CHAPTER II

COLONIAL OCCUPATION OF DARJEELING HILLS

Darjeeling hills are situated between 28°21' – 27°13' North and 87°59' – 88°53' East in the Eastern Himalayan region of India. Forming an intrinsic part of the Eastern Himalayas, Darjeeling tract stands distinct in respect of climate, topography, flora and fauna. Darjeeling hills have always been considered as a distinct phyto-geographical region with its distinctive climate and ecological system. Lulled in the lap of Singalila range, down through ages, Darjeeling hills thus form a distinct ecological zone in terms of specific variables of elevation, vegetation, climatic category, soil, topography, slope contours, precipitation and patterns of socio-economic adaptation. The vegetation and forests in Darjeeling Himalayas due to distinctive climate, rainfall, soil etc. gave birth to tropical rain forests to mountain temperate forests. The Darjeeling tract, till thirties of the nineteenth century, was covered with forests from the bottom to the top, characterized not only by ecological fragility but also deep historical and geographical sensitivity. Such a distinctive part of the Himalayas needs to be traced back in historical search taking as a peripheral border zone affected by colonial encounter in general and the anthropogenic and archeological historical processes in such colonially cherished and materially transformed landscape in particular.

While writing on 'British Conquest of the Western Himalayas, Aniket Alam, has rightly observed that *"the generic cases of territorial conquest by the British East India Company can be understood and explained through the global context of colonialism based on the requirements of ascendant British capital, which first needed to monopolize trade and latter the source of raw material and captive markets for emergent industries. Any account of colonial conquests in one particular region needs to base itself on these in the first instance,*

otherwise it has a tendency to become a study of colonialism without perceiving colonialism"[1] The history of Darjeeling hills under British rule may be placed in line with the above arguments.

Some major political and economic concerns made the British East India Company (EIC) interested in the Darjeeling hill tract. Establishment of political control by subjugating local/regional rulers of the Himalayan Kingdoms and extension of the geopolitical boundary had been the primary concern of the British ruler. The British wanted to control and to have direct access to trans-Himalayan trade for extracting profit and for the establishment of strategic control over trans-Himalayan border. The king of Nepal had an exclusive control over this trade because of its geo-political location and military might. The hill tract of Darjeeling had been a buffer location of such trade route. As a part of greater imperial power project, the British policy intended to curtail the power of the Gurkha King of Nepal. British and Gurkhali rivalries in the Himalayas came to a head chiefly over the desire to control the major trans-Himalayan trade routes, and the immediate cause of the war of 1814-15 between the British and the Gurkhas were some border disputes between the latter and some Indian States under British paramountcy.[2]

It was not just only the control over the natural resources but also the attraction of climate, physiographic and some major political and economic concerns that led the East India Company interested in the Darjeeling hill tract. Notwithstanding the attraction of the natural scenic cite and healthy 'other' of the dirty diseased plains of India, Darjeeling was actually conceived as a part of the colonial mainstream and was included into the greater colonial politico-economic project. The natural spatial features of colonial Darjeeling can well be identified with respect to its link with colonial political economy in which the Nature's resources of all sites, however scenic, were subject to colonial capitalistic utilization. Therefore, a constant inherent tension between

Darjeeling's natural exotic and its functional elements persisted throughout the colonial period.[3]

The East India Company officials identified the potentiality for a sanatorium town at the site of a Lepcha village (Dorje-ling) in the eastern Himalayas. In 1828, Captain Lloyd, an army official, and J.W.Grant, the Commercial Resident, Maldah, under the instruction of the Governor General, arrived at Chongtung near Darjeeling and found the place ideal for the establishment of a sanatorium. Lloyd reported that the spot so identified as Dorje-ling "was formerly occupied by a large village or town (an unusual circumstances in the country) and some shops were set up in it; one of the principal Lepcha Karjee's resided here, and the remains of his house, and also of a gombah or temple built of stone are still extant; also several stone tombs or chatyas of different forms, Karjees and Lamas**."[4]** In 1829, the EIC Board of Directors sent Captain J.D. Herbert, Deputy Surveyor General, to the site to explore possibilities for the establishment of a sanatorium for British Troops. Herbert described Dorje-ling as a place "completely clothed with forest from top to the bottom" and pleaded for the establishment of a sanatorium. Herbert reported, "twelve hundred able bodied Lepchas forming two thirds of the population of Sikkim, have been forced to fly from Darjeeling and its neighbourhood, owing to oppression of the Raja." [5]

The British encounter with tropical environment of Gangetic plains of Bengal gave rise interest in Darjeeling hills. The principal reason for seeking sanctuary in the Indian highlands was to escape from the heat of the plains and corresponding health hazards. J.T.Pearson, an Army Surgeon, who arrived in Darjeeling in 1839, informs "there is an elasticity of the air in these mountains, and freshness…, exercise gives all the pleasant glow of an English walk on a frosty morning." [6] The tropical plains had divested the English physique of its natural self. The mountains were posited to restore it. The temperate climate, and the familiarizing and domesticating of the

mountains and dense forests rendered the British engaged in India, similar to British landscapes and to the Alps, an availability of leisure pursuits added to the appeal of the Darjeeling sanatoria. Brian Hodgson, formerly the British Resident at Kathmandu, and a polymath on eastern Himalayas, who spent a considerable period of retired years at "Brianstone", Jalapahar, Darjeeling, wrote, "The fearful epidemics of the plains seldom penetrate the Himalayas, which, moreover, seem to have a positive exemption from epidemic diseases. For forty years cholera has ravaged the plains continually…But in all that period Nepal has been visited only twice and Darjeeling scarcely at all."[7] Hodgson's view validated the need for high altitude sanatorium town for the British in India. Hooker endorsed the rejuvenating qualities of Darjeeling for Europeans. The British health authorities, however, were not able to proclaim the highlands fully free from the so called diseases of the tropics.

To put the argument differently, the nostalgic sense of loss of European vision of Nature and) natural beauty of the landscape came to be identified with the beauty of Nature of Darjeeling hills which was marked as an insulated colonial retreat both for the Europeans and civic personnel engaged in East India Company affairs with Calcutta at its Headquarters.[8] However, with the passage of building Darjeeling with its administrative and commercial possibilities, the British sense of making European landscape were gradually intruded upon by the neighbouring natives settled widely in and around Darjeeling. Thus, the political control and extension of the geopolitical boundary had been the primary principal concern of the British ruler keeping aside the issue of Nature. The British wanted to control and to have direct access to trans-Himalayan trade for extracting profit and for establishment of strategic control over trans-Himalayan border by making Darjeeling a buffer zone.[9]

Before the beginning of colonial conquest, there had been a process of nascent society-state formation in Darjeeling Himalayas

viewed in terms of small scattered settlements of native Lepcha population, more specifically culturally distinct Tibeto-Burman language speaking population of Mongolian racial stock, principally out of Hindu religious and cultural fold.[10] These people practiced shifting cultivation, herding and a small portion was directly or indirectly occupied with trans-Himalayan trade. Originally belonging to Sikkim, Darjeeling tract was conquered by Nepal and was kept under Nepali occupation till 1816. However, whatever small in number the population of Mongolian racial stock available in Darjeeling were associated culturally and religiously with the Buddhist Monastic principality of Sikkim. The Buddhist ruling institution of Sikkim had received back the Darjeeling hill tract from the British soon after the defeat of Nepal in the Anglo-Gorkha War. The Raja of Sikkim derived allegiance of this non-Hindu Population living in Darjeeling tract and extracted revenues largely from yielded agricultural produce or physical labour.[11] Land in Sikkim including land of Darjeeling tract was not defined but was attached to monastic estate control and down-level management was vested with Kat zees.[12] There had been presence of sub-infeudation in pre- British Darjeeling. In this sense, there were landlords to whom Raja of Sikkim granted lease of lands which they further subject to the peasants. The chief whip of the landlords was the 'mandals' who acted according to the desires of the landlords. Such an attachment provided the basis for political consolidation of the Raja of Sikkim.

