



# Calcutta: Two Years in the City (Vintage Departures)

*Amit Chaudhuri*

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## Calcutta: Two Years in the City (Vintage Departures) Amit Chaudhuri

The award-winning author Amit Chaudhuri has been widely praised for the beauty and subtle power of his writing and for the ways in which he makes “place” as complex a character as his men and women. Now he brings these gifts to a spellbinding amalgam of memoir, reportage, and history in this intimate, luminous portrait of Calcutta.

Chaudhuri guides us through the city where he was born, the home he loved as a child, the setting of his acclaimed novels—a place he now finds captivating for all the ways it has, and, perhaps more powerfully, has not, changed. He shows us a city relatively untouched by the currents of globalization but possessed of a “self-renewing way of seeing, of inhabiting space, of apprehending life.” He takes us along vibrant avenues and derelict alleyways; introduces us to intellectuals, Marxists, members of the declining haute bourgeoisie, street vendors, domestic workers; brings to life the city’s sounds and smells, its architecture, its traditional shops and restaurants, new malls and hotels. And, using the historic elections of 2011 as a fulcrum, Chaudhuri looks back to the nineteenth century, when the city burst with a new vitality, and toward the politics of the present, finding a city “still not recovered from history” yet possessed of a singular modernity. Chaudhuri observes and writes about Calcutta with rare candor and clarity, making graspable the complex, ultimately ineluctable reasons for his passionate attachment to the place and its people.

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