

# **Forays of the English East India Company into the Kumaon-Garhwal Belt of the Central Himalayas (1800's-1840's)**

**Anukta Gairola**

## **Abstract:**

*After the Gurkha ruler was defeated in the Anglo-Gurkha war (1814-15), the treaty of Sugauli (1815) was signed and as war indemnity, the areas of Garhwal and Kumaon in the Central Himalayan region along with the territory of Sikkim that belonged to the Gurkha king were transferred to the Company. The paper attempts to explore various reasons of interest that the Company had in gaining access to the Central Himalayan region during the period of 1800's-1840's. The paper draws out the importance of the Himalayan region as a haven for the Europeans traveling far from 'home'. The development of hill stations of Mussourie, Lansdowne, and Nanital as retreat centers attest to the interest of the Company in the region. Furthermore, both land revenue and revenue from the rich forest wealth were important reasons for the Company to gain access to this region. In addition, the new army recruits that were available in the region became an important source for expanding the strength of Company's army. Last but not least was the trade with Tibet that attracted the attention of the Company. The author of the paper aspires to examine the diverse contributing factors that led the Company to choose the Central Himalayan region as an area for its political expansion.*

**Keywords:** Garhwal-Kumaon, Gurkha, Company, Revenue, Soldiers, *Bhotiyas* and Political expansion

## **Introduction**

The political sway of the English East India Company over the Indian subcontinent began with their victory in the battle of Plassey in 1757. After defeating the forces of *Nawab* of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Company earned *Diwani* rights over one of the most fertile and richest provinces of India. The revenue from the region helped the Company to organize a strong army and meet the cost of the conquest of the rest of the country. Historians have divergent views while describing the motives for the territorial conquest of the Company. While scholars like P.J. Marshall have argued that the territorial expansion was “neither planned nor directed from Britain” (Marshall, 2003, p. 24), for other scholars, the imperial expansion was motivated by the fiscal and military needs of the Company, rather than interests in trade (Bayly, 1989, p. 10). P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins share the view that the expansion of Company was “the progress of Gentlemanly Capitalism” (Cain and Hopkins, 1993, pp. 323-24). They have argued that the revenue from the subcontinent was essential for internal and external trade and this in turn created an impulse to conquer. Bipan Chandra has also argued that the expansionist policy of the Company was guided by the needs of the British industry (Chandra, 2020, p.

97). Bandyopadhyay has commented that the commercial and political expansion are the most important reasons behind the story of imperialism which began with the Company and later was taken over by the British Crown (Bandopadhyay, 2014, p. 60). Thus, the imperial expansion of the British in the Subcontinent seems to be intrinsically linked to their need for revenue and markets. However, scholars while chronicling the story of the political expansion of the British into the Indian subcontinent often concentrate on the dynamics that existed between the British and the various post-Mughal regional polities. In this regard while the relationship between the British and regions like Awadh, Hyderabad, Bengal, Mysore, Punjab have received tremendous scholarly attention, the same cannot be said for the Central Himalayan polities.

This paper attempts to understand the motives of the Company to conquer the Central Himalayan region and incorporate it within its imperial framework. Through an understanding of the imperial expansion in these peripheral areas, it is hoped that a fresh perspective can be brought into understanding the political expansion of the English East India Company.

## I

After the Gurkhas conquered the region of Kumaon in 1790, it raised an alarm for Pradyuman Shah (1787-1804), the raja of Garhwal, to militarize the region and prepare for the onslaught of the Gurkhas into his own territory. Captain F. V. Raper (who was sent to Garhwal by the Company to gather information about the region) has pointed out in his survey that Pradyuman Shah took a loan from one of the *Bhotiya* trader from village Mana to recruit an army and protect his realm.<sup>1</sup> However, his measure could not match the military might of the Gurkhas under Bahadur Shah, regent of the minor king Ran Bahadur (1777-1799) of Nepal, who in 1792, after securing Almora, attacked the territory of Pradyuman Shah (Saksena, 1956, p. 9).<sup>2</sup> This attack though could not lead into any definitive territorial gain for the Gurkhas due to an attack of the Qing Emperor on Nepal itself. However, the 1792 episode was a testimony of the military strength and might of the Gurkha army, the full force of which was felt by the Parmar Rajas of Garhwal later. In 1803, the Gurkhas, under the leadership of Bikram Shah (1799-1816) launched an attack on Srinagar, the capital of the Parmar Rajas of Garhwal. Pradyuman Shah unable to face the unexpected development fled to the plains for refuge while his son Sudarshan Shah (1815-1859) escaped to seek Company's refuge in Bareilly (Bahadur, 1992, p. 199).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Captain R.V. Raper. (1807). *The Narrative of a Survey to the Purpose of Discovering the Source of Ganges XI*. Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, p. 525

<sup>2</sup> A treaty was signed and Pradyuman Shah agreed to pay a hefty amount of Rs. 25,000 to establish peace from the Gurkha menace. For next 12 years there was a period of external peace in Garhwal.

