CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to explore and identify the intricacies of the different facets of colonial encounter in the Darjeeling hills and has sought to find out answers to the research questions raised in the Introductory Chapter. While striving to locate transformations of Darjeeling hills under colonialism, the study has shown how the definition and management of boundaries between wildness and civility in Darjeeling hill society situated in the border zone of the Eastern Himalayas, and the relation of ideas of nature to different socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of life are interconnected historical processes that inform environmental history. The primary purpose of the study is to substantiate why Darjeeling hills should be separately dealt with from the conventional historical discourses of colonialism in India. Unquestionably, for Darjeeling, it was colonialism which tied it with British India positing therefore an alternative lens to view Indian history of the peripheral zone under colonial rule.

The study has attempted to verify the hypotheses formulated on the basis of the research questions. Beside presenting Chapter wise conclusions, precisely, the study posits that landscape, as an organic part of environmental history, holds historical significance specifically when landscape of Darjeeling did develop in increasingly complex and materially meaningful ways under the aegis of colonialism. The motive of the British East India Company to occupy Darjeeling tract from the Rajah of Sikkim was not an accident of history, rather such occupation was a calculative move for strategic and political interests, as well as for resource extraction and revenue generation of the British Empire from the colonial periphery.

The colonial motives behind the clearance of forests in Darjeeling were directed by the forces of natural resource extraction and profit

maximization. The colonial scientific forestry in India, as a matter of coincidence, was first initiated in Darjeeling during early sixties of the nineteenth century. By then, Darjeeling forests were started depleting for extension of colonial development activities, valuable timber extractions and expansion of commercial tea plantations. As a corollary, scientific conservation of forests was meshed with imperial agenda of extraction of resources out of forest resources, principally, timbers of high value. However, in materializing the principal objectives of scientific forest policies, both the forest officials and revenue officials in Darjeeling worked hand in hand where the forest officials had to play a subordinate role in relation to revenue administrative officials being the Superintendent at the helm of all affairs of Darjeeling who was bestowed with huge discretionary powers. Even after 1869, when Darjeeling was designated as a District under directly administered British Bengal Province, the District Collector/Magistrate of Darjeeling continued to enjoy extra-administrative prerogatives due to its unique kinds of administrative status in different phases of the colonial period. The impact of colonial forest policy on the indigenous people of Darjeeling had multipronged effects which fundamentally altered the basic nature of society and economy and the modes of natural resource use of Darjeeling hills.

In order to usher in scientific forest conservation in Darjeeling, the colonial forest policy had been pursued with the primary objective for the dispossession of land, the restriction of use and access to resources, the imposition of codified rules ignoring traditional customs, the prohibition of local trade in forest produce for the purpose of basic sustenance by indigenous populations, imposition of levies and taxes, prohibitory rules for grazing and cattle raising, and prohibition of shifting cultivation. In view of the absence of any legally documented proprietary hold of the native population over forested lands of the Darjeeling tract, the British established unquestionable proprietary hold and supremacy over such forested tract. Thus for colonialists,

lands became nature's prizes. It has been initially shown in our study that in the name of forest conservation or scientific forestry, the forest working plans were drawn to enable the selective manipulation of certain plants to regenerate only monoculture of commercially valuable species.

It has been established in our study that the imperatives of colonial forestry in the Darjeeling hills were essentially commercial. Broader social and environmental considerations were subjugated by the commercial and strategic utility of the colonizers. However, such a conclusion from the point of view of academic objectivity is incapable of providing the other side of the picture. Despite their imperial utilitarian ethos, the British Indian forest administrators had equal concern for long term environmental effects of deforestation caused by illegal and indiscriminate logging by the local contractors and mafias and shifting cultivation practiced by indigenous population. This concern of the British foresters and officials would prompt us to a different conclusion that environmentalism and British imperialism have a shared past. Both the British Acts were enacted and Rules were framed with the environmental concern along with the expansion of state apparatus in Darjeeling hills. In this way colonial foresters and administrators mothered environmentalism by the system of evolving techniques of governability.

The study has further revealed the fact that in many of the occasions, the colonial conservation policies were continuously undermined by their conflicting priorities. Thus, the strict policy of forest conservation armed with Acts and Rules could not be followed because of unique local situations, paucity of labour and various indigenous everyday forms of resistance. In effect, both the colonial foresters and the people in and around forests tended to follow an accommodative middle path of mutually shared interests of ecological ideology. Amidst such circumstances, both the native and settled natural population of Darjeeling hills started acknowledging the

preeminence of colonial conception of state owned natural resources and colonially defined private holdings.

Most importantly, the study unravels the basic fact that Darjeeling, as a hill station, a military garrison, a sanatorium, a tea zone, a tourist destination, an area of valuable forest produce, was out and out a colonial construction. It witnessed simultaneous colonial state making and institution building processes and governance consolidation throughout the period of the colonial rule. Darjeeling forested territory did not form part of the pre-colonial India. The British East India Company did not only bring Darjeeling under British Indian fold, but also had made required Indian mainstreaming of Darjeeling through various parameters of governability. Ordering of lands by a set of rules and procedures, land grants and settlement rules, administrative codes and procedures, forest rules are some of the examples of such colonial governance having pan Indian colonial features. Thus, shaping and making of Darjeeling was an uncontested colonial politico-economic project directly linked with grand imperial political economy ethos of British utilitarian philosophy.

