



# House, but No Garden: Apartment Living in Bombay's Suburbs, 1898-1964

*Nikhil Rao*

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## **House, but No Garden: Apartment Living in Bombay's Suburbs, 1898-1964** Nikhil Rao

Between the well-documented development of colonial Bombay and sprawling contemporary Mumbai, a profound shift in the city's fabric occurred: the emergence of the first suburbs and their distinctive pattern of apartment living. In *House, but No Garden* Nikhil Rao considers this phenomenon and its significance for South Asian urban life. It is the first book to explore an organization of the middle-class neighborhood that became ubiquitous in the mid-twentieth-century city and that has spread throughout the subcontinent.

Rao examines how the challenge of converting lands from agrarian to urban use created new relations between the state, landholders, and other residents of the city. At the level of dwellings, apartment living in self-contained flats represented a novel form of urban life, one that expressed a compromise between the caste and class identities of suburban residents who are upper caste but belong to the lower-middle or middle class. Living in such a built environment, under the often conflicting imperatives of maintaining the exclusivity of caste and subcaste while assembling residential groupings large enough to be economically viable, led suburban residents to combine caste with class, type of work, and residence to forge new metacaste practices of community identity.

As it links the colonial and postcolonial city—both visually and analytically—Rao's work traces the appearance of new spatial and cultural configurations in the middle decades of the twentieth century in Bombay. In doing so, it expands our understanding of how built environments and urban identities are constitutive of one another.

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