Col. Lloyd informs us, "*Lepchas are migratory in their habits and quit the spot they have been cultivating at the expiration of the third year and take up a new location, often many miles from their former one on fresh land where they clear the forest and jungle and remain for three years after which they consider the soil exhausted and remove again to a third place. The institutions of the country are feudal, and the people belong to the same one or other chief or lama, or to the Rajah. To whomever they belong or are attached, they pay whatever revenue they*

have to pay, and do feudal services. In fact, the people are taxed and not the land, and each family in subservient to its own feudal chief, and no other but under him; to the Rajah the revenue they pay is a mere nominal one, generally in kind, as a man's load or two of paddy, and fermented murva for making shiab. Sometimes it is in money to about the value of eight annas per family, but the chief imposition is the necessity of giving personal services in whatever way the chief requires."[13]

From British historiography on early colonial phase of Darjeeling, it has been assumed that in pre-colonial Darjeeling, there were two centers of political authority. Whatever little might be the number of native Lepcha population inhabiting in Darjeeling tract, the population were associated with two kinds of political authority—the Sikkim Rajah and the clan deity, while the latter ruled over population belonging to clan or clans, living in different parts of the territory, the former had control over territory. There was no direct rule of the Rajah of Sikkim over the population inhabiting in Darjeeling tract but rather one which was mediated through the relation between his patron God and the clan deity, was a clear reflection of the vulnerability of the state and its institution in pre-colonial Darjeeling. The nature of the revenue and labour demands on the peasantry were made by the deity and the Sikkim state. Land belonged to the commons and there was no personal propriety hold over land. Thus, this was not based on the peasant's ownership of land or even on his ability to produce and harness various use values, but was based on his belongings to the clan which had certain obligations towards its protectors and patron, the clan deity, and towards the overlord of his deity. It was for this reason the Sikkim Rajas like other Himalayan Kings were always either personifications of some divinity or its regent on earth designating the nature of rule as "divine kingship".[14]

Owing to very low level technology of primitive conventional mode used in shifting cultivation, the low amount of yielded production was not even equal to the necessities of the communities informing that

there were only very little that could be appropriated by the Sikkim Raja or clan deity. There were two principal forms of appropriating the surplus produced – in kind and through labour. Begar or labour service, was an integral part of the demand on the peasant family by the Sikkim state and the local deity. There were basically two types of "Begar" that are classified in British records. The first was called 'athwara' beggar used for portage, including carrying the revenue collected in kind to the ruler's household or the store of the deity, meaning the choukis along travel routes and defending the resources of the ruler or deity, providing labour, food and other requirements for officials of the state and the deity, and service in the household of the ruler or the temple of the deity. The second form is called 'hela begar'. This was the demand made on the subjects on specific occasions like birth, marriage, death, and festivals in the ruling family, or some special ceremony of the deity. This consolidation included labour, goods, and cash.[15]

Prior to the British inroad to the region, the process of nascent state formation in Darjeeling tract, forming part of the eastern Himalaya, can be viewed in terms of the gradual settlement of aboriginal population (principally out of Hindu fold) belonging to culturally distinct Tibeto-Burman language speaking Mongolian racial stock. These people practiced shifting cultivation, herding and a small portion was occupied with trans-Himalayan trade. Except the conquered part of the eastern Himalayas by the Gorkha rulers of Nepal, the Buddhist monastic principalities that controlled access to the high mountain passes along the Himalayan periphery remained independent of Hindu Domination. The Buddhist ruling institutions of these principalities derived their support largely from trade revenues and to a lesser extent, from tribute yielded by agricultural tenants and artisans attached to monastic estates. However, only the Sikkim and Bhutan Rajas were successful in extending their control over lowland tribal

groups. Revenues extracted in terms of yielded produce provided the basis for more extensive political consolidation.[16]

The rivalries between British and the Gorkha Rulers in Nepal have been rooted in the British imperial political and economic motives of expansion, intervention and revenue generation through extraction of resources. The British desire to control the major trans-Himalayan trade routed through Kathmandu valley and eastern Nepal to have access to unexplored settlements to market British manufactured goods in Tibet and China, which precluded the interest of revenues used to be earned by the rulers of Gorkha. It is to be mentioned, however, while the British troops succeeded in containing ambitions of Nepal rulers early in the 19th century, but not without conceding the broader demands of the Gorkhas for their territorial sovereignty. By restricting the Gorkhas within their territorial limits, the British had a larger intention to constitute the Gorkha Brigade which played very important role in extending British Empire to the entire Himalayan territory and for political consolidation and for expansion of British colonial economy.[17]

The British East India Company started functioning actively in India early in the Seventeenth Century as a syndicate of merchants with a royal charter for the exclusive trading rights in the Orient.[18] By the mid-eighteenth century, the EIC over powered the French interest in eastern India and achieved revenue entitlements and trading concessions to territories within the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the ruling Mughal rulers. By the late eighteenth century, the EIC usurped the Mughal ruling authorities and successfully introduced an integrated revenue administration and agricultural and industrial capitalist development.[19] As a part of imperial project, the nature and character of British Interests in the Himalayas reflects two distinct phases in the development of 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.[20]

Newall (1887) discussed the strategic importance of Darjeeling and strongly advocated the military colonization of the hills. He referred to the views of Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellington, Munro, Bentinck, Metcalfe, Ellenborough, Dalhousie, Malcolm, Canning, Lawrence and others, all of whom had favoured hill colonization. According to him, *"The occupation of a ridge of mountain forming water parting whence issued the rivers which fertilise that adjacent lowlands must at once strike the eye of the military critic as the true line of domination of the plain country embraced within those rivers".*[21] He therefore argued that the troops in the mountain ranges of Garhwal and Kumaon should command the Doab, through Dehra Dun, as far as Allahabad. The group of hill stations encompassing Almora, Nainital and Ranikhet should command Rohilkhand, Oudh and the area as far as the Ganges. Troops at Darjeeling should command south-east Tirhut and Bengal as far as the Brahmaputra. Moreover, in the event of war with Nepal, Newall believed that Darjeeling would constitute the refuge of the whole district and might find it difficult to maintain itself.

