



The Margins Made Visible: Calcutta, Poverty, and the Politics of Representation in Dominique Lapierre's *City of Joy*

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Abstract:

Dominique Lapierre's *City of Joy* (1985) occupies a singular and contested position within the literature of the Global South. A French journalist's account of life in Anand Nagar - one of Calcutta's most densely populated slums - the novel-narrative navigates the treacherous terrain between humanitarian empathy and the politics of representation. This paper undertakes a comprehensive multi-theoretical analysis of *City of Joy*, bringing to bear the full spectrum of contemporary critical and literary theory: postcolonial criticism, Saidian Orientalism, Spivakian subaltern studies, Marxist and materialist analysis, feminist and gender theory, new historicism, narratological inquiry, Bakhtinian dialogics, reader-response theory, and humanist-existentialist perspectives. The aim is to demonstrate that while Lapierre's text is animated by a sincere philanthropic impulse, it simultaneously reproduces, complicates, and at times inadvertently subverts dominant ideological structures of representation. Through the interlocking lenses of these critical frameworks, the paper argues that *City of Joy* is not merely a document of poverty but a site of ideological and discursive struggle - a text that both marginalises and rescues its subjects, and whose enduring critical value lies precisely in the contradictions it cannot resolve.

Keywords: Calcutta, Urbanism, Margin, Postcolonialism, Politics.