultural affinities with the local population. They became proletarianised and formed the principle base of the Communist Party in Calcutta during the 1950's. It can be said that the refugees of the Partition dealt with their situation in various ways of which the major one was quick assimilation into the life of the country to which they migrated. It is another
aspect that the cities to which they migrated had to face a lot of hardships in trying to inculcate this huge influx. Thus the Partition of India remains in the history of the twentieth century a *sui generis* event, the result of political tensions linked to an unequal penetration of the democratic ideas in a society infused with a heterogeneous culture. But it is the outcome of such an event, which changes or rather breaks down the geographical, environmental, social and economic strictures of the cities, and Calcutta is the living witness of such a situation. Calcutta witnessed the influx of refugee as late as the 1970s starting from the time of independence. Coupled with this influx, there was the virtual migration of the workers even from the surrounding states like Orissa and Bihar, which has further aggravated the situation. Starting from the time of independence Calcutta witnessed the influx of refugee as late as the 1970s. Coupled with this influx, there was the virtual migration of the workers even from the surrounding states like Orissa and Bihar, which has further aggravated the situation. Thus one sees a city torn within itself by the various forces, creating a situation of a continuous flux. Here is a city, which is bogged down by the weight of its glorious colonial past, in its present situation of economic-political and social turmoil. As said earlier, the city is in a situation of continuous flux, which is evident from the new phase of developments which the city witnessed in recent times, brought about by the new economic policies developed by the reigning government. Now, what these policies are or how they have affected the city, is a matter that needs to be taken up in greater details.

### 3.6.3 The rise of Communism and political changes in Bengal

After independence, the political scenario at the centre witnessed a dynamic and fluid struggle for power among the various existing party systems. The advantage, which Congress had in its initial years after independence in getting a sweeping majority from the masses, changed with the death of Nehru. Among the various parties that rose to power, the Communist and Marxist parties started gaining major footholds in some parts of India like Kerala and West Bengal. In Bengal too the political system reflected the same, with the gradual waning of the Congress influence as the majority party after independence. The increasing influence and the gaining
predominance of the Leftist Leftist struggle necessitated the need to study the rise of their power in Bengal. March 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1967 witnessed the first victory of the Communist party from where in there resulted a change in the political scenario of Bengal. However their major victory was in 1969, which comprised of a coalition of four parties the major ones being the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M). Since then the communist movement gained momentum and came up as a major political force in West Bengal. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that communism in Bengal rose during the 1960s. The reason behind this is that communism, as a political notion, had its root in the pre-independence times. The initial adoption of Marxist philosophy among the populace was seen within the Bhadralok\textsuperscript{81} society, who adopted the philosophy in the hope of the development of a modern society (Ghosh 2004). As a result, the predominance of this class gave the Communist organizers a strong elitist bend. This led to a restraint in the spread of the party among the rural mass. Though the movement of establishing a party based on Marxist principles took place during the 1920s, it gained footage in the late 1930s. Thus the first inception of a Marxist political party was witnessed in the formation of the Forward Bloc, which was formed by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, way back in 1939\textsuperscript{82}. The members of this party comprised mainly the Bhadraloks some of who had the opportunity of being exposed to the British

\textsuperscript{81} This category of middle class resulted as a response to the needs of the British Empire. They were the product of the mercantile development of Calcutta, a development which gave rise to a class of bureaucrats who helped in the administrative jobs. The term is multivalent, but refers to “respectable people”. This category of people was distinguished by their refined behaviour and cultivated taste. This did not mean that they always possessed substantial wealth and power. They emerged as the new social group in the late eighteenth century in Bengal whose affiliates were the first to gain the benefits of the English education and thereby were able to get into urban professional occupations. Although they were originally from the upper castes, however in contemporary society there has been a blurring of this with a more heterogeneous nature as education opened up the opportunities for vertical mobility between castes. So in present context they have gained reputation as a distinct status group (more in the line of the Weberian concept of class) having the characteristics of heterogeneity and indigent. Education and correspondingly the access to professional occupations were the main factors behind the development of this class. Hence they have a distinctive cultural trait which distinguishes them from the other classes. Known as the connoisseurs of arts, music and writing this class has in present context come under the influence of conspicuous consumption. (McGuire 1983; Ganguly-Scrase 2003)