There were several splendid plateaus in Darjeeling and across the Tista suitably adopted for this purpose. Newall suggested that an arrangement could be made with the Raja of Sikkim according to which the country up to the frontier might be acquired in return for a pension or money gratuity. Newall hoped that "The country up to the granite walls of Thibet would then be ours, and available for settlement, and I scarcely know of any country more calculated to form a refuge or "military circle" such as I have suggested. In this fine hill district, then, since Nepal and Valley of Khatmandoo cannot be availed of, I would suggest the establishment of a Grand Southern Military Reserve Circle for Bengal".[22]

It is evident that Darjeeling occupied a very important strategic location in the British Indian defense parameter. The cantonments at Jalapahar and Katapahar developed as a spatial response to the need for defending the British Indian Empire.[23]

Much of the development of commercial agriculture in the Himalaya was concentrated in its eastern parts primarily due to their close proximity to Calcutta and other ports on the Bay of Bengal. From the initial years of the 19th century, the EIC began to take active interests in Darjeeling. The entire Darjeeling tract came under British occupation in three phases spanning from 1835-1865. Darjeeling had been a military garrison of the Gorkhalis and also the director recruitment centre of the Gorkha Brigade military personnel before Darjeeling was restored to the Chogyal of Sikkim. The first phase of colonial occupation of Darjeeling began during early February 1835 when by a Deed of Grant, the Sikkim Raja ceded to the British rulers a portion of the Sikkim hills which covered the areas south of the Great Rangit river, east of the Balasan, Kehel and Little Rangit rivers and West of the Rangnu and Mahananda rivers.[24]

The second phase of colonial occupation was resulted in the annexation of Sikkim's 'Morang' or Terai at the foot hills and a portion of the Sikkim's mid-land hills which was bounded by the Rammam river on the north, by the Great Rangit and Tista rivers on the east, and by the frontier of Nepal on the west. This area of Sikkim was conquered by Nepal and was under the possession of the latter from 1788 to 1816. Only in 1816, after the defeat of Nepal at the hand of EIC this tract was ceded to EIC by the Treat of Segauli (1816). However, the EIC returned this tract to the Raja of Sikkim by the Treaty of Titaliya (1817). Ultimately, however, this territory was annexed with British India followed by a war with Sikkim and was ratified by the Treaty of Tunlong (1861).[25]

This phase of colonial occupation of Darjeeling Hills was marked by the British annexation of the hill tract, a portion of which originally belonged to Sikkim but wrested by Bhutan and a considerable portion of land belonging to Sikkim. Such annexation of Bhutanese land and or a portion of land possessed by Bhutan were the outcome of Anglo-Bhutan War which ceded in the Treaty of Sinchulia (1865). This tract was situated to the east of the Tista river, the west of the Ne-Chu and De-chu rivers, and the south of Sikkim.[26] Thus, the history suggests that the land of Darjeeling Hills originally belonged to Sikkim and Bhutan and there is no recorded historical evidence that Darjeeling Hills was ever a part of Nepal. The Terai portion of the Siliguri and Kurseong sub-divisions was for the time being conquered by Nepal from Sikkim, but was restored by the British and was returned back to Sikkim in 1816.

Principally, based on English utilitarian ethos of imperial expansion the EIC had the desire to control the major trans-Himalayan trade routes through the Kathmandu valley and principally through the Eastern part of Nepal. The British had in mind to tap the markets of Tibet and China for the British manufactured goods. The geopolitical importance of Darjeeling Hills safeguarding the northern border of India against China and Tibet turned out to be the guiding parameters in the policy of the EIC towards the principalities of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. In this effort, Sikkim came into prominence as it held the strategic position as its borders touched China, Nepal, Bhutan and India. The historic Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route was the shortest one from India to the heart of Tibet. Two main ranges of the Himalayas – the Singalila range and the Chola range – enclosed Sikkim on the North of Darjeeling and it was bounded on either side by Nepal and Bhutan.[27]

Thus, with Sikkim and Darjeeling hills being a part of the former, the commercial compulsions of the British were also closely associated. By occupying Darjeeling tract from Sikkim and Bhutan, the English traders started to increase trade with Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet through

Darjeeling. While the export items consisted of European piece-goods, rice, salt, indigo, brass, copper wares, tobacco etc., the import items included horses, blankets, tar, tea, coal, wool, musk, musical instruments and shoes. Throughout the nineteenth century, the volume of trade through Darjeeling went on increasing and the prospects of the central Asian trade through Darjeeling via Sikkim, Darjeeling Himalayas appeared to be more promising. The consecutive war defeats with the British had compelled Nepal to be kept low and to be satisfied with the restrictively defined independent territory. For her political existence felt, Nepal maintained a friendly relation with the British from the mid of nineteenth century.[28]

The apparent compatible relationship between British India and Nepal provided a congenial political ambience which can well be treated as a major factor for the British thought towards Darjeeling. During the Prime Ministership of Jung Bahadur Rana (1846-77), the Gorkha king of Nepal was ceased to become a titular head, when Rana being Prime Minister had become the de-facto Head of the State, the process of subservience to the British rulers was set in motion. Jung Bahadur paid tributes to the British by directly providing military support to the British Government at different was fronts. Jung Bahadur not only provided military support to British in the Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49), but also physically presented as the head of nine thousand Nepali soldiers[29] to help the British to suppress the Great Sepoy Revolt in 1857 and rescued Lucknow from the rebel hands.[30]

Darjeeling then became an important centre to recruit Gurkhas and to enlist them in the British Army along with Gorakhpur in view the capacity, potentiality and endurance to fight in the difficult terrain, and the unquestionable resistance free loyalty of the Gurkhas. Thus while Nepal remained independent of direct British rule, their subjects constituted an army of reserve labour. Since, Nepal disallowed any British Military recruitment centre within their territorial limits, Darjeeling had become the principal location of such recruitment. The

availability of Gurkha personnel in British Army at a very cheap rate due to weak agrarian system in Eastern Nepal as well as the eviction of the low caste Nepali from eastern Nepal added additional momentum in such process. With the occupation of Darjeeling by the EIC, such recruitment centres in and around Darjeeling grew in number.

E. Drummend, the then Magistrate of Dinajpur, urged upon the Government of Bengal to accelerate the process of recruitment as *"they would in every way be more efficient, courageous and trustworthy body of men than any to be held in the plains".*[31] Indeed, this was the beginning of the formulation of "martial race" theory, which Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1885-1983), subsequently made the corner-stone of the British recruiting policy in armed forces. The Commander-in-Chief must have had in his mind the bitter experience of Sepoy Rebellion largely shared by the Hindusthani Sepoys, Marathi and Tamil and Telegu speaking sepoys. To Lord Roberts, *"the first step towards improving the quality of army was to substitute men of more warlike and hardy races for the Hindusthani sepoys of Bengal, the Tamils and Telegus of Madras and the so-called Marathas of Bombay."*[32]

Above all, the Gurkhas were devoid of any incipient nationalist feelings, however, loaded with orthodox religious taboos. Infact, low caste Nepali Gurkhas living in the eastern part of Nepal was out of the higher caste Hindu hierarchical order. These entire factors led the Bengal Government to respond positively for the increase of Gurkhas recruits in British Army. Resultantly, the increase in the number of the Gorkhas battalions was dramatic, from five in 1862 to twenty in 1914. Darjeeling became an important recruiting centre for these battalions because the Nepali rulers in Kathmandu did not initially favour recruitment of Gorkha soldiers for Indian Army from within Nepal. The privileges and benefits provided to the Gurkhas and the post-retirement benefits had been the principal attractive force which made Gurkhas interested to join in Indian Army. The uninhabited Terai and Darjeeling

hills became the abode of retired military personnel belonging to Gurkha community (all categories of Nepali speaking recruits were known as "Gorkha" in the British Indian Army).[33]