<sup>3</sup> Though, Pradyuman Chand (Shah) with the help of Ram Dayal Singh, the Gujar Raja of Landhura fought against the Gurkha's at Kurbura in Dehradun, but he lost the battle and died at battle field.

By 1804, the Gurkhas had finally occupied the region of Kumaon and Garhwal. Hastidal Chautara<sup>4</sup> and Bumb Shah were given the reign of administration in Garhwal. Next on the Gurkha expansionary chart lay the kingdom of Sirmaur, through which they wanted to push further west into Kangra and beyond. Meanwhile, the king of Sirmaur, Karm Prakash (1793-1815), had to flee Sirmaur due to the machinations of the opposition. The fugitive king asked the Gurkha commander Amar Singh Thapa for their support to reclaim the throne which the commander happily lent. Though Amar Singh Thapa's forces did help to reinstate Karm Prakash, his role became largely ceremonial with the Gurkhas controlling administration in Sirmaur. The Gurkha forces then advanced up to Kangra where they were stuck in a lengthy siege and the alliance of Ranjit Singh with the ruler of Kangra saw the Gurkhas retreating from Kangra in 1809. The returning Gurkha forces returned to Sirmaur where the ruler Karm Prakash was deposed for his failure to supply men and resources to the Gurkha army during its siege of Kangra. The deposed Karm Prakash like the Garhwal ruler went over to the EIC for support while Amar Singh Thapa's son transformed Sirmaur into a vassal state of the Gurkhas. With the Westward expansion of the Gurkha kingdom blocked by the might Sikhs, the expansionary needs of the Gurkha kingdom looked to encroach upon the British Indian territories.

It has been argued by few historians that Bhim Singh Thapa underestimated the power and might of the EIC and felt that the opportunity was right to encroach upon Company's territories as he felt the Company was suffering from multiple wounds, any of which if pressed could turn fatal (Chowdhury, 1960, p. 161; Regmi, 2007, pp. 199-232) Meanwhile the cessation of Gorakhpur to the EIC had brought the Company in close contact with the frontier of the Gurkha kingdom. The Gurkhas took advantage and begun infiltrating through the Terai region absorbing multiple villages which were situated in disputed territory or within British territory itself (Shaphalya, 1969, pp. 1-9). The annexation of the areas of Butwal and Sheoraj by the Gurkhas was protested by the Company who claimed it as their own territory and it was the dispute around these two territories that served as a spark leading to the Anglo-Gurkha war in 1814. The Anglo-Gurkha war concluded in 1815 and a peace treaty was signed between the Company and the Gurkha Raja at Sugauli. According to this treaty, the region of Sikkim, Terai, Kumaon, Garhwal and Sirmour became part of the Company's territory. Within the territory of Garhwal, the western half of the kingdom lying between Alaknanda and Mandakini were given to Sudarshan Shah, son of Pradyuman Shah. The rest of the region came directly under the control of the Company. The eastern part of Garhwal along with Kumaon were recognized as non-regulation Province and this legal status even after the region's incorporation into the larger administrative unit of North Western

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<sup>4</sup> Chautara or Chautariya was a regional affiliation. However, Mola Ram the poet and painter of Garhwal in his text *Garhraj Vansh Kavya* have used this name for Hastidal.

Frontier Province. While the region of Sirmaur was handed back to Karm Prakash but his court was placed under the supervision of a Company's resident.

Mola Ram in his text *Garhraj Vansh Kavya* has pointed out that in Garhwal, corruption and personal ambitions of court officials were responsible for the political turmoil in the region. Even under the Gurkhas this phenomenon continued. This image of the Gurkha invaders as ferocious barbarians, ravaging the Himalayan lands and destroying its peace and stability is a standard trope in regional histories. This trope was popularized by the Company's documents which portrayed an image of cruel and vicious Gurkha rule. Such a portrayal allowed the Company officials to argue that their main aim was to end the tyrannical rule of the Gurkha governors in Garhwal and Kumaon and free the people here from their exploitative iron fist rule thereby legitimizing the Company's incursions into this region. However, this paper will show that the reason for the company to enter into this region were far more complex and demonstrate that the perception of the Gurkha rule as evil and tyrannical was far from the actual reality.