This study has attempted to project the colonial encounter in the Darjeeling hills being a regional sub-space which was never a part of the historical accounts of colonial India till the occupation of the Darjeeling tract by the East India Company in the mid-thirties of the nineteenth century. The present study has discerned the different politico-administrative processes by which Darjeeling hills had been integrated into the larger colonial political economy of British India. Such integration had been momentous event of history for this peripherally situated border zone, so to say, an anomalous zone, remained outside the civilization centers of India. The transmigration within inner Himalayas, (taking Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet) through Darjeeling tract, till the beginning of the nineteenth century was a spontaneous course of historical event. It was taken place not only because of inner Himalayan trading or economic reasons, but also of

climatic and physiographic affinity of this part of Himalayas. As a corollary of such climatic affinity cultural accommodation and assimilation could have been possible. However, with the advent of the British, such inner Himalayan migration was questioned by the political boundary issues. Notwithstanding the all pervasive colonial encounters and corresponding role of the migrated population from the plains, the critical role of the natural Himalayan population in shaping and making Darjeeling had remained always a decisive factor in the history of this hilly region.

So far as this study is concerned, what are ostensibly material transformations have been viewed against the backdrop of concomitant changes in patterns of the utilization of natural resources of the Darjeeling hills. Here the significance of the colonial intervention lies in the unique modes of natural resource extraction made possible by the political dominance of the Raj and such tools or technologies previously unknown to the people of this peripheral Himalayan zone. Unfortunately, however, the transformations that came in the wake of colonial rule could not touch upon the principal area of concern of essential interdependence or required reconciliation of the ecological changes and transformation. On the contrary, while asserting formal rights of ownership over various forms of natural resources, the colonial government brought to bear on their management a highly developed legal and administrative infrastructure.

The massive expansion of commercial tea plantations and urbanization had greatly impinged on the lives of indigenous people and migrant labour force settled permanently in Darjeeling. Colonial capital investment in tea plantation had fundamentally altered the edifice of the subsistence based traditional pre-colonial economy of Darjeeling. Such interventions had certainly disturbed, destroyed and reconstructed both the natural landscape and matterscape of Darjeeling tract as existed in pre-colonial situation, but such pre-colonial situation, for Darjeeling, has not been revealed by our study as

"golden age of equilibrium" which was destroyed by the colonizers. Our study runs counter to the established arguments treating the environment as either static or the existence of pre-colonial natural harmony which experienced dramatic rupture under colonial interventions. Our study establishes the fact that under the aegis of colonialism, the witnessed ecological transformations had been one of negotiated nature of colonial encounter. However, for Darjeeling, the local contestation was very much bleak in nature. Hence, a complex picture of environmental impacts emerged rather than a one way narrative about exploitation, extraction by the colonizer. However, the massive impact of colonial environmental encounter on Darjeeling hills has left a permanent mark in the process of production of material transformation.

The designed interrelated hypotheses of this study have been intrinsically tested in the respective relevant Chapters. While tested academically, most of the hypotheses have been stood valid and a few of them have been modified while making chapter wise presentation. It has been amply approved by this study that colonization had a vital and decisive role to play in the material transformations of the landscape of Darjeeling hills. For Darjeeling, colonial equilibrium between natural and social systems remained harder to sustain due to intricacies of evolving dialectical relationships. Agrarian changes in Darjeeling hills within the framework of colonial state making and corresponding ecological consequences and environmental implications had been instrumental for the radical dispossession of the indigenous people. The establishment of unquestionable colonial proprietary hold over land of Darjeeling had augmented the unfettered process of colonial state making and institution building in this hill tract. The commercial and utilitarian purposes of British expansion produced a situation in which Darjeeling tract was increasingly used and utilized. As colonial expansion proceeded, the environmental experiences of colonizers and colonized living at the colonial periphery had started

playing steadily more dominant and dynamic part in the construction of new European evaluations of Nature. The differences between the hills and plains were implanted and indoctrinated through the system of colonial governability that distinguished Darjeeling landscape as a unique 'other'.

The thrust of the English East India Company on Darjeeling was motivated by several factors principally emanated from the geo-political importance of Darjeeling as being a part of Sikkim with which the British political and commercial compulsions were closely associated throughout the 19th century as the buffer northern border of India against China and Tibet. Sikkim was of special interest to the English rulers because of its strategic position. The apparent amicable relationship between British India and Nepal, after consecutive wars followed by treaties, gradually became a subservient one which provided another major factor for the British thrust towards Darjeeling hill tract. The British compulsion in the post-Sepoy Revolt period was to recruit "loyal" Nepali soldiers who were not affected by the incipient nationalist feelings as was distinctly found among the Indian sepoys during the Revolt of 1857.Darjeeling became the principal station of recruitment. Thus, while Nepal remained independent of British India, its subjects constituted an army which played a crucial role in both the political consolidation of the Indian sub-continent and the development of the British colonial economy. Thus by keeping Nepal outside of direct colonial rule and at the same time by using subjects of Nepal as soldiers for colonial expansion and political consolidation provided for a unique feature of colonial encounter hardly observable in any other part of colonial India.