Darjeeling had remained as a military garrison of the Gorkhalis as well as also the direct recruitment centre of the Gorkha Brigade of the British Indian Army before Darjeeling tract was restored to the Choggyal (Raja) of Sikkim from Nepali's occupation at the end of Anglo-Gorkha War in 1816. Darjeeling tract including hills, Terai and Doars parts were brought under direct colonial control through three distinct phases. The first phase of colonial occupation of Darjeeling was thus initiated during February 1835.[34] When Col. Lloyd was directed by the Governor General to negotiate with the Rajah of Sikkim to have Darjeeling, a place of land as grant for the establishment of a sanatorium. Col. Lloyd was empowered by the East India Company to work in three capacities, firstly, as the Government Agent-in-charge of relations with the Rajah of Sikkim; secondly, as in-charge of the establishment of a sanatorium or hill station of Darjeeling, and thirdly, as the in-charge for the construction of Darjeeling road.[35] As a mark of respect to British ruler and on receipt of a proposal for establishing a sanitarium and to create a permanent cantonment for the British regiment by a Deed of Grant, the Chogyal of Sikkim ceded to the British rulers a portion of Sikkim hills which covered the areas south of the Great Rangit river, east of the Balasun, Kahel and Little Rangit rivers and West of the Rangnu and Mahanadi rivers.[36]

The third phase of colonial occupation of Darjeeling was marked by the annexation of Kalimpong hills and Doars, a natural forested and agricultural and mercy land space which originally belonged to Sikkim but wrested by Bhutan excepting a small tract still belonged to Sikkim. By virtue of the Treaty of Sinchulia (1865) concluded immediately after Anglo-Bhutan War, the Kalimpong Tract both hills and doars was brought under British rule. This tract of land situated to the east of the Tista river, the west of the Ne-Chu and De-Chu rivers and the south of

Sikkim. The most important institution which continued even after this part of the region came under the British Control was 'mandali' or headman.[37] His duty was not only to collect rents from the raiyats or peasants but also settled the disputes between the villagers on behalf of the Bhutan King. After all these three phases of occupation the British occupied Darjeeling constituted a total land-mass of 1164 sq. miles.[38]

Till Darjeeling tract was brought under colonial control, the pre-colonial Darjeeling was thus a forested landscape of differentiated mountain ridges, grasslands, wastelands, mercy lands and pastures of low, medium and high ridge mountains and terai lands of undulated nature. As Jhoom or shifting cultivation was the mode of agricultural produce, there was in fact no defined agricultural land and codified system of land tenure. The indigenous people were continued to be governed by their customary rules, rituals and practices. These people lived in and lived with nature. In fact, the notion of land of the indigenous people was intrinsically linked with Nature. To them, land was not a commodity but a gift of nature and was a natural property of the commons. Since this forested tract was never measured and defined, there was no personal proprietary hold over this entire forested land.

Immediately after the cession of Darjeeling, the British ruler established unquestionable supremacy over the entire Darjeeling tract. Col. Lloyd issue a Proclamation on October 12, 1838, which reads, "the people settled on the Darjeeling tract were now subjects of the Company and the laws of Sikkim would not apply to them".[39] With the declaration of such Proclamation, Lloyd imposed revenues on the native Lepchas. However, the intention of the East India Company was markedly different. Instruction was issued to Lloyd by His Honour in Council which stated clearly, "Your purpose of it was intended merely to fix the term on which settlers of native tribes should be permitted to locate would have been sufficiently answered by a notice addressed to such persons in a different form requiring them, when desirous of

settling, to state their intention and obtain from you an order for permission of the lands selected by them. The terms on which locations ought to be assigned to settlers of this description must depend upon the purposes for which they come to settle as well as upon the localities selected by them."[40] Certain points crop up from the Instruction of the Company Government, for example, the Government did not appreciate the hasty imposition of revenue and such unilateral action of Col. Lloyd. Since there was no land map or no land settlement in pre-colonial Darjeeling, the East India Company's Agent was given the authority to allow people to settle with an affirmation of the Agent only. The Proclamation of Col. Lloyd thus remained non-ratified. Lloyd could no longer remain in the good book of the Company Government due to complaints against him from various corners. After Lloyd had initially organized the labour for building the road to and market in Darjeeling, he was replaced by Surgeon Major, Dr. Arthur Cambell, formerly and Assistant Resident in Nepal. Dr. Cambell was vested with the civil charge of Darjeeling as Superintendent and was empowered with wide ranging fiscal, civil and judicial and land tenure powers for the expansion of Darjeeling. Dr. Cambell remained in office for a long twenty two years at a stretch. The efforts of Cambell in land revenue administration made Darjeeling a station fit for leisure seeking Europeans and an important trading centre and tea producing zone.

In pre-colonial setting, the Darjeeling tract was neither pre-defined as Zamindari Khas or self-cultivated holdings nor was put under Raiyati (occupancy of the cultivating tenants). Moreover, there had been the absence of Jungle Zamindars. For Darjeeling, the system of land holding under Permanent Settlement Act, 1793 or under Bengal Tenancy Act 1885 had always remained as misnomers. The proprietary right over land and forest was a concept traditionally alien to the indigenous people of Darjeeling. People were only obliged to give a share of their labour or the result of his labour to the Raja of Sikkim. This system of paying the state through labour was prevalent in all the

Himalayan principalities till nineteenth century.[41] The material linkage of life of the indigenous people with Nature came under strain with the advent of colonialism in Darjeeling hills.

The application of colonial knowledge of science and administration based on utilitarian philosophy initiated the process of transformation of human-nature relations in Darjeeling hills. Immediately after the occupation, the entire Darjeeling tract was brought under direct administrative control of the East India Company. The British established unquestionable propriety hold over the entire land of Darjeeling hills. Darjeeling was initially administered by following the tradition of 'non regulation scheme' in which local level officials were provided with huge executive discretionary powers to govern. Darjeeling was kept under the control of Bengal Presidency and was primarily administered by a Superintendant who was given huge executive discretionary powers within the broader legislative framework of Bengal province. The Superintendent was kept under the control of the Court of Directors being Governor General on the Chair.