\textsuperscript{82} However, the first open evidence of Marxist influence or inspiration in India appeared in the early 1920’s, contemporaneous with the Non-Cooperation Movement. These included few individuals who were mainly the youth exposed to the western philosophies due to access in British education. They were grouped by M.N. Roy (originally known as Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya), also exposed to the Marxist thoughts. Since then, till the 1930’s, there came up several parties who were based on the Leftist philosophy. All these parties came under a single alliance under the name of Forward Bloc, which was formed by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose, who resigned from the position of the Congress President in 29\textsuperscript{th} August, 1939, organized this new alliance of the leftist group (Laushey 1975).
education which had broadened their visions. Since then, the Leftist party had witnessed a history of struggle for survival (Franda 1971). A common explanation for the limited growth of the party was accorded to the skeptical attitude prevalent among the organizers, which was due to the lack of political maturity. Moreover, an effective strategy was needed for proper political action to be based on mass agitation. However, the main opposition which the party faced was from the British government, which had declared it illegal as its activities were considered to be a threat to the government. Later, after the lifting of the ban from 1942 onwards, the party began its engagement on a much wider scale. The other setback which the party received was the partition of Bengal in 1947, which resulted in the breakdown of the party members, as a majority of them moved over to the then East Pakistan (Bangladesh). The status of the Indian Left became disconnected, even alienated, from the social democratic Left in general and from international communism in particular (Franda 1971). Though communism in India has a long history like its counterparts in China, the fact remains that Indian communism has not received the euphoric success, which was received in the erstwhile Soviet Union, China or even Vietnam. Its success was rather limited to party victories within the confines of West Bengal and Kerala. Without further dwelling into factors which led to the incompetence of communism in India, the emphasis is directed towards its historicity. The status of communism in India shows how in recent times, the CPI is undergoing an identity crisis. CPM on the other hand is surviving through its multiparty national political system, which is buoyed by thoughts and actions of dedicated workers and skilled leaders. The overall scenario of communism in India is the maintenance of a unique status quo, unhindered by the outcomes of the international Left.

In the post-independence era, the Leftist struggle gained a new dimension, which was radical in outlook. One positive aspect which the communist party had was the support of the Bengali Bhadralok class, which was due to the result of the pro-industrial policies introduced by the Centre. As per these policies, the focus was more on the development and growth of the industrial class, which was composed of the baniyas and the merchants, who started having increasing control in Calcutta. This indirectly threatened the dominance of the Bhadralok class who, as a result, backed the communist movements which engulfed Bengal. Thus the Leftist parties came out strongly against the
policies adopted by the Nehru Government, which they felt led to an increasing Anglo-America domination. To quote the viewpoint of the CPI as depicted in the Calcutta Thesis of the Communist Party (1950s): *Indian Big-business and the Government are mortgaging Indian economy to Anglo-American capital in their selfish interests. The natural result of this is not only economic but indirect political domination, so both the economy and the political freedom are being mortgaged to the Anglo-American imperialists.*

The ‘Big-business’ referred to is the Indian bourgeoisie, who have gone for collaborative undertaking with the foreign business houses. This collaboration, strongly opposed by the Leftist parties, was revealed through their statement in the thesis which said: "*The desire for collaboration (between Anglo-American imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie or Big-business) takes the shape of retaining the colonial order...*" (cited in Chaudhuri 1986, pp: 64-65).

Even though the party members were predominantly the urban middle class, the need was felt for the expansion of the base to incorporate the rural masses. The influence of the international communist movement was also witnessed in the party’s philosophy, which oriented itself as per these views. This was revealed in the party’s shifting focus towards rural welfare, which it had started in the southern districts (like Burdwan, Bankura, Midnapore, Howrah and the 24 Parganas) near Kolkata. A pro-sharecropper policy was introduced and advocated by the parties in order to gain support from the rural mass. The party cadres spread into the rural areas and thus, for the first time, they began functioning as a ‘full-fledged’ party with units in all districts of Bengal (Farda 1971; Desai 2001). At this time, the Leftist parties faced another major setback in the form of party factionalism and break-ups. This inner turmoil within the parties was based on ideological, theoretical and organizational differences. Despite these prevailing differences, the 1969 and 1972 elections saw a sweeping win by the United Front (which comprised all the allied communist parties) over Congress, thereby resulting in the formation of a coalition government.

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83 Coalition government is a parliamentary form of government where these multiple parties come together to govern because of the lack of any single party in getting a majority of votes (50% and above).
One drawback that communism in India in general, and West Bengal in particular faced, despite their nationalization, was the strong orthodox orientation that restricted the freedom of humanistic aspirations and movement. This orthodox orientation towards the economic reforms, initiated with the opening up of the economy, initially resulted in the restricted growth of West Bengal, which later resulted in high income growth and increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).\textsuperscript{84} Bengal witnessed a certain decline in the economic front, which was further aggravated by the increasing politicization within the party (Farda 1971). With the gaining of state power, the situation further aggravated which saw a rift within the party. Again, the initiatives, which the party at one time had taken to bridge the rural issue into their agendas, lost incentives and the party again started having an elitist outlook. Moreover, in recent times, with the changing orientations of the Leftist government policies, which was coined as the New Communism, there has resulted a distinctive breakthrough in the economic policies, which aim towards a globalised economy characterised by technological evolutions and free capital movements.