Another factor which drove the British rulers towards Darjeeling was the rapid growth of tea industry in Darjeeling hills and adjoining plains. Commercial tea cultivation at a larger scale began in the Darjeeling from 1856 onwards and the industry flourished rapidly which attracted the British planters in considerable number. Along

with tea plantation, the prospects of forest products for commercial utilization and cinchona plantation had also attracted the attention of the British. Another important factor which had initially encouraged the English East India Company to move towards Darjeeling was the possibility of setting up a sanatorium and health resort for the British officials and businessmen in the cool climate of Darjeeling hills.

Thus, while viewing Darjeeling under colonial occupation, the present study agrees with the arguments of Richard English when he observes, *"the character of British interests in the Himalaya reflects two distinct phases in the development of the colonial economy in India: the first being the period of mercantile exploitation under the Company, and the second being the expansion of commercial agricultural investment under the civil administration of the Raj".* It has been revealed in our study that from the initial days of Company Raj, the British were interested in trade between Tibet and British possessions in Bengal. The rise of Gorkha rulers in Nepal was seen by the British as a threat both to their own trans-montane commercial prospects and to their zamindari holdings bordering Nepal plains. Despite initial failures, in 1815, the British defeated Nepal and restored the lands east of Nepal's Mechi River to Sikkim and could establish a direct route to Lhasa from Calcutta to realize their mercantile trade activities.

The second phase of commercial expansion of the Raj was to integrate Indian colonial economy with the world economy. During this phase, Darjeeling was brought under commercial plantation such as tea. Darjeeling was given priority because of its proximity to Calcutta and other ports of on the Bay of Bengal.

The British notion of Nature as indoctrinated in the mindscape of the colonial officials, since the beginning of colonial rule in Darjeeling was fundamentally different from the notion of Nature of the indigenous people who in fact lived in and lived with Nature. Nature to them was a strong cultural space and loosely defined political territory. The

ecologically distinct attitude manifested the inter-communities ties with the natural world. The animist religious practices celebrated nature and natural objects. Unlike Europeans, forest to the indigenous people was their natural abode and means of subsistence and was certainly not a source of profit extraction. Colonial interventions brought about decisive changes in the ecology and society of the native hill population of the Darjeeling tract.

It has been shown in the study that the debate on the issue of ownership/entitlement of forests in India was emerged only after the establishment of the Department of Forest in the early sixties of the nineteenth century. Such a debate has been well analyzed by the scholars in three broad categories, the first of which they call "annexationist" implying absolute state control over forests. The second one is the "pragmatic" favouring arguably state management of ecologically sensitive and strategically valuable forests keeping apart the areas to remain under communal system of management. The third category as they termed "populist" refers to rejection of state intervention, holding that tribal and peasants must exercise sovereign rights over the woodlands. However, this study has established the fact that none of these categories can be well founded when applied to colonial Darjeeling for the purpose of explanation.

It has been exposed in our study that the colonial government brought out a comprehensive forest policy that clearly spelt out the colonial interest over that of interests of the commons. Here, the colonial forest policy was perceived and chalked out with three dimensional mandates to organize sustained-yield timber production for the long future; to preserve the forest cover of remote and unstable watersheds; to ensure that the people living in forests have adequate supplies of wood and fodder for their subsistence needs. In reality, however, policy pursued by the colonial government was mostly centered round the first mandate and the second mandate was pursued to fulfill the first one, whereas, the declared third mandate was never

pursued in reality as it directly confronted with the colonial notion of ownership over forests and extraction of forest resources to the maximum extent possible.

Thus, our study has approved the fact that the imperatives of colonial forestry in Darjeeling hills were essentially commercial. Broader social and environmental considerations were subjugated by the commercial and strategic utility of the British. However, such observation would reveal half-truth from the perspective of academic objectivity. The colonial forest administrators had deep concern too for long-term environmental effects of deforestations caused by illegal and indiscriminate logging and timber fallings. The regeneration of plants, silviculture, and monoculture of valuable timbers through various working plans, and different measures of forest protection are some of the references of the colonial foresters operating in Darjeeling forests. It is therefore argued that environmentalism and colonialism have a shared past. However, the British Acts and Forest Rules were enacted and framed with the environmental concern along with the expansion of imperial powers. In this way, colonialism in the Darjeeling hills mothered environmentalism by the evolving system of governability.

From all the colonial legislations, it was clear that commercial interests were the primary consideration in declaring forests reserved and Darjeeling forests were of no exception. When the entire Darjeeling forested tract was occupied by the East India Company through a Deed of Grant from the Raja of Sikkim in 1835, there had been no personal proprietary hold over the forested land. Darjeeling tract was not either predefined as Zamindari Khas (self-cultivated holdings) or did remain under Raiyati (occupancy of the cultivating tenants). Unlike plains of South Bengal, there had been the absence of Jungle Zamindars in Darjeeling. This was the principal reason why Colonial scientific forestry under the Indian Forest Act, 1865, was first adopted in Darjeeling hills.