From 'Bengal Hurkaru', it is known that most of the plots of the 'identified station', Darjeeling, were initially distributed by the EIC Government from Calcutta. The Company Government attracted the attention of the European officials, traders, hoteliers and indigenous elites, Rajas, Zamindars and aristocrats to purchase plots at a very low cost in the form of revenue by projecting the possibilities of Darjeeling as a health station. People of social and administrative rank and file started responding to the call. The grantees/lessees of such plots formed Darjeeling Association Committee. To put differently, the members of such Committee were the principal stake holders of Darjeeling station. The Editor of 'Hurkaru', Samuel Smith was the grantee of two plots of land at Darjeeling; Prince Dwarkanath Tagore had been the lessee of location no. 11 along with Darjeeling station's main street.[42] Major E. Grastin, the Chief Executive Engineer of the Lower Provinces was the lessee of two locations of Darjeeling.[43] From

the sketch plan of Darjeeling drawn in 1840, it is shown that out of forty five identified locations forty three plots were granted to thirty two numbers of grantees. Col. Lloyd, Grastin, Martin and Sam Smith owned two plots each. Dr. Pearson had three plots and Mr. Hepper four. Twenty eight plots of Lebong, the northern extension of Darjeeling were provided to Mr. Heeper and one Mr. Martin. Most of the grantees and lessees of Darjeeling plots were interested in speculation and gamble with the plots.[44]

In his Report, usually called Grastin Report, submitted to H. M. Low, Esq., Secretary to the Dorjeeling Committee, Major Grastin stated, inter alia, "…all such ground as may be required for public purposes be at once resumed and set apart, and that to prevent future disputes a committee be formed to mark out all the allotments and to see that their boundaries are clearly defined, and to settle the ground rent to be paid for the same."[45] Mr. Low forwarded the Grastin Report in its entirety with his observations. The response of the Government was positive as was discerned from its subsequent actions. Two of first applications for grants of land to reach Dr. Cambell, the newly appointed officer in civil charge, Darjeeling, came from H.M.Low and Col. Lloyd. The Officer in civil charge sent those applications to the Government for consideration. In reply to Col. Lloyd's application asking for a land of more than one square mile at Kurseong, the Secretary of the Political Department wrote, "… I am desired to state that the President-in-Council declines to interfere with the discretion necessarily vested in the Officer in Civil Charge of Darjeeling with respect to the admission of claims to particular localities, and likewise in respect to the extent of land which a single individual is to be allowed to occupy on any spot favorable to the errection of houses, for farming or garden purposes. This Officer has been called upon to frame and submit for the approval of the Government a detailed set of rules applicable to grants of all description and you will be entitled to the full benefit of them, but His Honor-in-Council declines to make any pledges

as anticipated as to hold out to you the hope of many more than will be offered to all".[46]

From the above Communication, it transpires that Lloyd's hope of getting a square mile land at Kurseong was not realized. The Government was sincere to establish a civic system in granting lands through a set of rules. Dr. Cambell was authorized to frame such rules and to work upon it with the approval and authority of the Government. Accordingly, on 1st August 1839, Dr. Cambell sent his draft rules for regulating the assignment of building locations and grants of lands in the hill tract of Darjeeling for the consideration of Government. The draft was sent by the Government to Darjeeling Association Committee, with negligible amendment, the Committee sent back the draft to the Government expressly showing its satisfaction. The Government approved the draft rules and issued Notification duly signed by H .T. Prinsep, the Secretary, Political Department, dtd., 4th September 1839 and the Rules came into force from the date of issuance of the Notification.[47]

For the first time in the land settlement history of Darjeeling, Rules for Regulating the Assignment of Building Locations and Grants of Lands in the Hill Tracts were put in place. By virtue of the above promulgation, Dr. Cambell was provided with huge revenue power and police and magisterial authority to settle any dispute on land. In order to maintain a status quo the said Rules expressly stated that "it will not apply to ancient Residents and parties in possession at the time when the territory of Darjeeling was made over by the Rajah of Sikkim."[48] To elaborate the rule further, the Officer on Civil Charge was vested with huge authority in assigning/granting lands on the basis of revenue defined and fixed by the Rule. Thus the principal source of Nature-the land resources were administered, preserved, reserved, distributed, granted and leased out by the British sense of justice as codified through the rules ignoring naturally customized traditional methods

and practices followed through centuries in the eastern Himalayan principalities.

As a part of greater imperial project, the nature and character of British interests in the Himalayas in general, reflects two distinct phases in the development of colonial economy: the first being the mercantile exploitation under the Company, and the second being the expansion of commercial agricultural investment under the civil administration of the Raj. Thus, the major influences of British rule – land settlement, roads construction forest settlement and tea plantation settlement, governance structure were firmly in place. Moreover, the summer transfer of the Bengal provincial administration to Darjeeling in 1879, lent its social space glamour and urgency. The British interest of establishing a hill station nearer to Calcutta was also accomplished at the cost of wilderness of Nature of Darjeeling forested tract.

Immediately before British annexation of the entire Darjeeling tract, the Gurkha ruler of Nepal and Bhutanese ruler kept the possession of such territories concurring the Sikkim ruler for a considerable period of time. It is therefore indeed important to have at least a glimpse of the then existing land arrangement excavating the agrarian history of Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan. Even before the coming of Namgyal Dynasty in Sikkim, the Kazis used to hold grants of land from the earlier Kings on hereditary principle. The Kazis were bound to the land for payment of revenue for the whole term of settlement. The holders were not allowed to sell the land under the terms of contract they entered into.[49] During early Tibetan rule in Sikkim, the raiyats were directly controlled by the palace. These raiyats were of two types- Nangzans and Zimchungpas, while the former referred to the constant palace attendants and the latter served the King on the tours.[50] The latter group constituted of the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. In those periods, the country Sikkim was divided into 12 administrative areas under twelve Bhutia Kahlons (Ministers) and 12 Lepcha Heads of

Dzongs (Castles). Arguably, the Monastries had no land holdings and depended on gifts and donations from the people. Darjeeling, once being a part of Sikkim used to be administered by a Kazi who paid rent amounting to Rs. 20 every year to the Raja of Sikkim.[51] After occupation of Darjeeling, the old system experienced both change and continuity by the British rule of land grants without taking away the land right of the native people living in the tract.

After the annexation of Terai part of the tract in 1850, the British both retained and continued the old Nepalis land tenure system in the cultivation areas of terai plains and at the same time brought substantial changes to cope with the expanding tea gardens in teriai area. Immediately after the annexation in 1950, the southern part of terai (foot hills) was placed under the Collector of Purnea and the Northern portion was attached to Darjeeling. The settlement of the land revenue for three years had been effected by the Purnea Collector with the original inhabitants of the lower terai, mostly Muslims, Rajbanshis and low caste Nepalis and few other tribes. However, the inhabitants of Suthern terai had shown exasperation not to be attached with Purnea. Ultimately, the EIC Government decided to attach the whole tract to Darjeeling. Meanwhile, Dr. Campbell, Superintendent, Darjeeling had made a settlement for three years of the upper terai, chiefly inhabited by Meches. The cultivated portion of the whole terai area was first regularly settled in 1853 and was updated in subsequent periods. Besides the area thus settled, over 28,000 acres were granted in the years 1865-67 on thirty years leases for tea cultivation under the former Waste Land Rules. This was renewed for a term of thirty years in 1897. Thus there evolved two classes of tenants in the Terai were holding their lands directly from the Government- the Jotdars who held leases of land for ordinary cultivation and the Tea-planters holding grants of land for tea cultivation. The rights of both these classes are heritable and transferable.[52]

