

India's Middle Class

New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity

Christiane Brosius

Series: Cities and the Urban Imperative

Series Editor: Sujata Patel

About the Book:



This book examines the complexities of lifestyles of the upwardly mobile middle classes in India in the context of economic liberalisation in the new millennium. Rich in ethnographic material, the work is based on empirical case-studies of urban, cosmopolitan India (through interviews and participatory observation), research material (such as grey literature, lifestyle magazines, homepages, advertisements), and illustrations (colour photographs and posters). It analyses new social formations and aspirations, modes of consumption and ways of being in contemporary urban India, offering a model of how urban India might be studied and understood in a transnational and transcultural context. The book takes the reader into the world of real estate advertising, where Brosius examines the leap of a city like New Delhi from a colonial and national capital to a global city, or rather, to 'world-class status',

at the same time commenting on the high risks accompanying the seductive nature of a highly flexible and mobile career of the new 'global nomads'.

The study also explores the constitution of the city as a 'theme park' by examining a recent religious leisure site, the Akshardham Cultural Complex, arguing that this extraordinary theme-park/pilgrimage site/ 'spiritual condominium' addresses the needs and wants of India's new 'world-class' citizens by supplying a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' through moral instruction and 'museumization'. The third and last case-study examines the landscape of this new India through an analysis of life-cycle rites such as weddings and concepts of wellness as articulated through beauty and body shape.

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