
The edited volume of *Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies of India* has been contributed to by leading geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists around the world. Fifteen carefully chosen essays in this volume provide a broader view on postcolonial geographies of India with a strong base on historical evidence of writings on colonial geographies of India (p. 14). These essays with varied topics related to caste, gender, religious identities, nationalism and knowledge production are meticulously incorporated by the editors to provide a wide-ranging approach to the contemporary postcolonial geographic research on India.

In the introduction, the editors trace the historical journey of geographic education in Indian universities and institutes (p. 17). The editors also mention how the ‘new generation’ (p. 17) of Indian geographers have changed the study of the discipline in the post-independent period. Based mostly on empirical work, the 15 essays follow threads of some common themes throughout the book. The first and second essays give particular emphasis on caste and gender. M. Satish Kumar, in the second chapter, provides a very good description of the black and white towns in Madras. He points out that the black and white towns were merely a product of racial and colonial division (p. 24). The author further explains how the politics of caste during the colonial period played a role and eventually shaped the urban space of Madras. Alison Blunt, in the third chapter, explains the gendered geographies of home, community and nationality among Anglo-Indian women (p. 49). Based upon archival research and interviews, the author presents a stimulating description about the identity of Anglo-Indians residing in India, by way of exploring their contested spaces at different levels.

Chapters Four and Five highlight the contested geographies of Hindu nationalism and the evolving geopolitics of Kashmir and Indo-Pak conflicts respectively. Stuart Corbridge and Edward Simpson, in Chapter Four, describe how militant Hinduism became a significant part of national politics since 1980s through *yatras* (large processions) across the country. The authors further illustrate the strategies used by Hindu nationalists in mapping and naming of rivers, lakes, mountains, streets, etc., and thereby considered a part of the sacred Hindustan itself. In Chapter Five on territoriality, Kashmir and evolving geopolitics, Robert Bradnock emphasises on the issue and importance of territoriality through a historical description of geopolitics of Kashmir. He further explains how the restructuring of global security and economic interests have shaped the evolution of the Kashmir issue.

Gender-related issues are given special attention, as is evident from three essays (Raju, Desai and Shaw). In Chapter Six, Saraswati Raju provides an impressive description of how local women’s skills and employment are becoming influenced by the processes of globalisation. Backed by empirical research conducted in Delhi and Chennai, the author shows how socio-cultural elements, such as gender, caste and class, influence occupational opportunities and hierarchies. Vandana Desai, in Chapter Seven, observes how women’s participation in NGOs enhances empowerment and accelerates social transformation in the new globalised economy. Annapurna Shaw’s essay on women community workers in Chapter Thirteen illustrates how poverty alleviation programmes have helped women in small towns through increased decentralised governance resulting in the devolution of political and
fiscal power. The author further concludes that decentralisation of the power process has improved the participation of citizens in local governance systems and has also rendered voice to the poor (p. 256).

Interesting descriptions about the uneven geography of work and how various kinds of labour (blue-collared and white-collared) are networked in a global production system surfaces in Chapters Eight and Nine. Sharad Chari, in Chapter Eight, examines the social character of blue-collared labour in Tirupur town. He attempts to show the social gains of capital in networked production system through the garment factories. Martina Fromhold-Eisebith, in Chapter Nine, explains the potentiality of IT industries in the future economic development of India and also brings up issues of regional disparities due to uneven spatial clustering of IT industries in select urbanised regions. The author provides many arguments to bring a logical reasoning behind the regional concentration of these industries. Furthermore, the author gives emphasis to the need for poverty alleviation; employment of women; and overall increase in the application of IT products in everyday lives to tackle regional disparities (p. 180).

The next three chapters focus on urban developmental issues extending from Delhi’s restructuring in the postcolonial period to an analysis of post-modern and post-Fordist images of Mumbai. Stephen Legg, in Chapter Ten, examines the post-colonial developments of Delhi and the formation of Delhi Development Authority in 1957. The author criticises the Delhi Master Plan for following the colonial nature of planning even in its post colonial incarnation. In Chapter Eleven, Swapna Banerjee-Guha argues that in a globalising city, the geography of centrality and marginality has come up very strongly characterised by contestation and internal differentiation (p. 206). The author further says that the image of Mumbai as a global city is earned at the cost of increasing spatial disparity, increasing divide between rich and poor, and continuation of flawed planning policies. Craig Jeffrey, Patricia Jeffrey and Roger Jeffrey, in Chapter Twelve, examine how education is changing the social reproduction in rural northern India. Strongly grounded on empirical investigations, the authors have divided the chapter into seven sections, including theoretical context and background of the state, as well as the methodological concerns. Cutting across caste and religion, the authors have successfully illustrated three case studies involving three young men and bring out how education is being recognised as a tool for social mobility in rural northern India (p. 238).

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen deal with the environmental issues related to India. Glyn Williams and Emma Mawdsley analyse the evolving political ecologies in India and present a strong criticism of the standard environmental conceptualisations and narratives prevailing in contemporary literatures. The authors also provide a new approach to analysing the evolving political ecology through the inclusion of concepts like ‘social justice’. Paul Robbins, in Chapter Fifteen, provides a review of the colonial logic of forestry using the example of extensive forest conservation efforts in the Marwar region of Rajasthan during 1880s (p. 281). The author critically points out that the motive of this colonial forest conservation was not only to protect the forest rather to produce and earn revenue from it. Furthermore, the author expresses his concern that the contemporary forest policies in India draw a lot from the logic of colonial forestry and, therefore, must be challenged.

In the final chapter, Richa Singh and Richa Nagar provide a critical reflection on NGO work in India and the subsequent process and politics of knowledge production. The authors present a critique of the narrow definition and conceptualisations of ‘donor-