3.6.4 New Communism and the structural changes in the city

In reference to India, therefore, it becomes imperative to understand the political viewpoint of the governments both at the centre and at the level of the state of West Bengal (in view of the field work conducted at Kolkata). Thus even a city like Kolkata, which was considered to be stagnant, saw remarkable development in recent times. With liberalization and globalisation taking place at the national level, West Bengal, under the regime of the Left Front government, also welcomed the move to open its economy to these macro global forces. As a result, the introduction of the New Economic Policies from 1990s onwards brought in sea changes in the socio-economic structure and growth of the state, but in a restricted form. The Policies envisioned new alliances with the urban capitalist, which favoured urban development programmes. This hegemonic consolidation and its paradoxes can only be understood by situating the issue within a specific historical moment of the Left Front. This specific historical moment is

\textsuperscript{84} For further read refer to web article www.thehindubusinessline.com/205/04/01/stories/2005040100090900.htm
what is referred to as the *New Communism* or *communism for the new millennium*. Liberalization thus came to Kolkata in the form of a new political alliance between the regime and the commercial and industrial investors. It brought along a new regime of regulations, whereby the market played a dominant part in the socio-cultural sphere of the city. The New Economic Policy that the state introduced in keeping with the national trends at the national level, led to the reversal in the state’s stand against the development of the multinationals and the consequent inflow of the foreign and domestic capitals to the city (Roy 2003). So the state’s economic recovery gathered momentum, after the introduction of the economic reforms, aided by the election of a new reformist Chief Minister in 2000. As a result of these new policies, the economic situation of Bengal is rightly described as resurgent by potential investors. The new policies with pro-industry attitude of the socialist-leaning West Bengal government, has resulted in the initiations of various projects on a grand scale.

So on one hand, there was the reification of the crisis of infrastructure, which had been a major factor behind the decline of industrialization in West Bengal; while, on the other hand, there was an emphasis on the tertiary sector, with special emphasis on the trade/hotels and real estate sectors. So the government was seen to play a key-role in attracting investments in various sectors including shipbuilding, Special Economic Zones\(^5\) (SEZs), manufacturing, retails, tourism and Information Technology sectors. Diversification of agricultural production, assured supply of cheap and docile labour and red carpet welcome to private capital of preferably foreign origin – these then are the key inputs of the West Bengal Government’s new recipe for industrial revival. The salient features of the policy on economic development and industrial promotion have resulted in attracting numerous foreign capital and private sector investments, which have in turn, played a key role in changing the character of the city. Mr. Buddhadeb Basu an eminent personality comments on the fast changing space of the city on a positive note by claiming that:

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\(^5\) Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been the buzz word of the West Bengal government in their policy of enhancing economic development of the state. Further read ‘West Bengal-Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Policy, www.wbidc.com
"In the last few years what an extraordinary spread of Calcutta and at what speed! Calcutta will grow more. It is still the capital, because it is the seat of commerce. Today the merchants are kings"

(Racine 1990, pp: 25)

One of the changing characters is revealed in the changes in the infrastructural dimensions, which is seen from the constructions of highways, high-rises and the new retail outlets at various areas of the city. The effect of liberalization has manifested itself at the level of the urban life of Kolkata with the development of shopping malls, arcades and multiplexes within the city. The emphasis was on the policy related to urban development. This urban development was thus meant to be a catalyst in the Left's project of economic rejuvenation. Thus in order to develop the New Kolkata, there resulted in a notable change in the infrastructural scenario. With the main rhetoric of the New Communism being urban development, the prominent CPM leaders sought to recast the 'dying city' as a site for energetic entrepreneurship. The opinion of a veteran party leader, as spoken in an interview, was that the party could no longer afford to ignore companies with enormous financial capital. His comments were: "If Kentucky Fried Chicken or the McDonald's are here in the city, we could certainly love to have their advertisements splashed on our pages". It is on this ground that the reformist moves of the Left can be best understood, not as ideological changes but rather as localized struggle over resources and meaning. Hence in Kolkata, the moment of liberalization has manifested itself at the level of the urban – in what Harvey (1989, cited in Wynne and O'Connor 1998) designate as an "entrepreneurial" urban regime seeking to recreate the city as the spectacle.