## II

One of the primary causes for the Company's intrusion into the Central Himalayan region was the desire for revenue. However, the Company officials were quick to realize that maximum benefit from the region of Garhwal and Kumaon could only be achieved through systematic governance, and establishment of law and order in the region. Their direct involvement in this region allowed the Company to understand the nitty- gritty of revenue administration here. Equipped with this knowledge, the Company initiated a process of agrarian expansion in the region through extension of cultivation of crops like rice, wheat, barley, buckwheat, and commercial crops such as amaranth, ginger, turmeric (Agarwal and Siva Krishnan, 2000, pp. 30). The early Company officials were aware of the agrarian benefits enjoyed by the region of Kumaon and Garhwal and the early records of the Company show them making a conscious effort to develop an environment for further agrarian growth and prosperity.

In order to maximize the land revenue from the region of Garhwal, the Company undertook an extensive survey across the entire region which was conducted by G.W. Traill, Deputy Commissioner of Kumaon. The aim of the survey was to understand the people and the extent of cultivation in Garhwal. According to the early Company official records, the region of Doon yielded a revenue of over a lakh per annum under the Parmars. Under the Gurkhas this had fallen down to an amount of less than Rs. 50,000.<sup>5</sup> The Company officials tried various methods to systematize the process of revenue administration with the ultimate aim of extracting maximum revenue. Through their repeated attempts to increase the revenue yield from Garhwal, the Company officials realized that government

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<sup>5</sup> James B. Fraser, *An Account of a Journey to the Source of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers XIII* (Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 1810), 466.

incentives in the form of tax remissions, support for extension of agriculture into uncultivated areas could play a pivotal role in maximizing the produce from soil.<sup>6</sup> In one of the early letters written by Captain H.Y. Hearsay to the Governor General at Fort Williams, this sentiment is reiterated when the former mentions that during the Gurkha rule, the revenue from the entire region of Garhwal was around 3 Lakhs of Rupees in grain and coin which, he argued could be extended up to 6 lakhs of rupees per annum if managed leniently.<sup>7</sup>

The Company was also aware of the various other resources that were found in abundance in the Central Himalayan region which they were looking for an opportunity to tap into. Deciduous trees like *Deodhar* and pine grew in abundance in the forests of Garhwal and Kumaon. Entry into this region meant that the Company now had access to fine quality timber. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the exploitation of the region's vast stands of deodar and pine was confined to the smelting fuel needs of the mining industry in copper and iron. The expansion of Indian railways and its voracious demand for fuel and sleepers caused a rapid depletion of lowland hardwood forests across India. In such a situation, the entire region from Garhwal and Kumaon to Kashmir became a crucial source of timber for railway and other commercial needs. The Government awarded harvesting rights to contractors who used local labor for the felling and dressing of timber to meet the requirements of the British Government (English, 1985, pp. 61-79). The clearing of thick forests also paved the way for the establishment of tea plantations while also providing fuel for activities associated with tea production (Rawat, 1995, pp. 311-22)

While timber was one of the most important commodities obtained from the forested regions of Kumaon and Garhwal, the Company was mindful of the economic importance of the other forest products in this region as well. Consequently, it is not surprising to find evidences in the early Company records of duty levied on individuals who sold forest products like bees-wax and honey in nearby local markets.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> During the early period of the Company's rule in Garhwal, *padhans* and *thokdars* were given tracts of wasteland or forested areas by the government to settle tenants. These grants called *nayabads* were not taxed till the new settlement took place and these *nayabad* settlements played a very important role in increasing agrarian production.

<sup>7</sup> Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adams, Secretary to the Government, 24 August 1814 cited in cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 4. Also see Letter from W.L. Gardner to Colonel Nicholls Commander in Kumaon, Camp Jamar Prnc., May 14<sup>th</sup> 1815 cited in cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 97. Where W.L. Gardner points out that total loss in revenue of the Gurkha Raja after the Peace Treaty with the English government is estimated to be 8 lakh out of which 2 lakh alone has been estimated as loss of revenue from Garhwal.

<sup>8</sup> H Newnham, Secretary Board of Commissioner Furruckhabad to Mr. Moore Esq, Collector of Sehrunpore, Pre-Mutiny Record, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1819, List no. 1 Volume 1, DSA, 83-84. Further in a letter by the same person dated: 31st October 1819, The Secretary had specified the duty to be levied which should not hamper the trade and should encourage new region within the Doon valley to be cleared for expansion of agriculture. Also see M Moore, Collector of Sehrunpore to Henry Newnham Esq., Secretary of the Board of Commissioner Furruckhabad, Pre-Mutiny Records, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1818, List no.1 Volume 3, DSA, 18-20. From

