



## PROCESS AND PROSPECTS OF DARJEELING HILL DEVELOPMENT AND URBANIZATION: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

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### Abstract:

*The rapid growth and development in Darjeeling hills was primarily through the introduction of tea industry in the hills. By the middle of the nineteenth century tea industry had become the major economic activity in Darjeeling. Intact the tea industry exerted a deep influence upon the growth and development of the hill city. The first such influence was found in the improvement of transport system. Initially the industry was almost entirely in the hands of Europeans. The rapid growth of tea industry in Darjeeling hills generated a huge demand of labour force and this could not be supplied by the local inhabitants that are why the Britishers were compelled to invite the outsiders. People of Nepal were preferred instead of Indian Tribes and Indian plainsmen because of their similarities with the local hill people. Actually they were found to be born cultivators resourceful and hardworking. The migration has played a vital role in the population increase in Darjeeling hill area. Naturally it has a pronounce effect on the Urbanization of the region .every year a large number of people migrated from Nepal. Darjeeling hills are the major recipient of these people. The rapid increase of population in the hill made a real urbanization in Darjeeling from quantitative point of view.*

### KEY WORDS:

Britishers, comfort, tea industry, plainsmen , hill city, compelled, Urbanization.

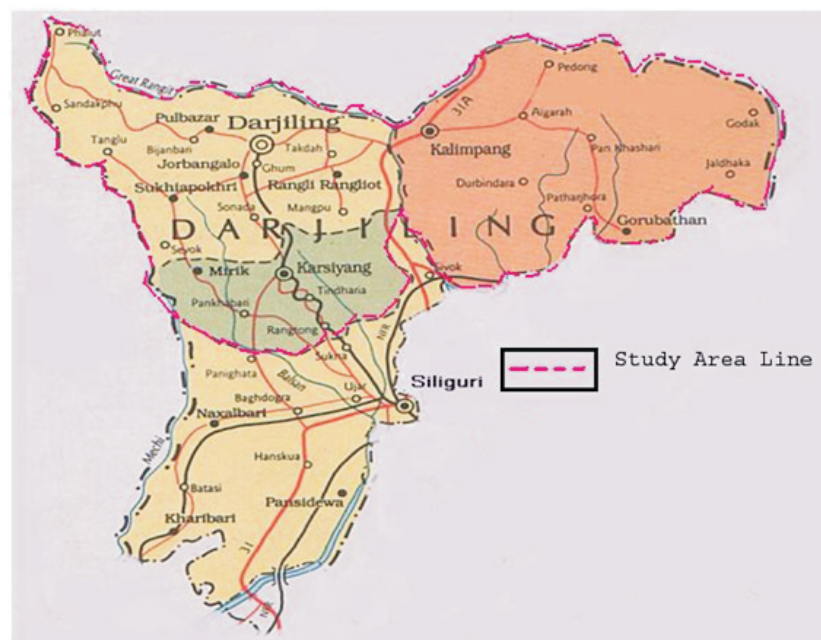
### INTRODUCTION:

The emergence of hill cities in India was not an accidental phenomenon. They are, in essence, conscious European creations, arisen with the expansion of british rule in India. From the very beginning of their rule in India the britishers conceived of India as a land of dirt, disease and sudden death and particularly at the turn of the eighteenth century they had realised that even though they would be able to snatch Indian resources in every possible way but they would surely lose their energy, vigour and health if stayed for a long time within the unbearable hot weather of the Indian plains (cf. Metcalf: 1998: 171). The decision to find out some other means to cope up with the heat became imperative especially when from the increasing number of british females started arriving in India (early part of the nineteenth century), It was not until the Raj tangled with the Gorkhas of Nepal in the Wars of 1816 to 1819 that a solution was found, almost accidentally. For it was noticed that the health and spirits of the men improved dramatically during their sojourn in the hills. The british forces triumphed and at the subsequent peace treaty a substantial area of land was ceded to the victors. Because of the improved health and morale in the hills, it was decided to erect rest centre on the newly acquired land (Westlake, GD: 1993: 16). The birth of the hill stations in India has happened in this way and the region soon included there major hill stations-Simla, Mussoorie, and Nainital.

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### AREA OF STUDY:

Darjeeling district is the northern most district of West Bengal. The area covered by Darjeeling Himalaya is about 1721 sq.kms while the total area of the district is 3202 sq.kms. Darjeeling Himalaya consists of a portion of the outlying hill of the lower Himalayas, which accounts for about 69.1 per cent of the total area of the district. Darjeeling hills that form a part of Darjeeling district of West Bengal is an important segment of the Eastern Himalayan eco-system. These hill areas lie between 26°48' north to 27°13'30" north latitude and between 87°57' east to 87°59' east longitude. The Northern boundary on west is at the peak of Phalut which is nearly 3600 meters high and is the trijunction of the boundaries of Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling. On the North it is bounded by Sikkim and Darjeeling. On the North it is bounded by Sikkim and Bhutan, on the west by Nepal, on the South lies the Siliguri sub-division and on the East the hill division is bounded by Jalpaiguri District.