Land granted to Chebu Lama by the British comprising an area of 115 square miles in the north-west of the Darjeeling tract between the Nepal and Sikkim boundaries and Little Rangit river had been an unique occasion in the early colonial land history of Darjeeling. This tract was annexed by the British in 1850 and Chebu Lama received a lease of the whole tract for an immediate term of three years in recognition of his service he had rendered during the troubles of the British officers under captivity of Sikkim. In 1862, Chebu Lama appealed for holding the land under the grant Fee-simple (1861) or in perpetuity. The Government acceded to his request by making a grant of the land to him and his heirs forever. As per British records, this is the only permanently settled estate in the District. However, in 1882-83, part of this estate, containing forests of the Singalila range and covering 66 square miles, was sold to the Forest Department; and the remainder had been partitioned among the descendants of Chebu Lama.[53]

Land system of Kalimpong was different in pre-British period as this part of the tract was ruled by the Bhutanese rulers for over a century after subjugating Sikkim. The travel report of Markham[54] informs us that local inhabitants of the said area were divided into three sections- priests, government officials and landowners. But the land was never defined and documented. After British annexation, Kalimpong was divided into 48 blocks and each was kept under a Mandal who used to collect rents from raiyats and paid revenue to the British on tenure basis as fixed by the Government. Out of total 401 square miles of land so annexed, 213 square miles were kept occupied by reserved forests and 10 square miles by four tea gardens, while178 square miles were reserved for native cultivation.[55] In fact five-sixth of the inhabitants was settled on this Khas Mahal or State lands. However, there had been some rent free lands belonging to Monasteries and a few Mandals. Such arrangements were continued even after British annexation. The British reserved a huge forest and cultivable

land both on the western and eastern side of Tista as Khas Mahals under the management of Kalimpong Government Estates. In the whole tract of the district there was a bewildering variety of land tenure such as Revenue- paying tenure; Free-hold tenures and Lands held by the Government.

Under Revenue-paying tenures, locations of lands were settled in perpetuity under the building location Rules of 1839; locations of lands were settled for 99 years under the same Rules as amended in 1840; Farming leases were settled under the Rules of 1859; Cultivation leases for thirty years were put in place under the Rules of 1864; Lands granted to Chebu Lama, firstly on tenure and subsequently in perpetuity in the mid fifties and early sixties of nineteenth century; Tea-cultivation leases under the Waste Land Rules of 1882 as modified time to time; Other leases of different sorts and Government Khas Mahals under direct management. Under Free-hold tenures, Land locations were commuted into fee-simple under Rule 10 of the Rules of 1859; Lands (a huge size of 48476 acres) were brought under Rule 1 of the Rules of 1859; Lands commuted under Rule 9 of the Rules of 1859 and Lands brought under Fee-Simple Rules of 1862. Lands held under the Government were: Lands held by the Forest Department for forest reserves (a huge landmass occupying 278400 acres covering 435 square miles); Lands held by the Military Department; Lands held by the Government for Cinchona plantation; Lands for Jail Department; Municipal Grazing lands; Other lands including waste lands, bazaar lands, development area, etc.[56]

Tea production and commercialization of tea had been a major driving force which motivated both the company officials and British rulers towards Darjeeling. The expansion of tea industry both in Darjeeling hills and in its Terai part served immensely the commercial purpose of the British rulers. The growing production of tea with the expansion of tea gardens had made British ruler competitive with China in the international tea market. Again Nepali people fulfilled the

gap of this labour intensive tea industry. Tens of thousands of Nepali subjects migrated to British Darjeeling and Terai during the course of nineteenth century to take work as plantation labourers. In 1866, the total number of tea gardens in Darjeeling was 39 which raised to 186 in 1895. This resulted in a considerable number of recruitment at the level of plantation workers and majority of them came from eastern part of Nepal as the migrants. The British planters had an inclination to encourage settlement of the Nepali migrants as the plantation workers in the tea gardens on the ground that these labouerrs were hardworking and could adapt themselves to the working conditions and natural climatic conditions of the tea gardens which were situated in the high attitude in the hills of Darjeeling. Moreover, tea labourers were available at a very low remuneration throughout the nineteenth century.[57]

The saga of Darjeeling tea labourers available at a very cheap rate needs to be viewed from the then existing political-economy of Nepal. The massive migration of labourers principally from Eastern Nepal had fundamentally altered the ethno-demographic composition of Darjeeling Hills. Such migration was taken place principally for the push factor of agricultural based poor economic situation that existed in Nepal and the pull factors of Darjeeling hills under British rule which attracted the population of Nepal to join in labour intensive moneytised economy that gradually developed in Darjeeling principally in the British effort of tea garden expansion, roads and railways constructions and British scientific forest management. Besides, three major factors caused heavily for such massive migration from Nepal to British occupied Darjeeling throughout the nineteenth century.[58]

The second half of nineteenth century Nepal witnessed the rise of Prithvinarayan Shah, the founder king of Gorkha dynasty of Nepal, Kathmandu being the capital. This high caste Hindu Monarchy had made aggressive drive for centralization, expansion and consolidation. Such drive caused heavily the socio-economic balance of Nepalis

society and economy. The king imposed a series of repressive measures to ascertain the domination of high caste Hindu Nepalis over the Buddhist and other non-Hindu Nepalis tribes and communities. The Kirat region in eastern Nepal mostly inhabited by tribal communities had a unique system of landholding. Such tribal land tenure was marked by the system of 'Kipat' landholding which was a kind of community land ownership system.[59]

More specifically, land holding system was based on the principle of commons. It was known as "Kipat" landholding which was a kind of community landownership system. In such a system, the holding of Kipat vested in a particular tribal/ethnic group could not alienate any individual belonging to such group from land. The Gorkha rulers altered this system of landholding soon after they established their unquestionable supremacy over the entire eastern Nepal. The collective pattern of land ownership was replaced by the Royal possession of land, making thereby the tribal/ethnic communities as landless. The Nepal low caste category of people living in Eastern Nepal such as the Rais, the Limbus, the Gurungs and the Tamangs were treated as Shudra people in the Hindu hierarchical structure of Nepali's society and were vulnerable to oppression and repression of the Hindu higher castes such as Kshatriya (ruling class) and the Brahmin. Non-compliance of the Hindu religious scriptures and social practices by the lower castes and aboriginal tribes caused exemplenary punishment usually known as "Panchakhat", which included "confiscation of property, banishment, mutilation, enslavement and even death sentences".[60] Life of the low caste people living specially in eastern Nepal became intolerable; their subsistence was put to question and existence was in crisis owing to tremendous repression and oppression. Resultantly, a large number of Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang and other low caste people used to be call Mongers opted out/or pushed out from eastern Nepal and migrated to neighbouring Darjeeling Hills and Terai

occupied by the British. To them, Darjeeling hills was accessible and convenient for settlement.

Secondly, the growing expansion of tea gardens in Darjeeling Hills created an economic space of labour intensive economy which created in turn demands for labour. The roadways and railways constructions added momentum to such demand for labour and certainly for cheap labour. These pull factors attracted the destitute population of eastern Nepal to respond to such growing demands for labour. Being aware of the fact that Nepali migrants were hardworking and could adapt themselves to the working conditions of the tea gardens situated at different difficult high attitude in the hills of Darjeeling, the European planters encouraged settlement of the Nepali migrants as plantation labourers. What encouraged the British rulers and planters was the availability of cheap labour from the poverty stricken low caste Hindu population of the eastern part of Nepal. For Terai area, the British preferred bringing tribal labour with low remuneration from chotonagpur part of central India. Thus the throughout the second half of nineteenth century and early few decades of twentieth century witnessed a steady flow of population in the form of cheap labour force from eastern part of Nepal to Darjeeling hills on the ground mutually convenient hypothesis of getting employed for the hapless people immigrated in Darjeeling and the availability of easily accessed labour force at a very cheap rate. Furthermore, the ancillary economic activities in Darjeeling created a demand for more immigrants who took part in agriculture, orchards, forestry, livestock, construction, mining, trading and such other various service oriented activities. The British rulers encouraged the Nepali migrants for recruitment in the police as well as in various construction works which were connected with the growth process of Darjeeling as a sanatorium and a tourist centre.