The other important object from this Central Himalayan region which was exported in large quantities by the Company was opium and hemp. In the region of *Jaunsar Bhawar* opium and hemp were grown by the people in the villages. These were then sent to Doon where it was exchanged for grains. The importance of a commodity like hemp is evident from Captain Hearsay's letter to John Adams where he mentioned that the huge quantities of hemp found in this region would be sufficient for all the navy of England (Saksena, 1956, pp. 1-9) The Company wanted to control the trade in opium and hemp and hence asked its officials to record the average quantity produced in the province and the rate at which it was sold per *maund*.<sup>9</sup> To effectively collect opium from the cultivators, the Company appointed two officials who would also assess the quality and rate of the produce.<sup>10</sup> Gradually, the Company decided to monopolize their control over the opium trade. For this purpose, they decreed that the cultivators could only sell opium to the Company and no one else. Furthermore, a special board was formed by the Company to deal with commodities like salt and opium. This board forbid anybody to trade in opium or salt unless registered with the Board. Strict punishments were given to people who attempted to trade in these two goods without permission from the government.<sup>11</sup> The Company's control over the opium trade is evident in one of the letters to the Sudder Board of Revenue Allahabad in which the Commissioner of 1<sup>st</sup> division stated that if ever any division of another district required opium, it would be forwarded from Dehradun.<sup>12</sup>

Along with these products, the Company officials were also very impressed by the quality of paper found in the hills of Kumaon and Garhwal. The paper found in the hills was of a superior strength and would not break or crack however much it may be bent or folded. Also, it was resilient to moisture. Prior to the coming of the Company, the paper was used across the region for writing genealogical records or other such accounts. The paper was made from the bark of an oak tree peculiar to the region and through Company's intervention the paper was available at a price 25 percent cheaper than what it used to be.<sup>13</sup> The discussion so far has shown the

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106 mouza in Doon valley, an annual yield of Rs 5000 from forest products is mentioned. Moore argues that people have resorted to abandoning agriculture and showed an inclination to work in forests to escape duties and taxes. Therefore, he argues that a duty on selling of forest goods would be a welcome move.

<sup>9</sup> J. R. Hutchinson, Commissioner of Revenue Meerut Division to Lieut. Colonel Young, Political Agent Dehradun, Pre-Mutiny Record, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1834, List 1 Volume 81, DSA, 113-114. In his reply dated: 26<sup>th</sup> August 1834, Lieut. Colonel Young wrote that in the province of Doon opium is sold at a rate of Rs 160 per maund or Rs 4 per seer. 129-130.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to J. R. Hutchison Esq, Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Meerut, Pre-Mutiny Record, List no. 1 Volume 81, DSA, 200-202.

<sup>11</sup> Commissioner Office 1<sup>st</sup> Division to Lieut. Col Young, Political Agent for Dehra Doon, Pre-Mutiny Record, 26<sup>th</sup> Dec 1833, List no. 1 Volume 7, DSA, 365. The example given is of salt but even for opium this kind of vigilance was seen by the British government all across the subcontinent.

<sup>12</sup> H.S. Boulderson, Commissioner Office 1<sup>st</sup> Division to Sudder Board of Revenue, Allahabad, Pre-Mutiny Record, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1837, List no. 1 Volume. 81, DSA, 238-239

<sup>13</sup> M.R. Murray Lt 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of Native Infantry to Capt. Brownrigg, Secretary of Military Board, Almora, Military Proceedings, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1816 and 21<sup>st</sup> December 1816, Letter no.122 and 123, NIA.

diverse and varied economic resources that were present in the Garhwal-Kumaon region of the Central Himalayan belt. The current discussion also makes it clear that it was with a view to exploit these vast agrarian and forest resources that the Company entered into the region in question.

### III

One of the most important factors that drew the Company into the Kumaon-Garhwal region was their desire to control the trans-Himalayan trade. Scholars have shown that the region of Kumaon-Garhwal had extensive trading links with Tibet from the pre-colonial period (Joshi and Brown, 1987, pp. 303-317) Historically, a mercantile community referred to by the Company officials as '*bhotiyas*' were actively involved in this region's trans- Himalayan trade. They exchanged sugar, grains and manufactured wool from the Lesser Himalayas for salt, wool, animals and borax from the Tibetan plateau. Large herds of sheep, goats and yak were used as pack animals to traverse the hilly mountainous routes. When the Company controlled these regions post the treaty with the Gurkhas, their main aim was to exert strategic control over this lucrative trade. John Pemble has written that the annexation of Garhwal was contemplated "not much with a view to revenue as for the security of commercial communication with the country where shawl wool is produced" (Pemble, 1971, p. 85). The Company's desire to secure the Tibetan trade was primarily fueled by the needs for markets for their manufactured items. In this regard, the Tibetan kingdom was an untapped market for the Company to try and capture.

