

## Book Review

**Rituparna Patgiri*****Shifting Landscapes: Education and Urban Transformations in India*, (Eds.) Geetha B. Nambissan, Nandini Manjrekar, Shivali Tukdeo, and Indra Sengupta, Cambridge University Press, 2025, 375 pp., INR 1,395.**

*Shifting Landscapes: Education and Urban Transformations in India*, edited by Geetha B. Nambissan, Nandini Manjrekar, Shivali Tukdeo, and Indra Sengupta, published by Cambridge University Press in 2025, explores the growing interconnections between education and urbanisation. The book argues that urban and educational spaces co-determine each other. It highlights how the growth of cities has led to increased regulation of access, planned spatial segregation, and the provision of education. The authors draw on historical records, policy evidence, ethnographic insights, and case studies of neighbourhoods, schools, families, and youth to illustrate the relationship between education and urban life. The intersectionality of class, caste, ethnicity, religion, region, and gender mediates access to educational and occupational opportunities.

It is a multidisciplinary volume that adopts a range of disciplinary and methodological tools, as can be seen across the twelve chapters. The urban is used as a conceptual and theoretical tool to understand the socially produced nature of spatial formations, which are constantly in the making. It extends beyond the city and its peripheries. The chapters present an understanding of diverse and heterogeneous urban forms, which include large metropolises, smaller cities, towns, and peri-urban areas, cutting across diverse regions and states of India. They cater to different time periods—colonialism, the impact of neo-liberal policies, and recent contexts—tracing the education-urban relationship since the middle of the nineteenth century in India.

The book is divided into four sections: “City Histories and Educational Pasts,” “Urban Transformations, Marginalities and Education,” “Beyond the Metropolis: Urban Spaces, Education and Changing Aspirations,” and “Neighbourhoods, Minorities, and the Politics of Education.” The three chapters in the first section explore the importance of education in the history of modern India. The contributors address the historical antecedents of education and the urban in contemporary times. For instance, in Chapter 1, Akash Bhattacharya examines the causes and patterns of urbanisation in Uttarpara in West Bengal using a historical analysis. This chapter highlights how colonial education and the Permanent Settlement together facilitated philanthropy, which led to the consolidation of the power of the Bengali *bhadralok*. Nandini Manjrekar and Poushali Basak (Chapter 2) trace diverse historical trajectories of state-funded education in the mill district of colonial Bombay (now Mumbai). This chapter departs from colonial and nationalist narratives of famous elite educational institutions in Bombay to explore the contexts within which children of the working classes were to be educated. Margrit Pernau (Chapter 3) looks at Jamia Millia Islamia's foundation in Aligarh, its history in Karol Bagh, and its institutional transfer to Okhla. She explores what it meant for the university's relations with Delhi, and situates Jamia within the unravelling landscape of nationalist education in colonial India. These chapters provide a chronology of urbanisation that began in colonial India around the middle of the nineteenth century and accelerated with increasing industrialisation and the migration of people from villages to cities in the early twentieth century.

The second section looks at the intensity of urban expansion since the 1980s and its connections to marginalities and education. The liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s led to a boom in private investment in higher education. Debarati Bagchi (Chapter 6) traces the connections between higher education institutions and urban transformation in the National Capital Region (NCR) during the post-liberalisation decade. Her work shows how Sonapat in Haryana became an education city within an “urban complex.” Education has been central to the story of urbanisation in this urban periphery. Shivali Tukdeo (Chapter 5) explores the connections between displacement, city, periphery, and education through fieldwork in rehabilitation colonies in Bengaluru. By foregrounding the entanglements of education and the urban, she shows the common ground between urban studies and education. The resettlement sites and the peri-urban areas highlight the crisis of education as well as the crisis of the urban. Geetha B. Nambissan

(Chapter 4) looks at the impact of Delhi's changing urban trajectory on the education of children. Using a methodological framework located in the analysis of documents, she explores how the transformation of the city affected the lives of the poor and their children's education.

The third section presents an understanding of the urban education dynamics in non-metropolitan spaces in India. Sadhana Saxena (Chapter 7) looks at Pipariya in Madhya Pradesh, Nirmali Goswami (Chapter 8) explores Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, and Supriya RoyChowdhury and Vishaka V. Warriar (Chapter 9) look at Raichur in Karnataka. Saxena traces how Pipariya transforms from a small settlement into a town with the emergence of stratified spatial and social structures. Goswami's chapter, which captures the intricacies of class and status dynamics with respect to schooling in Varanasi, complements Saxena's study by highlighting how people from small towns and lower classes constitute their social relations vis-à-vis schooling. RoyChowdhury and Warriar examine the interrelationships between skills training, migration, and employment in Raichur. While skills are promoted as the education that is job-oriented, the reality is different. The study highlights the disjuncture between skills training and the job market. Cities such as Raichur hardly have malls and companies that would recruit young people with skills training. This results in migration to other bigger cities, with the dwindling agricultural sector also acting as a contributing factor.

In the fourth section, Anasua Chatterjee, Farah Farooqi, and Yamini Agarwal look at different facets of neighbourhoods, minorities, and education. Chatterjee (Chapter 10) draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Kolkata to locate the ability of marginal Muslim communities to access education. Education is an important site for aspiring to a better life for marginal Muslim groups in Kolkata; however, this access to urban education infrastructure itself is fraught with marginalities. Farooqi (Chapter 11) explores the patterns of Indian Muslims' precariousness and its connection with space in the colonial period. She highlights how the Partition led to the religious definition of urban space in cities such as Delhi today. Agarwal's study (Chapter 12), also situated in Delhi, traces the making of Tilak Vihar, known as a "widows' colony." Stigmatised after the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, Tilak Vihar lacks opportunities due to the persisting gender and class continuum, the absent state, and the larger Sikh

community's neglect. All three chapters look at segregated spaces and neighbourhoods to understand urbanity and education.

The volume would have benefited from chapters representing marginalised regions of the country, like Northeast India, Kashmir, and others, where urbanisation has taken new forms in contemporary times. While scholars have focused on urban centres and metropolises such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, urban shifts and phenomena remain understudied in regions like Northeast India, Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, etc. This is particularly true in the context of the growth of smart cities and the rise of private educational as well as skill-based institutions. There is a need to theorise the urban and to explore its relationship with education in India's neglected urban spaces. Nonetheless, the volume adds to our understanding of education, urbanisation, and socio-historical forces, and will be useful to students of education, sociology, development studies, urban studies, and history.