3.7 Kolkata and its new image of consumption

This brings one to the centrality of the problem of this work. The study is interesting because of the fact that Kolkata as a city has never been regarded as having a flamboyant culture of consumption. It is in the backdrop of this cultural setting (which has been discussed earlier), that the study would try to locate this new culture of consumption which seems to have grasped the city at an alarming rate. The growth is also

remarkably visible in the transformation of the market in recent years. Apart from that, avenues of consumption are witnessing an increased participation, driven by pro-consumerist transformation of the urban landscape. The evidence is none other than the rising culture of malls, cafes, multiplexes, eating joints and other forms of entertainment that have opened up at every nook and corner of the city. Several of them are in the process of construction and opening up in near future. Thus there is a harmonious co-existence between the multinational brand names and the indigenous products. In this changing landscape of Kolkata, with its diverse new and old marketplaces existing side by side, the study of the rise in consumerism in this setting becomes interesting and challenging in its own way. In view of this, the study of the consumption oriented places i.e. the shopping malls, are distinguished as the area of study not only because of their physiognomy but also due to the collective impressions and the environment created by the individuals visiting the place. While studying these spaces, it should always be kept in mind that their focal point is consumption, rather than social interaction.

3.7.1 Changing urban landscape of the city

It has been often said that the true character of the city is revealed through not only the structural elements but also the characters of those living within it. The characteristic of the city of Kolkata has already been referred to earlier. Once the capital of the British Empire, it grew up into a busy flourishing town and became the centre of cultural, political and economic life of Bengal. After independence, the city witnessed a sluggish growth that surged with the new economic reforms which took place from 1990s onwards. These new reforms struck the political and economic structure of the state bringing in new changes, the manifestations of which were seen in various forms. These included the restructuring of the face of the city with the opening of new industrial units, with special reference to the service sector industries, remodelling of the spatial characters (breaking of slums and beautification of the marketplaces), development of the infrastructural facilities with better transport structure and increasing modes of entertainment. Kolkata can be seen as a conglomeration of the traditional past with the present modern amenities. So the ‘paras’ of North and South Kolkata co-exist with the
modern day multi-residential complexes. This unbridled growth of the high-rises and malls developing in the heart of the city has, to a large extent, changed the character of the city. The changing skyline of the city is said to be dominated by the new flyovers, swanky malls, and residential complexes. This was followed by a deepening of the markets as the changing lifestyle of the people was supported by the emergence of new public spaces in the urban environment. These spaces were in the shapes of the departmental stores, restaurants, and shopping malls.

Even a city like Kolkata, which was considered to be stagnant, saw remarkable development in recent times. Along with these changes, the city also witnessed a change in the behavioural pattern of the consumers. So, when the fever of consumerism was gripping other parts of India, Kolkata too, could not escape from its powerful clutches. When consumerism hit Kolkata with a bang, it knocked out the city flat. Before the traditional ‘bhadrolok’ realized what was happening, Calcutta metamorphosed into Kolkata. This new face of the city is modern and techno-savvy. Thus it gained prominence along with the other metros to become a part of the ‘global village’. As consumption grew, industry thrived and the job market in Kolkata benefited a cross-section of its population. In this background, this study would try to understand the new middle class situated in Kolkata and its relation with the sites of consumption. The city of Kolkata has been gradually turning into a consumer hive. The shops presume customers: people who can not only buy, but also want to buy. Conspicuous retail works by the dynamics of an intricate social psychology. The bright windows and goods-laden shelves are controlled by the masses that seem to be superficially controlled by them. So the aim is to understand the changes in the attitude towards buying goods that have resulted among the people of Kolkata and how these changes are affecting the people across the various age, gender and economic sections. This will be taken up in detail in the following chapters.

3.7.2 Shopping Malls and their evolution in the city

The growth of the shopping malls in India, and Kolkata in particular, has definitely been a recent phenomenon. Malls were an outcome of the changes that have
resulted from the opening up of the economy since 1990s. As discussed earlier, the Indian market faced the onslaught of a wide range of new household appliances, stylish apparels, and other consumer products which changed the patterns of consumption of a targeted section of society - the 'new middle class'. However at that point of time, what Indian consumers lacked was the facility of world-class shopping experience. A shopping place which would have artificial climatic control facilities; the presence of a wide range of products with quality and style and, most importantly, a hassle-free shopping environment, which would be devoid of the noise and jostling crowd. So, a good ambience was desired for encouraging shopping as an activity. This led to the opening of the first mall in India at Mumbai called the 'Crossroads' in the year 1999 which was followed by 'Ansal Plaza' in Delhi.\(^{87}\) Since then, India has witnessed an increasing growth of shopping malls at various megacities and even in smaller towns. Thus, in the words of a respondent: 'Nothing seems to symbolize India's transformation from a stagnant Third World country into an emerging economic superpower as does its sparkling new malls' (Male, 31 years). This new craze, often called mall mania, has gripped the nation into a shopping frenzy as a result of which there has been an increase in the construction of shopping malls. Chart 2 below represents the proportionate growth of mall constructions all over India specifying the North-South-East-West divisions. Though it shows that in the eastern region there is only 10 per cent of mall development compared to the other areas, however the interesting aspect is that out of this 10 per cent, Kolkata is projected to have 9 per cent in the share. This definitely indicates the mall development rate in the city.