It must be kept in mind that Tibet had direct commercial linkages with China. A large number of Chinese products found their way into the Tibetan markets from where they were re-exported through the trans-Himalayan trading routes. The Company also wanted to control this Tibetan trade in the hopes of getting access to China and their markets as well. As early as under Warren Hastings an emissary was sent in the form of George Bogle to Tibet to negotiate commercial relations between the two countries (Chansoria, 2008, pp.1-8). Though Bogle was received warmly by the *Lama* in Tibet, who even spoke to the Chinese emperor regarding establishing trade relations with the Company, the *Lama's* untimely death ended the Company's hopes of securing a commercial deal with Tibet. Hence, following the treaty with the Gurkhas, it was through the agency of the *Bhotiya* traders that the Company wanted to secure its control over the Tibetan trade and get an entry into the Tibetan lands. Influential *Bhotiya* traders with links to the Tibetan plateaus were identified as political ambassadors who would serve as bridge between the Company and the Tibetan authorities and help the Company gain an entry into the Tibetan lands (Bergmann et al, 2011, pp. 104-129).

Since the *Bhotiyas* played a crucial role in the Company's plans, it was important to gain the loyalty of these elements so that they could help in furthering the Company's interests in Tibet. The Company's overall attitude towards the *Bhotiyas*

became evident when the *Dogras* invaded Western Tibet in 1841. This conflict severely affected the trans-Himalayan trade with several Tibetan marts which the *Bhotiyas* visited shutting down. To provide some relief to the *Bhotiyas* and in the hopes of securing their loyalty, Lushington, the then commissioner of Kumaon exempted the *Bhotiyas* from paying any revenue (Bergmann, 2016, pp. 88-98). The tax concessions were aimed at winning the support of the *Bhotiyas* and it was hoped that they would spread the message of the benefits of the Company rule to Tibetan authorities. The important role of the *Bhotiyas* to the Company's strategic program becomes clear when one notices that a traditional custom of Tibetan authorities collecting land tax from *Bhotiya* merchants residing within British territories continued till the 1890s. Though this was an infringement of Company's sovereignty, Lushington rejected any advice to change status-quo<sup>14</sup>.

The Company efforts seem to be bearing fruit when the major exports from Kumaon to Tibet starts to comprise broadcloths, cotton-cloths, chintz, matchlock, dyes, sugar, brass-pots, beads to name a few. These were all products of the ever-expanding British industrial economy in India which gradually found their way onto Tibetan markets (Traill, 1928, pp. 98-99). The second half of the nineteenth century also saw an increase in the wool trade through the high valleys of Kumaon which increased from 800 kgs in 1841 to 3,30,000 kgs in 1901 (Roy, 2003, pp. 271-272). The industrialized wool mills in market towns along the foothills fueled a growth in demand. Thus, the trans-Himalayan trade and the need to establish commercial relations with Tibet and possibly China remained an integral factor for the entry of the Company into the Central Himalayan region.

#### IV

The Company servants who were residing in the Indian subcontinent from 1700-1800 always lamented about the overcrowded cities of the Gangetic plains and the tropical climate that was unlike what they were habituated to in the European metropolis (Pradhan, 2017, p. 6).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the foundation of hill station has been seen as an attempt of the English government to create spaces within the newly acquired territory that could act as retreats for the new settlers. These hill spaces were both secluded and had similar climatic conditions that the Europeans were accustomed to. In addition, various scholars while attempting to understand the discourse regarding the foundation and popularity of the hill stations in the Indian subcontinent have argued that, for the Europeans the hills served as transitional space to reduce their sense of 'aloneness' and displacement from home while familiarizing them into their new surroundings. While explaining the climate of

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<sup>14</sup> G.T. Lushington to R.N.C. Hamilton, Kumaon Division Political Letters Issued, 14 September 1842, Volume 50, SAUPF.

<sup>15</sup> In the book Pradhan has quoted Lady Eden's account about the excruciating heat in the plains of United Province and after returning to the Hills she can breathe again in the fresh and cool air. Also read D.M. Grey, Assistant Surgeon to Capt Young, Deyrah, Pre-Mutiny Records, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1829, List no.1 Volume 5, DSA, 47.



