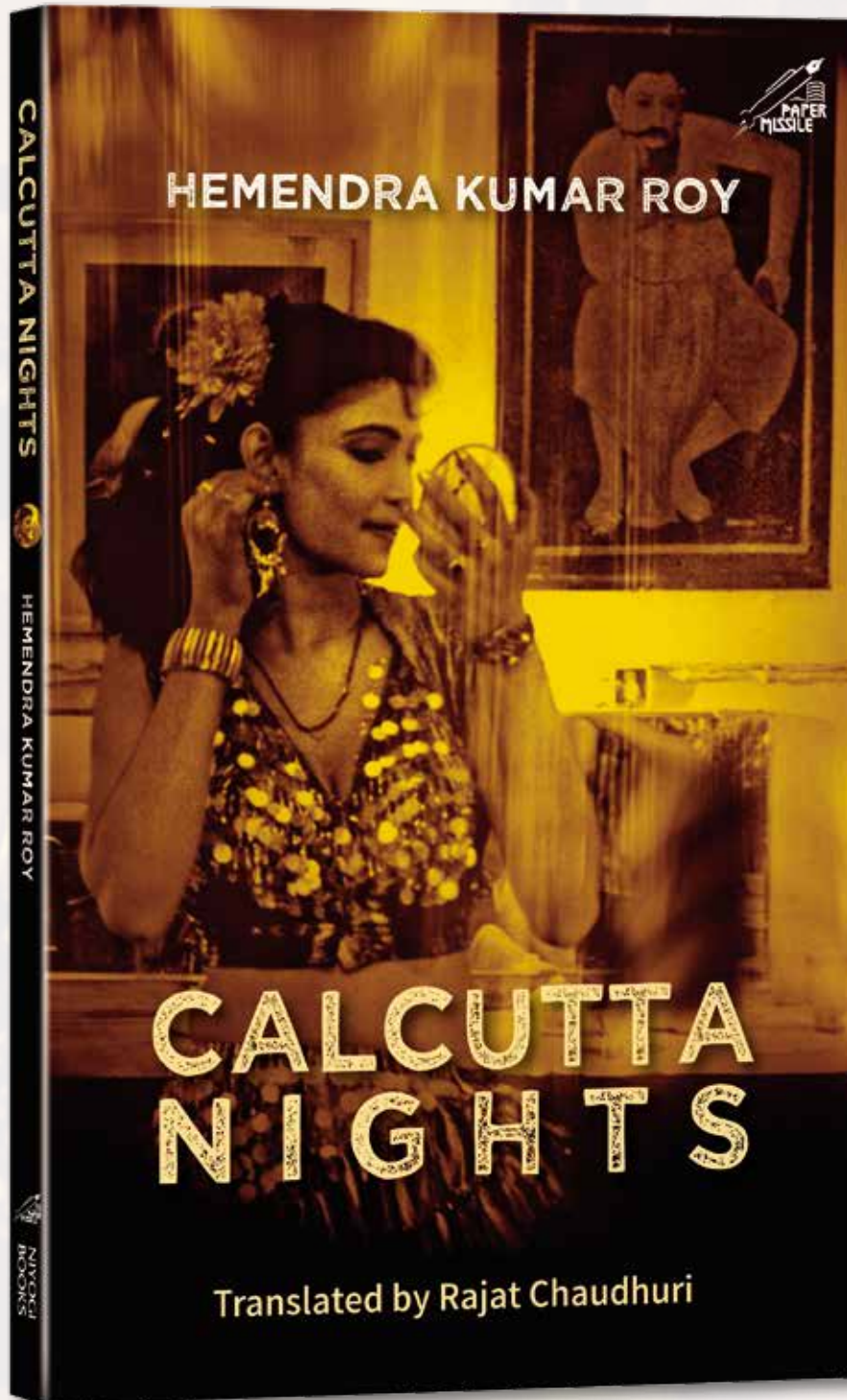


ISBN: 978-93-89136-45-6
IMPRINT: PAPER MISSILE

NON-FICTION | TRANSLATION
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CALCUTTA NIGHTS

by
HEMENDRA KUMAR ROY

Translated by Rajat Chaudhuri

NON-FICTION | TRANSLATION

₹295

ISBN: 978-93-89136-45-6

Size: 216mm x 140mm; 140pp

Book Print Paper

Black and white

Flexiback

Calcutta Nights (Raater Kolkata) is the real-life story and memoir of the enigmatic 'Meghnad Gupta', or Hemendra kumar Roy—one of the pioneering creators of Bengali fiction. Translated into English by Rajat Chaudhuri almost a century after the first publication of *Raater Kolkata* in 1923, Roy reveals to contemporary readers the darkest secrets of erstwhile Calcutta.

The first two decades of the last century— the backdrop for this book—were turbulent times. Calcutta, the city, witnessed an influx of 'foreigners' migrating from beyond the country's boundaries as well as of members of different Indian communities who left their native places in search of a better living. They merged with the local populace of the city, some of them learning to dress, walk and talk like the resident Bengali 'babu' and some keeping their identities separate and alive, adding to the unique and bubbling cauldron of communities and people this book describes. Written in an age very different from ours, some views of the author could be jarring for the present times. However, these need to be tempered by the understanding of the sociopolitical contexts and the distance of a century separating us from Meghnad Gupta's Calcutta.

Calcutta Nights (Raater Kolkata) is the *Hootum Pyanchar Naksha* (published in 1862 and penned by Kaliprasanna Sinha) of the early 20th century.



Famous Bengali author **Hemendra kumar Roy** was also known as the emperor of adventure stories. His contribution to 20th century

Bengali literature covering adventure, detective, and supernatural plots inspired movie hits like *Bees Saal Baad* (Twenty Years Later) and *Jawkher Dhan* (The Treasure and its Ghost). He pioneered the Bengali science-fiction and detective story traditions. Born in Kolkata, Roy also published essays and was closely associated with a number of literary magazines.



Rajat Chaudhuri is the author of *Hotel Calcutta*, *Amber Dusk* and the Bengali short story collection *Calculus*. His writings has won him a Charles

Wallace Creative Writing Fellowship, UK, a Hawthornden Castle Fellowship, Scotland, a Korean Arts Council-InKo Residency in South Korea, and a Sangam House residency. He has written for *Outlook* magazine, *American Book Review*, *Asian Review of Books*, *The Telegraph*, *Eclectica*, among others.

The book has great historical value as an authentic and well-researched field study of areas which were considered out of reach of the general reader and the resident of the city of pre-Partition Kolkata.

The mystery element in this book is a very strong and appealing one. The author dared to go on secret nocturnal visits to certain dubious localities in the city of Kolkata in the early decades of the last century.

Author Hemendrakumar Roy was a well-known writer of popular detective novels of his times and his inimitable style of prose grips the reader's attention. Nothing is lost in translation.