

## The Western Influence on India and the Transformation of Culture in Amit Chaudhuri's Novel *Calcutta: Two Years in the City*

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### ABSTRACT

Amit Chaudhuri, a world-renowned novelist and a well-known figure in the world of literature, is a living inspiration for aspiring authors. The encounter between India and the West was a meeting of a pre-modern and a modernising social system. When the Western show had an impact on different aspects of the Indian open action, social, and political system, its own one-of-a-kind internal structure had changed. Its standard dynamic and far-reaching character had become isolated; its value structure had become increasingly open, liberal, equalitarian, and humanistic, and the show was saturated with a newfound sentiment of trust in the consistent and mechanical world-see based on rationale, equalisation, and opportunity. In any case, not all of the Western sharp persons were aware of these altered qualities in a positive light. A portion of the Western educated population was disposed to these qualities in the other direction. Taking everything into account, the Indian context's encounter with the West resulted in a radical sociological critique. Its enormous size was documented at the start of a new period in Indian culture's development. In this work of Chaudhuri, there are number of references of London and Calcutta and it portrays the different effects of westernization of the places and the cultures.

**Keywords:** West, Pre-Modern, Change, Impact, Alter, Indian, Radical, Culture

## INTRODUCTION

*Calcutta: Two Years in the City* is Amit Chaudhuri's best non-fiction work, and it captures the cultural heritage of Calcutta to a larger extent. Calcutta is a city that conjures up images of poverty and urban misery in the western mind. Chaudhuri seems unconcerned about the "coke-colonization" of his hometown. Furthermore, he considers Calcutta to be a place of 'bengaliness,' where Rabindranath Tagore's poetry coexisted with Chowringhee cricket and Satyajit Roy's film. Calcutta is a non-fiction narrative that highlights the city's westernisation during a time when locals crave Italian cuisine such as pizza and spaghetti. He recalls the gala *New Year* celebrations that have become popular in recent years at numerous clubs, followed by whisky fueled afterparties, in a superb chapter of his non-fiction work. Victorian leather sofas and billiard rooms can also be seen in the clubs. Marwari businessmen from northern India are unconcerned about Calcutta's cultures and traditions. The author also mentions that the great Calcutta of the 1960s and 1970s has vanished, and that he dislikes the city, particularly because of its progressive transformation. The club atmosphere on New Year's Eve, followed by whiskey, demonstrates the impact of westernisation on Calcutta. The author was saddened by the fact that Calcutta is losing all of its glory owing to the impact of westernisation, as indigenous culinary habits are being replaced with Italian pizzas and pastas.

*Calcutta: Two Years in the City* is a non-fiction account of modern-day Calcutta, which is a departure from Amit Chaudhuri's regular manner of writing. His style of writing and describing the city in which he was born and raised demonstrates that the author is unaffected by critics

sharply disparaging remarks about his hometown. The novelist and poet, who focuses on his personal life, was born in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) in 1962 and grew up in Bombay. The protagonist's passion for traditional Indian music, as well as other details highlighted in the text such as monuments, street stores, and old decaying buildings, reveal Amit Chaudhuri's regional sensibility. When looking at Amit Chaudhuri's writing as it is reflected in the narration, it can be said that the writer creates a sense of belonging by attempting to reflect life as it is without adding further information. The writer has highlighted important parts of life, such as friendship, youth experiences, and the role of Bombay in it, by commenting on Indian sensibilities inside the text. The Indianness inside the texts is brought forward by the realistic description of events and happenings, which sheds insight on the post-modern era and cultural inclinations. The ordinary is used to show the local culture and subjectivities associated with India, as well as the impact of modern life. In the activities of the writer, the Bengali ethos is reflected:

“It is not surprising then that much of Amit Chaudhuri's novels are a celebration of local cultures and subjectivities. His uniqueness as a writer, however, rests largely on the fact that his most sensitive evocations of the locality are done through an exclusive focus on the banal and the quotidian in fragmented, episodic form, he never wove into the holistic narrative, much less one about the development of the modern Indian nation-state.” (Yadav, 2012).