Dehradun in his memoir, G.R.C. Williams commented that during the sultry season of May and June, the cool breeze from the *Shiwalik* hills, after an occasional shower feels soothing to the Europeans and they dispense their *punkha* at night (Williams, 2010, p. 15). This was one of the reasons that the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal and Himachal were forever preferred as a retreat by the Europeans over the plains which were humid and hot. The presence of a retreat in the hills made it possible for the Europeans to bear the tropical climate. The hill stations like Mussourie, Darjeeling, Shimla and Ootacamund were favorite destinations for the Company during the summers and also emerged as important seat of imperial power under the British Government.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that practically all the travelers and Company officials have drawn comparisons between England and the region of Garhwal and Kumaon. In the early colonial writings, the climate, trees and the scenery of the region has been described with nostalgia reminding them of leaving their 'home'.<sup>17</sup> This was a process through which the colonizers were trying to appropriate the Indian landscape and thereby blur out the differences between the newly acquired land and the home left behind. This rooted the early colonist within the Indian subcontinent while creating 'non-hostile' spaces within the oriental. The attempts made by the early Company officials to trace similarities between the flora and fauna of Garhwal and Kumaon with those of Europe is a clear instance of the mechanism of appropriation at play. Therefore, one is not surprised to find Captain Hearsay arguing, the climate of northern and north eastern *parganah* of Garhwal were perfect for growing European species of fruits in wild state.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Raper's narrative which finds similarities between fruits found in wild state in the region of Garhwal with those in Europe also echo's a similar trope<sup>19</sup>

On hindsight, for Europeans, the hills were considered as natural sanatoriums and for this reason Indian hills became home to summer resorts and medical sanatoriums. Therefore, all new settlers would be sent to these hill stations after completing their long and torturous journey from the metropolis in order to bring back their health and acclimatize them to these new lands. Furthermore, for the reasons of health and hygiene the colonizers preferred the pure and tranquil climate

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<sup>16</sup> Shimla was made the summer capital of the British India in 1864. Darjeeling was the economical capital of Bengal presidency and Lord Ellenborough made Ootacamund as the summer capital of Madras Presidency. Annual Migration of Local Government to the Hill Stations, in Home Department (Public), Part A, National Archive of India, 163-209.

<sup>17</sup> James B. Fraser. (1810). *An Account of a Journey to the Source of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers XIII*. Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 199, 201, 205-6 and 215. James Fraser while visiting source Jumna described a place called *Cursali* and compared its jungle to the Scottish wood with similar Birch trees as found in the Europe. Similarly, he has pointed out that the flowers and berries found in the region of Garhwal though of wild variety but are of the same family as found in European gardens.

<sup>18</sup> Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adams, Secretary to the Government, 24<sup>th</sup> Aug 1814 cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Captain R.V. Raper. (1807). *The Narrative of a Survey to the Purpose of Discovering the Source of Ganges XI*. Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 468, 515 and 543.

of hills over the plains which were infested with mosquitoes and insects. The new European settlers unaccustomed to the tropical climate of the Indian subcontinent, were prone to dysentery due to loss of water from their bodies. The European medical practitioners often suggested the Company officials in North India to send such settlers to cantonments in Dehradun and Landour, where the weather was much pleasant<sup>20</sup>. Also, Rai Pati Ram Bahadur in his book quoted a pamphlet by E.H. Hankin titled *The Cause and prevention of Cholera* which was published in *Indian Medical Gazetteer No. XII of 1900*. Hankin argues, “Since I originally wrote this pamphlet, I have discovered that the water of Ganges and Jumna is hostile to the growth of the Cholera microbe, not only owing to the absence of food materials but also owing to the actual presence of an antiseptic that has the power of destroying their microbes” (Bahadur, 1992, p. 27). Thus, these reasons highlight the fondness of the Company for Garhwal and Kumaon in the Northern-province and hence the company was eager to acquire and control these territories in the Central Himalayan region.

## V

The Anglo-Nepal peace treaty not only gave the Company political control over Kumaon and Garhwal, but also gave control over the regions military labor. It is important to understand that the recruits for the English army from the central Himalayan region were crucial in understanding the history of British army in the Indian subcontinent. The Company officials had realized the inefficiency of the soldiers of the Royal Bengal army to capture the hilly region Furthermore, the English had to depend on the local militia and martial practices to effectively control the region and protect its boundaries from any potential threat from the Nepal kingdom. During the decisive Battle of *Khalanga/Nalapani* (31 October- 30 November 1814) in which Major-General Robert Rollo Gillespie, the commander of the Company’s force was shot in the battle field, the Company’s military officials witnessed the bravery and conviction of the Gurkha soldiers who fought with every last drop of their blood for their commander Balbhadra Kunwar. The Gurkha forces were able to resist a month’s long heavy garrisoned breach by the English army, with the water and food supply being completely cut off. Though at the end, the English forces were able to breach the fort of *Khalanga/Nalapani*, but Balbhadra Kunwar along with a small band of his soldiers were able to escape in the neighboring hills. After the end of the Anglo-Gurkha war, soldiers of the Gurkha army that were taken as prisoners of war were given an option to join the Company’s army. A substantial portion of them agreed and this led to a new pool of military recruits from the region of Garhwal, Kumaon, Sirmour and Nepal.