The third major factor which accelerated the process of Nepali migration to Darjeeling hills was the opportunity to get entry in Indian

army through the recruitment centres situated in Darjeeling hills. As has been explained before that the British military administration had a positive perception on the masculinity, loyalty and honesty of the Gurkhas as potential mercenary force. The Gorkha loyalty to British was adequately proved during Sepoy Revolt of 1857. The British official records suggest that in 1863, the Sappers and Miners stationed at Darjeeling were composed almost entirely of the migrant Nepalis. Cumulatively, the Census data indicated that, in 1881, out of 1,55,179 of the total population of Darjeeling hills, 88,000 people were recorded to have been born in Neal. It is to be further noted that according to 1881 census data, the total number of Nepal born population in India was 2,23,314.

It is to be noted that the British encouragement to Nepali migration to Darjeeling hills in the mid-nineteenth century originated from the colonial political perception to outbalance the original ethnic domination of the indigenous people like Lepchas and Bhutias in Darjeeling tract. The British perception was that the Lepchas and Bhutias were Valikely to shift their loyalty from Tibet as they were strongly integrated by a common heritage, religion, language and culture. These indigenous people belonged to the Tibeto-Burman language group and were religiously indoctrinated by the Lamaist Buddhism. On the other, the nepalis migrated from Nepal were mostly Hindus were loyal to British. Dr. Campbell pointed out this Hindu religious anchorage of the Nepalis and wrote in his diary in the middle of 19th Century: "The British were keen that the Nepalis should settle in newly acquired land in Darjeeling because they were considered to be traditional enemy of the Buddhist Tibetans and the Buddhist Bhutias".[61] The British anticipated Nepali immigrants a group of loyal subjects whose allegiance would lie with the British Indian Government and not with the Dalai Lama of Tibet. In Bhutan and Sikkim, the British with the help of local landed aristocracy usually enemical to Sikkim/Bhutan Kings, sought to create a subservient Nepali

agricultural labourers subsequently turning into land-owing class in order to counteract the traditional predominance of the Tibetan and the Bhutia landed aristocracy. H.H. Risley in his Gazetteer of Sikkim (1894) spelt out the colonial objective underlying the British sponsored migration of the Nepalis: "Influx of the hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against revival of Tibetan influence. Here the religion will play a leading role. Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism."[62]

It is to be noted that there are two important paradoxes in accepting the above arguments in its entirely. Firstly, the population of Eastern Nepal, mostly belonged to the lowest of the ladder of Hindu hierarchical caste system. Moreover, they used to be punished for not following the upper caste Hindu practices. They were oppressed and repressed. Being depressed, they had to leave their original place of living and must have been frustrated with the upper caste Hindu way of life. This migrant Nepali labour force was not in a position to be proud enough to be a Hindu. Secondly, even if the British opted for Lepchas or Bhutias as their potential labour force, the demand part would have been remained always inadequate due to inadequate number of indigenous Lepchas and Bhutias in Darjeeling. The migration of Lepchas to Darjeeling from Sikkim or Bhutia migration from Bhutan could have been proved to be a misconception on the ground that there had been no push factors operated both in Sikkim and Bhutan. Lepchas in Sikkim used to be the ruling class and land owning class and the same was with Bhutias of Bhutan. Thus the complexities of diversified ethnicities in Darjeeling hills had been the result of various factors and forces which resulted in a composite culture and was not a planted mission of British colonial wisdom. However, the British always intended to inject an objective 'other' in the minds of the people of Darjeeling cutting across religions, castes and multiple communities.

Despite the dominant ethnic presence of Nepalis in Darjeeling, a section of Bengali speaking educated population of the plains was also encouraged to join in different administrative managerial and clerical services and educational institutions situated mostly in the urban spheres of the Hills of Darjeeling. The Biharis, the Marwaris the Punjabis and a few section of non-Bengali, non-Nepali speaking trading (both in wholesale and retail) people settled in Darjeeling throughout the nineteenth century and fist few decades of the twentieth century. However, by 1941, the population figures of the Bengalis, non-Nepali and Non-Bengali speaking people coming from the plains did not constitute more than 5.1 percent of the total population of Darjeeling District, while 86.8 percent of the population were Nepali speaking. The other hill men constituting of indigenous tribes and castes formed another 8.1 percent. Darjeeling hills did never experience the exodous of refugee population coming from erstwhile East Pakistan and thereafter from Bangladesh. On the other hand, in the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling district, which mostly included the plains and a part of the Terai forests and a segment of the tea gardens, the Bengalis constituted majority of the population which tended to increase further after the influx of the refugees through phases following the partition of Bengal in 1947.

Notwithstanding, the attraction of the natural scenic cite and healthy 'other' of the dirty and diseased plains of India, the study posits that Darjeeling was conceived as a part of the greater imperial project and for the larger imperial cause was included into the greater colonial economic project. Therefore, a constant tension between its natural exotic and its functional elements persisted throughout.[63] It has been argued that the natural spatial characteristic of colonial Darjeeling needs to be identified with respect to its link with colonial political economy in which the nature's resources of all sites, however scenic, were subject to colonial capitalistic utilization.

The nostalgic sense of loss of European sense of Nature and Natural beauty of the landscape came to be identified with the beauty of nature of Darjeeling hills and was marked as an insulated colonial retreat both for the European and civic personnel engaged in EIC affairs with Calcutta at its headquarters. However, with the passage of building Darjeeling with its administrative and commercial possibilities, the British sense of making European landscape were gradually intruded upon only the neighbouring natives settled widely in around tea gardens, settled retired soldiers of British Indian Army and middle class and affluent Indians from the plains. J.T. Pearson, an army Surgeon who arrived in Darjeeling in 1839 commented "there is an elasticity of the air in these mountains, and a freshness….., exercise gives all the pleasant glow of an English walk on a frosty morning".[64]

The tropical plains had divested the English constitution of its natural self. The mountains were posited to restore it. Brian Hodgson, formerly the British resident at Kathmandu stated, *"The fearful epidemics of the plains seldom penetrate the Himalayas, which, moreover, seem to have a positive exemption from epidemic diseases. From forty years cholera has ravaged the plains continually…. But in all that period Nepal has been visited only twice and Darjeeling scarcely at all."*[65] Hodgson's view validated the need for high attitude sanatorium towns for the British in India. Hooker endorsed the rejuvenating qualities of Darjeeling for Europeans. Health authorities however, were not able to proclaim the highlands fully free from the so called zygotic diseases of the tropics.