The *pukka* establishments in the form of high rises in all regions of Calcutta have contributed an extra splendour and majesty to the place. The author points out that the heritage buildings are being replaced by modern flats, and there is no trace of Calcutta's original beauty in the North and South by ways. Earlier in Calcutta, when there was no notion of high rises, Calcutta

residents were there for one other in happy and sad times, and each of them had daily chats with each other, which served as a fantastic stress reliever for the residents at the time. People in today's flats and apartments culture, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with their own parts and happiness or unhappiness. This causes a lot of stress for the city's residents, and it also loses the Bengali's spirit, culture, and heritage. In the opinion of Calcutta residents, the culture of flats and apartments is also a result of westernisation.

The author is fascinated by the word 'Bengal,' because the city is the least ethnocentric and tolerant, with influences from Dutch, Armenian, French, and Portuguese commerce visible in the architecture. However, as a result of westernisation, enterprises have relocated to Mumbai, which has the same glitz and glam as western countries.

Calcutta, a factual work by Chaudhuri, depicts a city that was once vibrant and friendly, but has now completely transformed due to the severe impact of westernisation. People from Calcutta used to go to England for higher education and then return to the motherland because of their culture, custom, and heritage impelled them to do so, just as the author, Amit Chaudhuri, did. Calcutta is "a self-renewing way contrast of seeing, of inhabiting space, apprehending life," according to Chaudhuri.

Chaudhuri goes on to say that there was no essence of modernity noticed previously, and that there was no modernity of glittering and brightening towers or digital billboards, which is why he adored Calcutta. His primary concern now is modernity, which has absorbed the essence of Calcutta in every way. For higher education, today's generation believes that going outside of India is the greatest alternative. They do not really bother to return after completing the course

and instead fall in love with western culture. There are several references to London and Calcutta throughout Chaudhuri's work, and it depicts the differences between the two places and cultures. The differences are intended to establish a contrast between Calcutta's traditional values and London's dominant western attitude. Calcutta's protagonist wants to return to Calcutta solely to care for his old parents, leaving Bonny. These moral ideals, on the other hand, are not present in western civilization. In contrast to the protagonist's moral principles, the novel depicts the opposite picture, in which a group of young students are fantasised by the streets of New York and the young generations no longer find Calcutta appealing. They absorbed western culture and preferred it because of all the glamour and fantasy associated with it. The attire of Shiva, Parvati, and Lord Ganesh has also changed as a result of westernisation, according to Amit Chaudhuri's non-fictional work. The Albert cut haircut has given Lord Kartik a more modern appearance, and the garment has a modern feel to it. In the above lines, the storey depicts a stark contrast between old Indian heritage and new Indianness.

Calcutta has altered in recent decades, according to Chaudhuri, and is now known as the city of disappearances, according to Iain Sinclair's anthology. Older structures are dismantled, while newer structures have a touch of westernisation. He also sees that, as a result of globalisation, malls and multiplexes have grown in popularity, whereas historic heritage buildings have lost their significance. He also looks into the changes in Calcutta's eating habits. Italian, Chinese, and Pan Asian cuisines have surpassed traditional Bengali cuisine in popularity in the city. He also mentions that the people of Calcutta were content with "bread and butter," but that the westernised view of eating has altered daily life.

Calcutta's various investigations will provide quotable measurements, dates of significant events, and close examinations of its government leaders and property designers. Chaudhuri's work, which is alternately grumpy and warm, diaristic and contemplative at times, is all the more lavish for depicting the city as a series of unexpected memory tugs. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, defined Delhi as the voice of authority and bureaucracy, Mumbai as the cacophony of entertainment, and Calcutta as the ghosts and whispers, weird resonances, and elusive melodies. Calcutta, according to Amit Chaudhuri, is "without space, without a past, and without a real appetite." The author was unable to accept the changes that have occurred in Calcutta as a result of globalisation and westernisation. Calcutta's dietary habits, culture, tradition, family values, and friendly character changed, depressing the author greatly. Calcutta is a nonfiction film that examines the transformation of the heritage city of Calcutta as a result of westernisation. The novel illustrates how modernism has affected Calcutta's lifestyle, culinary habits, and culture, and how this transformation has paved the way for Westernization, which has resulted in a shift in Calcutta's and India's mindsets.

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