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<sup>20</sup> D.M. Grey, Assistant Surgeon to Capt Young, Deyrah, Pre-Mutiny Records, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1829, List no. 1 Volume 5, DSA, 47. Captain Young, D.M. Gray, the assistant surgeon has argued that the Europeans should be settled in an around Dehradun to prevent them from falling sick.

When the Gurkha Rajas were in power in Kumaon and Garhwal they had taken several local men from the region as military slaves, who were trained in Gurkha military practice. Hearsay has argued that the Gurkha army under Amar Singh Thappa had 6000 men out of which only 1800-2000 were actual Gurkha soldiers, rest all were *Garhwali*, *Kumaoni* and *Sirmouri* men.<sup>21</sup> Even the Company recruited many *Paharees* in their army to fight the Gurkha army as these men had better knowledge of the region and of war tactics of *Gurkhalis* that were unknown to the English sepoys. James Fraser has argued that he employed 500 *Paharees* into his battalion and mixed them in every regiment.<sup>22</sup> After the Company conquered Kumaon and Garhwal from the Gurkha Raja, it was the soldiers trained in Gurkhali warfare that helped them in policing the region and also formed an integral part of the English army. These Gurkhali soldiers and local militia, retained their Gurkha military ethics but trained in the European military practices were appointed by the Company into four Gurkha battalions (Alavi, 1995, p. 278). These soldiers while being appointed were informed that they might be required to serve in the region away from their homeland, for which they agreed without any contestation. This became a crucial aspect for the Company that was expanding territorially in the subcontinent and required loyal soldiers who could be transferred to any location for the securing the benefits of EIC. Thus, the Company used the Gurkha soldiers to conquer regions in the hills, other parts of the subcontinent and even in expeditions abroad.<sup>23</sup> Though the army under the Gurkha Rajas followed the popular high caste *Kshatriya* warrior ethics prevalent in Awadh and Benaras (Alavi, 1995, p. 265). Yet the soldiers trained in Gurkha warfare were different from the soldiers of the plains as they consumed certain types of meat (except for cow's meat, even the upper caste people in the region of Garhwal, Kumaon and Nepal are not prohibited to consume meat) and were comfortable to eat food provided by the Company during an expedition. These soldiers, unlike their upper caste Eastern India brothers, did not pressed the Company to provide them with money for carrying food supplies while going for an expedition outside their own homeland. Furthermore, the Gurkha soldiers did not have a problem eating in the common dining mess and living together with other fellow soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

Also, by the early nineteenth century the Bengal native army started showing signs of dissent against the administration of the Company's army. These peasant soldiers

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<sup>21</sup> Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adam, Secretary to The Government, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1814, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Captain Hearsay, Commanding detachment to the Hon'ble Edward Gardner, Agent Governor General for Kumaon, Casseepoor, Camp Bilheree, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1815, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Nicole, Deputy Adjutant General of the Army to Capt. Young, Officiating Secretary to Government Military Department, Fort William, Military proceedings of 1817, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1817, Letter no. 45 Volume 1, NIA. Adjutant General is giving orders to Captain Young to send Hill pioneers to serve in plains following the footsteps of Sirmour Battalion.

<sup>24</sup> Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adam, Secretary to The Government, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1814, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 3.

were high class *Kshatriya* or *Brahmin* recruits and they would keep their distance from the irregular corps (Alavi, 1995, p. 281). The soldiers of the Bengal native army, were demanding the Company to maintain their caste privileges and religious sentiments within the cantonment areas. In addition, these soldiers by 1820's were also resisting any administrative change that could bring the slightest infringement in order to maintain their caste superiority (Alavi, 1993, pp. 168-176). Furthermore, the martial race theory of Richard Orme had made the Company shift its recruiting base to wheat eating belt rather than rice eating belt. Therefore, for Company the soldiers trained in Gurkha military practice became a new option for recruits who were preferred over the high caste peasants' recruits from the Gangetic plains.

For the local *paharee* soldiers trained in Gurkha war tactics the Company's service was more lucrative as it came with the added benefit of pension and regular salary. Also, these soldiers were given lands around the Doon valley to establish invalid *thannas* which helped the Company to keep a check on the soldiers who had retired from their service. These *thannas* further made the Company's service more popular. Thus, after the Gurkha forces withdrew their power from the region of Garhwal and Kumaon, a large pool of highly militarized soldiers was available for recruitment. The Company effectively used these men to train them in the European military practices to create an alternative for the peasant army created by Cornwallis and Hastings.