Agrarian changes and concomitant state making, material and ecological transformation that took place in Darjeeling under colonial control could only have been achieved due to the total possession of British over the whole tract of Darjeeling. It has been shown in our study that the codified colonial holding over forests in Darjeeling and application of colonial forestry along with its 'scientific' management has had congealed effects and consequences at different historical conjectures. Thus, there is no doubt that the environmental history of Darjeeling Hills is essentially linked with forest and is intrinsically tied up with the history of colonialism. In Darjeeling Hills, the scientific and technical discourse on forest has been shaped by the historical legacy of colonial knowledge building on forest; the forest development discourses had been continuously under production in specific political-ecological settings resulted in the development efforts of the British Government in shaping forests and making Darjeeling a location of ecological importance.

It has been argued that our study does not share with the argument that pre- colonial relationship between societies and their environment as a golden age of 'equilibrium' which colonial conquest disturbed and destroyed. Two principal points have come to the light: (i) In Darjeeling Hills, the scientific and technical discourse on forest has been shaped by the historical legacy of colonial knowledge building on forest; (ii) The forest development discourses had been continuously under production in such specific political-ecological settings. It has been revealed in our study that the imperatives of colonial forestry in Darjeeling were essentially commercial and was largely profit motive oriented. Its operations were dictated more by the commercial and strategic utility of different valuable species than by broader social and local environmental considerations. Thus, such strategy ran counter the main objectives of forest policy, envisioned in 1894, *"to promote the general well-being of the country, to preserve climatic and physical conditions of the country and to fulfill the needs of the people."*

The most serious consequence of colonial forestry was the diminution of customary rights as well as the decline in traditional conservation and management systems. The curtailment of communitarian ownership of forests of Darjeeling by the colonial state had severely undermined the subsistence economy of the indigenous Lepchas. Collection of Bamboos, Wax and Lac from the Darjeeling forest was prohibited by issuance of licenses. Like all other British Indian forests, Jhuming or shifting cultivation was discouraged without providing appropriate alternative livelihood or land to the Lepchas for settled agriculture. As a consequence, there had been displacement of Lepchas from their natural forest habitats. Restrictions on collection of forest produce, imposition of prohibitionary norms on grazing and gradual dwindling of grazing grounds of different seasons affected badly the indigenous people of Darjeeling hills. Moreover, the British forest policy or in the colonial Acts, had not ensured the rights of the indigenous population. Ultimately, the native Lepchas had to leave Reserved Forest of Darjeeling and they were directed to move south-west part of the District, between the hilly tract and the plains. Again during 1920s, the Lepcha tenants were evacuated and resettled from that part too due to expansion and construction of Kalimpong as an urban area. Deforestation of 999 acres of forest land in Lolegaon Reserved Forest was proposed and, sanction of such deforestation was granted by the colonial government. As a consequence the Lepchas became refugees in their own land.

The official correspondences of East India Company and thereafter those of the British India Government as the principal source of historiography of colonial Darjeeling would have us take it that it was not forests of Darjeeling Hills which attracted the preliminary attention of the British. Poor accessibility and high cost of transportation might have discouraged them from commercially exploiting the forest timber of the Tract. Therefore, the primary intention was to create a social space in the physical space of Darjeeling equitable to European

environment wherein the company officials would take refuge and would feel at home. The strategic location of Darjeeling as a military space had received adequate attention too. The ceded part of Kalimpong Hills(once owned by Sikkim) from Bhutan at a later years(1865) reapproves the argument that it was not forests but the consideration of strategic location prompted the British to annex the entirely forested hilly part of Kalimpong within the administrative fold of Darjeeling.

It has been explored that the development of Darjeeling hills as a region of tea plantation had acquired its credential since the beginning of the mid-nineteenth century. It was only with the abolition of the East India Company's trading monopoly of tea with China in 1833 that a quest for tea in British India acquired urgency. The imperial objective for tea was to grow it in territories under British control rather than importing tea from China on a competitive scale. The British Scientists and Botanists under the leadership of Nathaniel Wallich had noticed that the tea plant succeeded best on the sides of mountains. During the same period, the coincidence was that including Darjeeling hill tract along with extensive tracts of the Himalayan foot-hills had been brought under Company's direct control as the end results of wars with Burma, Nepal and Sikkim.

Darjeeling's potential and possibilities as a zone of tea cultivation had attracted the immediate attention of the EIC officials who sought to transform the almost uninhabited forested tract of Darjeeling into a tea region with several lasting repercussions on its physical and social landscape. Large tracts of virgin forest and grass lands were cleared by British Planters and cultivated with tea. In establishing and cultivating their estates it is apparent that the planters were initially able to secure labour from the neighbouring Nepal hills. Pertinently, eastern part of Nepal remained predominant among migrant workers on Darjeeling till plantations situated mostly in the middle and upper hills. The terai part of the plantation was dependent upon the labourers from the central Indian tribal population like their counterparts at Dooars

plantations and Assam tea plantations. However, unlike Assam, indenture system of labour was never adopted in Terai tea plantations.