The temperate climate, and the familiarizing and domesticating of the mountains and dense forests that rendered them similar to British landscapes and to the Alps, an availability of leisure pursuits – and once the custom of sending women and children to the hill stations for most of the year was established – the charms of a viable social life with the family all added to the appeal of the mountain sanatoria. Moreover, the summer transfer of the provincial administration of the Governor of

Bengal to Darjeeling during 1879 lent its social space glamour and urgency. In addition, the successes of the tea plantation industry made Darjeeling critical to the colonial economy, notwithstanding the scenic landscape. The introduction of tea industry contributed most to the transformation of the economic base and geographical space of the entire Darjeeling hills.[66]

Primarily, Lt. Col. GWA Lloyd was empowered by the East India Company at its head office Calcutta in three different capacities – firstly as the Government Agent-in-Charge of relations with the Rajah of Sikkim, Secondly, as in-charge of the establishment of the sanatorium or hill station of Darjeeling and thirdly as the in-charge for the construction of Darjeeling Road.[67]

It is to be noted that the nature of land revenue administrative governance experienced several changes throughout the colonial period on the premise that the British ruler had an objective mind to administer Darjeeling differently from the general land revenue administration of British Indian Plains. Darjeeling was a part of the non-regulation areas since British occupation till 1861. It was kept under the direct responsibility of the Governor General in regard to legislation from 1870 to 1874. After this, it brought within the purview of the Laws Local Extent Act 1874 known as the Scheduled Districts Act. It was a Scheduled District from 1874 to 1919. The Scheduled District Act provided that in the listed districts the normal legislation and jurisdiction were in force only in part or with modifications, if necessary, of any enactment in force at the time in any part of British India. Thus, Darjeeling was not placed with the ambit of the general laws in application over the rest of India. Darjeeling was designated as a backward tract by the Government of India Act 1919 and remained so till 1935. Darjeeling as a backward tract was subject to special law usually prescribing simple and elastic forms of judicial and administrative procedure. Darjeeling remained as a Partially Excluded Area from 1935 to the end of the British rule. Thus, under British rule,

the Acts and Regulations of the federal or provincial legislatures were not implemented in Darjeeling District unless specially extended. Only Act X of 1859 and Act V111 of 1879 regulated the rights and liabilities of land holders on tenure or perpetuity basis. [68] The officer in civil charge, be the Superintendent or District Collector/Magistrate was vested with huge authority in assigning/granting lands on the basis of revenue defined and fixed by the Rule. Thus the Natural land resource of the hill tract of Darjeeling was distributed and governed by the British administration of justice and without any local negotiation.

Lord William Bentinck, Governor General of India, proposed in his famous Minutes to the Court on the East India Company in 1833, that a committee should be formed to investigate the possibility of growing tea in India. Bentinck informed, immediately after his appointment to India, one John Walker had made his acquaintance and given his considered views regarding the possibility of tea culture in the Nepal hills.[69] Although, Hodgson, the Resident of Nepal, made no claim to be botanist, had introduced tea cultivation into the Himalayas, establishing a plot in the Residency garden using seeds obtained from China by Kashmiri merchants.[70] Latter on Dr. Cambell, who left Nepal where he was Assistant Resident and took charge of Darjeeling as superintendant in 1839, repeated the experiment leading to the establishment of Commercial tea estates there by 1852. In 1841, there was successful cultivation of tea plant in Darjeeling at an altitude of 213.36 metres, from the seeds of a Chinese variety brought from Kumaon. Out of the other early planters in Darjeeling were Dr. Whitecombe, a civil surgeon and Major Crommelin, a civil engineer. It was established that land around Lebong, a little below Darjeeling was particularly suitable within a short period, Pankhabari and Kurseong gardens were developed by pioneers like Martin and Captain Samber, the latter founded Makaibari garden at Pankhabari-Kurseong road. By the mid 1850s, the commercial potential of Darjeeling was proved beyond doubt and several other gardens were established. All the tea

gardens were promoted either on the basis of proprietorship or as joint stock companies. In 1856, the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company opened the Alubari garden. The Dhutana garden owned by Dr. Brougham was opened in 1859. During the early 1860s, several reputed companies like Darjeeling Tea Company and the Lebong Tea Company opened a number of gardens. In 1862, James White, the owner of Singel tea garden, opened the first garden in the Terai at a place called Champta. The new Champta Tea Garden was established in 1883. By 1874, tea in Darjeeling had proved to be a profitable venture and there were 113 gardens. By 1905, tea was grown in 148 gardens covering an area of 20,000 hactores – nearly 80 square miles.[71]

The basic ownership structure of the tea industry was of two types – (i) the typical unit was a sterling company registered in UK having plantations in India; (ii) the plantation company registered under the Indian Companies Act with India rupee capital. The overwhelming majority of shareholders of both these companies ware British nationals.[72] Most of the Darjeeling tea garden were under European ownership. Till 1901, there developed 71 gardens within Darjeeling police station, 46 gardens under Kurseong Police Station and 32 garden under Siliguri Police Station. About one seventh of the district of Darjeeling was covered with tea and no less than one third of the population lived off the tea industry. The census of 1901 recorded that 64000 persons were engaged as tea plantation workers. Being backed by capital is it sterling or Indian rupee, the tea plantation industry was essentially labour intensive industry which required considerable number of labour. The labour population mostly from eastern part of Nepal began immigrated and settled at Darjeeling plantation area which was instrumental in bringing change in the demographic profile of Darjeeling. The Nepali settlers ultimately outnumbered all other native or exogenous population settled at Darjeeling hills.

With the expansion of tea gardens in Darjeeling hills, the natural forest wealth had been subjected to virtual plunder. A large area of forestland was alienated by government for tea plantation. Natural forests, at the initial years of colonial expansion was considered as an obstruction to development be it in the name of construction of roads, provision making for urban basic services and commercial production of tea or agricultural goods and above all the general well being of the population settling at the hill tract of Darjeeling. The realization of optimal revenue was the priority. Resultantly, 60 percent of the forest cover had been cleared for development purposes. The rapid and continuous depletion of forested zone, extensive deforestation invited irreconcilable balance in the human-nature relations and gave rise to continuous soil erosion, innumerable landslides, devastating floods in the foot hills and the plains.

Colonization has a vital decisive role to play in the evolution of material landscapes of Darjeeling hills. As colonial expansion proceeded under the aegis of the British East India Company (EIC), the environmental experiences of Europeans and indigenous people and settlers living at the colonial periphery played a steadily more dominant and dynamic part in the construction of new European evolutions of nature and in the growing awareness of the distinctive impact of European knowledge and economic activity on the people and environments of the newly 'discovered' and colonized lands like Darjeeling hills. The emerging global framework of trade and communication provided the conditions for a process by which European notions about nature were gradually transformed by a plethora of information, impressions and inspirations from the wider world. In this way the commercial and utilitarian purposes of European expansion produced a situation in which both tropical and alpine environment was increasingly utilized as the symbolic location for the idealized landscapes and aspirations of the western imagination. The colonization of Darjeeling hills initiated in the thirties of the nineteenth

century can be described as the transformation of a desolate country seen into an organized, densely settled and intensively exploited landscape. The pressure of population on natural resources and application of new modes of resource use reached unprecedented levels with material interests participated in the colonization process.

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