

Calcutta Biologigraphies

Rituparna Datta

Cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata) rarely require an introduction as the heyday imperial British capitalism has put the region on the colonial global map of both commodity logistical channels and as a centre of Indian nationalist thought. From, Hickey's Gazette, Hunter's account of Bengal, memoirs of Europeans of their sojourn, vernacular press and literature in colonial times to print media coverage of the pulse of daily life in Calcutta after Independence or pamphlets of protest and many more all discuss the events of the time by describing and foregrounding the city in its temporal presence. Such descriptions give the city itself autonomy, a superlative personality that can see and feel and generate a sense of affect and emotion, thus, taking the definition of the city beyond just limitations of space and place and bringing the question of what it means "to be" a city in its "being" which to use Joyce's expression is experiences of everyday life "like always meeting ourselves". These experiences are the biologics of the city that generate a stream of consciousness through its mushrooming urban pattern and demographic rise as if the "living is continuously reproducing streams of living". Perhaps this is what makes Calcutta a living cosmopolitan city. This paper draws on the line what would a city write or wish to keep or exclude in its own biography? How the past of the present and future of the past will transcend in this "biologigraphy" that make Calcutta an urban mosaic of life and experiences.