In fact, tea as commercial plantation in Darjeeling since early fifties of the nineteenth century had been a sheer coincidence which was taken place as a part of larger imperial project. Since then tea continued to be the backbone of the economy of Darjeeling hills and Terai area. The expansion of tea industry in Darjeeling had fundamentally altered the nature of political economy of Darjeeling hills and Terai and that too at the cost of forests, ecology and environment in particular. Not only had the material landscape, but also the natural landscape of Darjeeling witnessed a fundamental change due to rapid expansion of commercial tea plantation at the cost of depletion of forests.

For Darjeeling the concern for development and environment appeared as a general phenomenon of imperialism/colonialism at a certain juncture of history. The turning point event was the introduction of new modes of resource use into the colonized Darjeeling hills with the infusion of colonial capitalist investment replacing the subsistence based traditional mode of production. Here a new method of production in the form capitalistic plantation agriculture was introduced by colonial/ foreign capital investment from the middle of the 19th century. Colonial capital infusion in tea plantation created a situation which was projected to believe that protecting nature necessitated that indigenous forests be transformed into the tea gardens which imperial science and commerce required.

It has been further observed in our study that the colonially induced expanding tea plantation lovably called 'imperial cash crop', owned and engineered by the British planters under the patronage of British East India Company gave rise to an insular economy hitherto unknown by the indigenous people lived in so far on tradition based subsistence economy. The substantial quantum of profits accrued from

Darjeeling tea used to be siphoned out to Europe and tea labourers had to be kept satisfied with wages only. Such a situation gave rise to a kind of dependent development economy in Darjeeling. In this context, the study has unfolded that the historical focus should be on the complex set of processes that generated relevant factors, forces and events leading to drainage of capital and environmental concerns of development.

The present study has adequately disclosed the facts that Darjeeling hills had largely been penetrated by the commercial plantation agriculture through colonial capital since the mid of nineteenth century. Till then, the whole part of the present district were least inhabited and a few indigenous people was engaged in shifting cultivation. Indeed, the entire tract of land was covered which forests and wild bushes. A major portion of forested land and bush covered hilly tract of land came to be subsequently interspersed with the plantation agriculture where growth was simply phenomenal in the wake of large capital investment. The unique aroma of Darjeeling tea attracted huge demand worldwide.

In this way, as a part of grand imperial political project, Darjeeling hill was drawn into the world capitalist system. The incorporation was also part of the expanded reproduction so essential to the workings of the capitalist mode of production corroborated with colonial mode of natural resource use. Experiences of early nineteenth century have approved the fact that the British falling of profits in Europe (at home) due to increased foreign competition and faced by many other severe crises, British capitalism had no real alternative to expansion of capital which was therefore forthcoming for investment in tea plantation estates in Darjeeling as well as other plantation belts. This brought along with it a new mode, viz., mode of resource use by way of infusion of capital and capital induced technology and corresponding changes in the relations of productions in this hilly tract. The class structure that came to emerge hence approximated to

those found in the modern industrial sector. At the helm of the hierarchy, there had been a small group a tea gardens' managers (sometimes manager-proprietor), whereas, the unskilled plantation labourers formed the bottom of the hierarchy. In between, there was the class of intermediaries known as babus which comprised the skilled workers, mostly brought from the plains.

For Darjeeling, such class differences were uniquely coupled with ethno-cultural and anthropogenic differences, for example, proprietors were European, managers were either European or Anglo-Indians; the Bengali Babus having skill and expertise represented the intermediary class and the unskilled labourers forming the lowest rung of the class structure were drawn mostly from neighbouring parts of Nepal, some were drawn from Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet having heterogeneous languages and culture, customs and ethnic identities. Such distinct class segregation along ethnic lines was an objective product of colonial plant capitalism. Implanting ethnic cleavages among the plantation labourers to resist class consciousness and regimenting class solidarity among the managers and Babus had been the dual objective of the colonizers to sustain unabated exploitation.

The colonially led processes of development in Darjeeling hills since the mid-nineteenth century had created new occupational differentiations, rural-urban differentiations, cultural and educational differentiations, ultimately culminating to class divisions. On the contrary, the levels of income at the neighbouring rural labour market remained strikingly at a low stage of development. The colonial disinterest in investing capital in conventional agriculture, absence of modern agricultural farming, and absence of effective and organized socio-economic institutions other than tea and road and rail constructions gave rise to the misery of the common people living in rural Darjeeling. Thus the arte fax of colonial nature of development did not match with the natural condition of soil, climate or even population

which resulted far-reaching structural consequences that were brought about by the colonial capitalist investment.

This study has attempted to explore the fact that throughout Darjeeling hills whatever little amount of land left for ordinary cultivation was resettled and new method of settled agriculture was put in place by discarding shifting cultivation. The ownership of cultivable land was also to be resettled in view of the absence of zamindar in this new tract originally clothed with jungle where indigenous Lepchas and few other primordial communities used to live on subsistence agriculture by clearing forests through jhum cultivation. These indigenous communities living in and around forest were also largely disturbed due to the initiation of scientific colonial forestry since the mid of 1860's. The agriculturist indigenous communities had to shift from one area to the other both from the internal pressure of expanding tea plantation, newly identified development areas, expansion of military cantonment, and spread of urbanization and extant rules of protected and reserved forests. The provisions of Land rules not disturbing the indigenous communities were violated time and again both by the revenue officials and foresters.