\(^{87}\) Due to the dearth of proper documentation of the rise of the shopping malls in India, the research had to be based on scattered sources which were accumulated from newspaper clippings, and work done by the market research agencies. This data was taken from the article, The Mall Mania by Arora in Span, issue March-April, 2005.
Kolkata too, could not escape from this new wave of consumerism and hence, within a span of four to five years, the city has witnessed the development of approximately twenty-five shopping malls (these include those under construction) at various parts of the city. Even though these malls are a very recent phenomenon, still it is interesting to trace the historicity of the development of them in Kolkata. It would not be wrong to point out that Kolkata began its development of the retail sector quite late unlike its other counterparts like Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai; yet surprisingly it has been quite fast in gaining momentum. The speed at which the city is witnessing the opening of various departmental outlets and shopping malls at various parts of the city, has led one

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A list with the names of the shopping malls in Kolkata is appended. This list includes also those which are not yet functional but are due to open in near future and is at present under construction.
to ponder about the fast changing characteristic of the city. A discussion on this aspect needs more time and hence, will be covered in the following chapters. So at present one is more interested in looking into the evolution of malls in Kolkata. The city witnessed the opening of the first shopping mall in the year 2003, when *Forum* was established. Since then, there has been a gradual rise in the construction of the shopping malls at various nooks and corners of the city, leading to a staggering number of twenty-five. With more new projects in the pipe-line, the city is gearing up to see more of such outlets in the recent future. The sheer increasing number of such ‘outlets’, makes one ponder on the issues of rising consumerism among the people of Kolkata. Table 3 below indicates their details in terms of area, location and the functional status. Of these, the present thesis would include three malls, namely *Forum, City Centre and Gariahat Mall* as the area of study. The reasons behind the choice of these three malls will be subsequently mentioned. However, before embarking on the study of the shopping malls, it is imperative to understand the behaviour of the people of Kolkata as consumers.
### Table: Name, location and specific details of the Malls in Kolkata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name of the Mall</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Area (in sq ft)</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Forum Mall</td>
<td>Elgin Road</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Mar, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>City Centre</td>
<td>Salt Lake</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Jun, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Metropolis</td>
<td>Chak Garia</td>
<td>141,660</td>
<td>Dec, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Homeland</td>
<td>Bhowanipur</td>
<td>105,000</td>
<td>Mid-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gariahat Mall</td>
<td>Amir Lane</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>Aug, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Avani Galleria</td>
<td>Park Street</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>Nov, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>South City Mall</td>
<td>Anwar Shah Road</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>Jan: 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Axis</td>
<td>Rajarhat</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2007-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Block by Block</td>
<td>Rajarhat</td>
<td>279,529</td>
<td>Sept, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hi Street Mall</td>
<td>E.M.Bypass</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mani Square</td>
<td>E.M.Bypass</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>Oct, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lake Mall</td>
<td>Rashbhari Avenue</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>Dec, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fort Knox</td>
<td>Camac Street</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>Mid-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fort Lee II</td>
<td>Lee Road</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>End-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fort Diwganta</td>
<td>Gol Park</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>July, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Forum II</td>
<td>E.M.Bypass</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>City Centre II</td>
<td>Rajarhat</td>
<td>540,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Times Square</td>
<td>Ultadanga</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Surabhi</td>
<td>Moria Street</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>New Market Mall</td>
<td>Lindsay Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tentative: 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Courtyard</td>
<td>Elgin Road</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Park Circus</td>
<td>Park Circus</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Not decided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Central Mall</td>
<td>Ballygung Circular Road</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mall name not decided</td>
<td>Syed Amir Ali Avenue</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Tentative: 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mall name not decided</td>
<td>Circus Market Road</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>Not decided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** The data has been put together from the articles published in the Times of India, June, 4th 2006 and August 11th 2007 and upon verification from some of the mall authorities. The dates of opening of some of the malls might have been extended due to constructional delay. Also there are a few more malls expected to come up. The above includes those which are already functional or those which have been already approved by the government.