## VI

To conclude, the paper attempts to oppose the ideology put forward by the early imperialist of saving the Himalayan region from the wrath of the Gurkha iron rod. An attempt has been made to highlight the material reasons were responsible for the Company to divert their resources in fighting with the Gurkha empire and conquering the region. However, even for the Company, their initial interest was concentrated to territorial and economic gains in the form of limited revenue and trade with Tibet. These two remained the immediate reasons for expanding in the region of Garhwal and Kumaon. However, the Company soon came across several other avenues like the timber, paper, forest produce, opium and hemp not exploited by the previous government, which would help them in generating more revenue and also produce resources which could be at disposal in the hands of the government. The *paharee* soldiers trained in Gurkhali military practices also attracted the attention of the Company's officials to widen their scope of military recruits. Further, the hills provided them with a sense of home, peace as well as a sanatorium for rejuvenating their bodies and minds. For the European children born in India, the idea of what England was could be explained through the Indian hills. This was one of the reasons why early schools for the European children born in India were concentrated in places like Mussourie, Nanital, Shimla, Darjeeling and

Dehradun.<sup>25</sup> As early as the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, European travelers were undertaking travel expeditions to the sources of Ganga and Yamuna. While undertaking these expeditions, these travelers were writing copious details of their thrilling and dangerous journey to the mighty Himalayan Mountain range. These early expeditions enticed an interest amongst first the English and then the Europeans to explore the uncharted Himalayan terrain. In the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the mighty Himalayas became an attractive destination for mountaineers and adventurers to conquer the most dangerous peaks of the world. Several mountaineering schools have been established in the Himalayan regions of India and till today the western world is fascinated by the might of the Himalayas.

In the end, it is important to understand that the Company's inroad into the region led to phenomenal changes in the political-cultural and economic structure of the region. The first major change was the division of the territory and Company's conquest of a substantial part of the Garhwal-Kumaon region. In 1815, after the signing of the treaty of Sugauli with the Gurkha raja, a separate treaty was signed by J.B. Fraser (in accordance with the Company) with Sudarshan Shah, the exiled Parmar Raja of Garhwal. Sudarshan Shah was given *parganahs* lying west of Alaknanda and Mandakini as far as Rudrapur. A new capital city was founded by the Raja called Tehri on the bank of river Bhagirathi. The Company divided the rest of the conquered region of Garhwal into two parts. The region of Dehradun along with *Jaunsar Bhawar* came under district Saharanpur, while the parts lying east of Alaknanda were added to Kumaon district under the administrative control of Commissioner of Kumaon, Mr. Edward Gardner with Almora as the headquarter for effective control over the new region. The newly conquered region of Kumaon Garhwal was administered as a non-Regulation province till 1835. Due to the remoteness and relative backwardness of the region and shortage of experienced civil servants in administering a vastly expanded territorial area, the administrative heads of the region were given flexibility in terms of introduction of English administrative mechanisms. Thus, the introduction of the institutions like *tehsils*, *thannas*, *sudder* office and revenue settlement in the region was initially carried out by Edward Gardner, but after 1816 G.W. Traill, who was appointed as the Commissioner of Kumaon-Garhwal, fine-tuned the administrative system in the region which would be followed by his predecessors for the next couple of decades. G.W. Traill devised the most extensive revenue settlement in the region. This settlement was unique because it addressed the regional specificity of agrarian and non-agrarian practices that were prevalent at time. In fact, Traill studied the society and economy of the region extensively before introducing the first British revenue settlement system (Tolia, 2009, p. 22).

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<sup>25</sup> The earliest schools for European children in Mussoorie are Woodstock School, Wynberg Allen and St. George's College; in Nainital Sherwood School and St. Joseph's; in Shimla Bishop Cotton and Loreto Convent; in Darjeeling St. Paul's, St. Joseph's and Loreto Convent; in Dehradun The Doon School.

Furthermore, colonial rule also introduced changes in the relationship of the people with the political administration and the natural resources of the region. Earlier, the power to mediate in any judicial matter was with the *sayana* (village headmen), *thokdar* (land grantee) and the king. The British established new courts and tehsils who now looked into the judicial matters of the region. Similarly for the policing of the region new *thanas* were setup to ensure maintenance of law and order. Even for the revenue administration the traditional revenue office of *duftree* (hereditary revenue assessors) was replaced by the more efficient *kanungos* and *hill patwaris* (Tolia, 2009, p. 11). In addition, the colonial government also included forest within the purview of the colonial state. This policy restricted the people from using forest resources without remunerating the colonial government (Bisht, 2021, pp. 268-69). Furthermore, forest preservation policies restricted certain forested areas of the region as prohibited from ‘human exploitation’ thereby making it difficult for groups who were dependent on forests to meet their subsistence requirements. They could no longer freely extract firewood and other forest-goods from these ‘protected areas’. The impact of the forest policies continues to haunt the people of the region (which was given an independent state status in 2001) by dismantling their symbiotic relationship with the forest through state intervention continuing even in post-independence times.

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