Under British rule, no effort was made to modernize traditional agriculture and as a result agriculture remained unaltered with its primitive conventional feudal mode which eventually culminated in the rampant practice of infeudation and sub-infeudation of the same piece of land due to inbuilt scarcity of land. This was because of two reasons; (i) growing population and dislocation of handicraft industry; (ii) absence of any alternative source of livelihood. Such a subsistence economy with a unique variety of pre-capitalist relations of productions continued to exist amidst phenomenal growth of plantation enterprise that was modern in character.

While reaching agreement with the theorists of underdevelopment, it is pertinent to observe that the colonial Darjeeling

did experience with a kind of dialectic unity in a dualistic economy purposively indoctrinated by the British by way of investing capitalist farming keeping apart, in isolation, the conventional agricultural sector based on tradition based subsistence economy. To agree with Evans Barbara, this unique dual economy, as created by the colonizers, had divided the economy of Darjeeling into two economic sectors; for example, "*tea plantations were part of the western capitalist export oriented sector which was characterized by its dynamic and progressive nature, and the Asiatic, subsistence, domestic sector said to have possessed social and cultural traits which inhibited its own economic development.*"

It has been adequately approved by the study that the hill station of Darjeeling was a unique form of colonial urbanism. Colonial administrators planned the hill stations in the nineteenth century to create an idyllic social space away from the tropical climate and the cities in the plains. Therefore, the Darjeeling hill station represented topographical, climatic, social and architectural ideals that were radically different from the cities in the plains. Like other colonial hill stations as visualized by occidental imaginations and built under the aegis of colonialism, Darjeeling had shown major shifts in its nature and form from major urban centres of the plains of colonial India. Darjeeling was a part of the colonial mainstream. Its urbanization and inclusion into the greater colonial economy was effected ever since its establishment followed by subsequent material transformations. Therefore, a constant tension between its exotic and its functional elements persisted throughout the colonial period.

The study has extensively substantiated the fact that colonial urbanism had two characteristics. First was the spatial segregation between the native and 'European' residential areas, although the latter were intruded upon by affluent Indians in the late colonial period. The second was its integration within colonial economy. It has been argued in this study that the spatial characteristic of colonial urbanism as

reflected in Darjeeling has to be identified with respect to its link with colonial economy. With the extensive details of colonial Darjeeling, this study argues that this British built town in the Eastern Himalaya was integral to the colonial political economy in which the resources of all sites were subject to capitalistic utilization.

Dane Kennedy has provided us an explanation for the eventual '*despoiling'* of the hill stations in the late colonial period. He has argued that *"their sustenance required legions of subordinates and attracted the aspiring Indian elite, whose presence subverted their pristine quality dislodging the 'private–public distinction' between the cities in the plains and the hill stations in British India."* Our study suggested for a different argument that the change of character that Kennedy has referred to was not anomalistic, rather symptomatic of urbanization of the Darjeeling hills. The expansion and growth of Darjeeling subverted another spatial dichotomy; that was between the idyllic hills and the disease ridden plains in official discourse and public culture. This subversion was not only occasioned by the accommodation of settlers in menial and clerical capacities within the municipal limits of this exclusive hill station. It was intrinsic to Darjeeling as a colonial outpost; its function being not only to serve as a site of medicalized leisure for the British and Indian elite, but also to transform adjacent newly colonized areas into commercial, revenue yielding, settled economic sites. Once this was achieved, thereafter, the integration of its resources into the larger colonial economy sustained the expansion and consolidation of the town. Thus colonial town of Darjeeling has been projected in this study as a part of the continuum of colonial urbanism from the mid of nineteenth century in the context of its colonial urban history.

While delving critically, this study has revealed the fact that under colonial rule, Lepcha subsistence economy had passed through hunting gathering to shifting cultivation stage and finally to settled agriculture in terraces because of constraints of nature and application

of prohibitory rules. Under the changed situation the Lepchas had to give up their primitive form of production technology and to take up advanced technology of cultivation which affiliated them with the more prosperous communities living in the neighbourood. Thus the Lepchas could no longer remain as self-contained as they happened to be in the pre-colonial days. The production of cash crops can be taken as an indication of social change. Thus the self-contained subsistence economy of the Lepchas came in contact with the market economy.

The evolution of the Lepcha subsistence economy has been seen through the evolution of the system of land tenure. Land tenure had been the rules regulating how land was owned and used. It was a combination of land tenancy and land labour management, making allocation of land resources for agricultural purpose a major facet of organization which British imposed in Darjeeling. Moreover, there had been internal dichotomy as there were land owners owning small amount of land while others with large amount of land. In some areas of Darjeeling, conflict of interests existed between the landless Nepalis and land owning Lepchas on one hand and within the Lepcha society between the large land owners and small landowners on the other.

The study has highlighted the uniqueness of the cultural distinctiveness of the hill people of Darjeeling while understanding their cultural transformations. These people lived between two great civilizations, the Nepalese Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism, and aspired to link themselves differently with values other than that of the Varna Jati based Hindu great tradition. The Himalayan regions like Sikkim, Bhutan and the Darjeeling hills have been shown as the ground of cultural contestations, assimilations, compromise and accommodation. Christian Missions and Churches also had a definite role in such cultural transformations. The study has revealed further that at the economic level, the presence of market oriented cash economy and a complex land tenure system along with other peasant features brought them nearer to the peasant pole of the continuum.

For the Lepchas, the transformation from tribe to peasantry, outside the Hindu society, had taken place without caste being a referent group. For the immigrated Nepalis, such transformation represented a process of depeasantization to repeasantization and simultaneously for the chunk of immigrated Nepalis, to proletarization as wage earners labours in the enclaved and insular tea plantation industry.

As a matter of fact, the study has established that the peoples of Darjeeling hills amidst colonial encounters were placed in different economic and ecological situations. The socio-economic changes and adaptations that had taken place among them during colonial rule had been enormous and far reaching. Fundamental changes had taken place in the subsistence sphere of their life. Within a span of a little more than one hundred years of colonial rule, the indigenous people had to transform their subsistence economy from hunting – food – gathering- shifting cultivation to settled plough cultivation.

It has also been revealed by the study that in the early part of the 19th Century the Nepalis migrated to Sikkim in waves from their relatively infertile and overpopulated land of Nepal. They worked as a dependent tenant under the Bhotia or Lepcha land lords and gradually made their entrance into the socio-political scene of Sikkim and Darjeeling, ultimately becoming a major force to reckon with. From the mid nineteenth century, the immigrated Nepalis mostly from eastern Nepal had largely settled in the commercial tea plantations in Darjeeling. The trilingual setting of the region had given the native people the advantage of social and economic contacts with Nepali and Tibetan speakers. This helped them to interact with different cultures. In such a social system, interaction did not lead to the liquidation of ethnic differences through acculturation; cultural differences persisted despite interethnic contact and interdependence.

In the beginning, the Lepchas could maintain ecological equilibrium with their environment. They lived in the zones of

abundant natural resources to support a relatively small population, which they successfully exploited with a low level technology of hunting and gathering. As the number grew, a primitive form of cultivation like slash and burn or shifting hill cultivation was adopted. In course of time as population further increased and the Nepali immigrants settled in the area in large numbers the land gradually become scarce and the Lepcha were somewhat compelled to take up settled plough agriculture in the terraces and thus began the era of better use of natural resources with an improved technology. But then they could not compete with the immigrant Bhotia and Nepalis. First the Bhotia and later the Nepalis, as a stronger group, had intruded in the region in search of better economic prospects. With a higher level of technology they took control of the better resources and the Lepcha subsisted on poorer and scanty natural resources.

In Darjeeling except a few villages in Kalimpong sub-division Lepchas' control over the natural resources were being minimized by the Nepalis. However this competition for resources acted in a different way in the case of the immigrant Bhotia who had come earlier than the Nepalis. Bhotias were fewer in number and they did not really compete for land rather they controlled the political structure of the region (Sikkim) till 1864. In the economic sphere they preferred to work more in trans-Himalayan trade and trans-humans than to settle down in one place and till the soil. The tremendous amount of in-migration of the Nepalis in the hills of Darjeeling had enormously affected the ethnic composition, ethnic balance and power structure of the region with a unique inter-ethnic convergence and consolidation. However, such converged ethnicity formation was no substitute for class consciousness in uniting hill people against colonialism.

Though the Lepcha and Nepalis followed the same technology of cultivation, Nepalis were able to accumulate more wealth than the Lepcha. Given the same population with the same resources the productivity of the Nepalis was always much higher and their

consumption is much lower than that of the Lepcha. They had taken for granted their low level of production. Lack of competitive zeal among them did not give rise to any conflict or tension which is generally expected in this type of situation. Their lack of competitive zeal indirectly influenced their mentality as a losing community in the struggle for existence. This was evident from little occupational mobility among them. Their deep attachment to land also prevented them from accepting new types of occupation. It has been exposed in this study that livelihood strategies were built around indigenous knowledge and traditional practices of ecological sustainability in natural resources management. Unfortunately, these practices lost their relevance as a result of global wide imperial project, at the expense of customary rights to ecosystem services. Without legal recognition of traditional practices, indigenous hill people were thus confronted with limited livelihood options and less incentive to stay in balance with surrounding ecosystems.

The study has established further that while understanding material transformations of colonial Darjeeling, historical context mattered inescapably for giving shape the localized socio-economic, geographic, anthropogenic processes into a trans-historical localized state and civic society formation. In fact, the range of transformation that took place in colonial Darjeeling hills had shaped the state-subject relations involving extraction-resistance-settlement cycle wherein colonial authority extracted resources to support its own activities from population living/settled under its jurisdiction. Such indiscriminate resource extractions always subordinated the survival question of the local/natural population. Sometimes, native population had shown manifest or latent resistance through their everyday forms of resistances. For Darjeeling such forms of tacit resistances and general form of acquiescence ensued in the colonially cherished and materially transformed settlement had produced synergic effects favouring the colonizers to order the lands of the tract, bringing modes of resource

use in colonial terms and shaping Darjeeling by ushering in overall colonial material transformations.

Explanations have been substantiated to understand the material transformations that took place in colonial Darjeeling- an ecologically distinct regional sub-space of the Eastern Himalayas. With the emergence of distinctively modern colonial encounters driven by the imperatives of resource extraction, state-making, new modes of resource use, colonial urban formation, establishment of colonial absolute rights over the whole occupied lands, colonial capital investment in commercial tea plantations, scientific forest conservation, extraction of forest resources by application of European knowledge, science and wisdom, Darjeeling hills had occupied separate urgency for the colonial power to be treated separately with larger sensitivity. The entire study has explored the exercises of colonial state-making and corresponding changes that occurred out of such processes of state- making in the form of establishing colonially cherished governability and cultivating natural resources in a specified ecological setting. The study has also addressed in details the question of how colonialism came to be exercised through the forcible transformation of Darjeeling's forests and waste lands into industrial tea plantation, thereby making Darjeeling a unique sub-region, a zone of intensive and profitable commercial plantation, tied closely to global capitalist market. The social and environmental transformation that took place in Darjeeling under the aegis of colonial governance gave birth to a new form of inequalities based on the proprietary hold and material consumption of the landscape. The old clan based communities and traditional religion based hierarchic social order got dismantled in the process of material landscape change and impending social relations impelled many of these changes. Darjeeling hills witnessed changes in production relations and modes of resource use.

The study has further revealed that Darjeeling Hills, under colonial rule, had largely transformed its socio-economic, cultural and

political profile thitherto dissociated from British Indian mainstream. The fundamental change replaced the primordial pre-capitalist traditional production relations and had brought forward modern capital based production relation economy. Darjeeling witnessed fundamental ecological changes too due to rapid depletion of forests, growing tea plantation, roads and railways construction, making of towns and military institutions. All these colonial capital based development induced transformations resulted to a strong colonial political regime, colonial ecological regime, colonial planters regime, installation based military regime, colonial forest regime, Christian missionary led neo-cultural regime and newly in migrated middle class regime in Darjeeling Hills. The imported labourers principally Nepalis, Bhutias and Sikkimese from the neighbouring areas along with as wage earners forming a new working class witnessed both peasatization and proletarization categorized as toiling hill men, could not form any meaningful voice.

Resultantly, the new eco-imperialist political and social order drastically replaced the indigenous eco-philosophical order and had attempted to invest the idea of "difference" in the minds of the inhabitants of Darjeeling, irrespective of religion, sect and culture, through all possible channels of social engineering. The "natural" difference between the hills and the plains was purposively indoctrinated through the system of colonial governability that distinguished Darjeeling as a unique socio-economic and cultural zone and finally as a separate ecological region as a whole. Such a colonially articulated socio-cultural and politico-administrative powerscape and matterscape of colonial Darjeeling provided for strong predicament to develop any sub-altern consciousness of resistance against the over archaic colonial state.

Our study explored the basic facts that due to colonial encounter, Darjeeling hills experienced rapid changes in her landscape and in social relations accompanied by equally sweeping ecological

transformations. Rapid commercialization of forests in the name of scientific forestry, colonial capitalistic formation of tea industry, construction of roads and railways, urban economic formation, settled land revenue administration and strong civic and military administration- all these introduced rapid, widespread and in some respects, irreversible changes which had both ecological and social dimensions. However, such effects of British colonial encounters were not sudden; this study has argued that other important function of British rule had been to provide the enabling tools for the social and political integration of the Darjeeling hill tract with the emerging Indian nation. The introduction of monetized economy in Darjeeling hills by colonial capitalist investment in tea plantations, establishment of military installations, construction of communication systems, creation of hill station, land and forest settlements, establishment of courts, schools and colleges, the stabilization of political relations with the neighboring hill states had become such enabling tools.

This does not necessarily mean that in this study we have attempted to eulogize or undermine the importance of the colonial impact on natural environments of Darjeeling hills. Unquestionably, however, from many points of view, the colonial encounters in Darjeeling hills, since the mid of nineteenth century, represented a radically new phenomenon unleashing material transformations of vivid description and directions. First, it was an intrusion on the world scale, corresponding to the phase of expansion of western merchant and industrial capitalism. Second, the colonizers had means of conquest at their control which was generally out of all proportion to those of the local dormant society of Darjeeling hills once subjected to Sikkim, a tiny Himalayan kingdom. Third, the offensive was battered by overwhelming modern ideology according to which both the then existing primordial natural society and nature ceased to be the sacred order or the abode of the gods. Darjeeling hills, thus, had become an object to be mastered, exploited, transformed, and commoditized, a

means of speculation, merchandise, a space for natural resource extraction and abode of profit maximization. Fourth, the colonizers carried with them techniques and tools, introduced crops and forms of animal husbandry, opened up routes for diffusion and exchange, which irreversibly altered the local socio-ecological configurations. And finally, to serve their own interests, they set up everywhere an increasingly efficient framework of governmental control, which gradually denied the local populations free access to their traditional natural resource bases, at a time when their numbers were beginning to increase. Although the ecological stresses and traumas resulting from European colonization were not by any means the first event of their kind in the colonies, but for Darjeeling hills, such encounters were altogether unprecedented. The predominant colonial encounters by means of commercial and industrial capital on the natural resources of Darjeeling, and the unbridled colonial resource extraction had fundamentally altered the nature and character of Darjeeling hills positing for a continuous rereading in history to understand the present from the perspective of its colonial past.