### DATASOURCE:

The study is based on secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from various Government source, Census of India; District Statistical Hand book, District gazetteer, different books, journals, internet etc.

### OBJECTIVES:

Recently the area of Darjeeling hills in view of its geo-strategic significance has considerably drawn the attention of the government, the planners and policy makers. The area due to its hilly and rugged terrain coupled with numerous socio-political and economic factors is trailing behind in the process of economic development and urbanization.

The objectives of the present study are enumerated as follows:

1. To know the origin and growth of urban centres in Darjeeling Hills.
2. To know the role and activities of the Britishers for urbanization in the study area.
3. To know the factors and process of urbanization in the hill region of Darjeeling in colonial days.
4. To review the basic problem of urbanization in the hills region.
5. To know the formation of British hinterland in colonial days.

## FORMATION OF BRITISH HINTERLAND

During the early decades of nineteenth century the Britishers had felt the need of establishing a hill station in the vicinity of Calcutta since the sojourn towards the hill stations of North India was both time consuming and costly. Underlying this apparent objective, there was also the objective of intervening into the body-politick of Tibet under the guises of trade. This becomes crystal clear when we see that Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India, had favourably disposed to the recommendation of Lloyd and Grant regarding the establishment of Darjeeling hill station, nothing a minute “the great saving of European life and the consequent saving of expense that will accrue both to individuals and to the state”(Foreign Dept. Proceedings; 1833). However, it is to be mentioned here that even though the quest for a hill station in the Eastern India was a conscious European project the selection of Darjeeling as such was accidental.

The place, which was earlier known as 'Dorje-Ling', came into British cognizance accidentally in 1829. Two high ranking British officials namely, General Lloyd and J.W. Grant spent a few days in February of that year in this 'Oid Gorkha Station' while leading their convoy to Sikkim for settling the border dispute that latter had developed with Nepal. The climatic suitability of the place in the hilltop had impressed and they brought into the notice of the government. The then Governor General, Lord Bentinck, later empowered General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman to explore and ascertain the place's suitability for establishing a sanitarium. In due course of time Darjeeling ceded by dint of a treaty in 1835 made between Governor General and Sikkimputtee Raja. However, the development of Darjeeling as a major hill city in colonial India got its pace particularly from 1856 when the border dispute between Sikkim and British India was settled permanently.

## TEA PLANTATION ECONOMY

What is important to note is that though the area was ceded primarily on health grounds it became much promising economically for the Britishers. Consequently, we find that tea plantation on experimental basis was started as early as in 1840 much earlier than the establishment of a sanitarium and by 1860 tea industry flourished in large-scale basis. Eden Sanitarium, the first of its kind, was established in 1883 and was followed by Louis Jubilee Sanitarium (1887). However, this would be unwise to order the colonial intentions in developing Darjeeling as a major hill city. If health consideration was the prime factor behind Darjeeling's cession then trade and commerce was the *raison d'être* of the colonial rule itself. Thus it would be proper to narrate how both these intentions i.e., the 'ascribed need' of economic and political control and the 'felt need' of bodily comfort have contributed in unison to the growth of Darjeeling as a major hill city in colonial India.

The growth and development of Darjeeling and other hill cities in India were somewhat different than the cities of the plains. The cities of the plains were multifunctional whereas the hill cities were primarily meant for seasonal trips of the Britishers. In a certain sense, the Britishers erected the hill cities for catering their own needs of comfort and control. For enjoying both bodily comfort and uninterrupted control over hill resources, they pursued the policy of secluding Darjeeling hills from the plains. Thus on the one hand, they tried to develop Darjeeling as a social space which could replicate the idea of a European country side wherein the ailing and retiring Britishers could regain the 'Saxon energy' and on the other hand, they tried to form a closed social space, based upon the idea of difference of 'hills' and 'plains' for securing control by scarcely allowing the plainmen in the hills except in the forms of a few labourers, business men and managerial staff.

The hill cities were basically British sanctuaries that were defined as India's exact opposite. In fact, this notion of difference can be visibly read in the social history of Darjeeling. Domestication of hill station required not merely a change in terminology but an intervention in the physical world itself (Kennedy, D: 1996 : 47). The English dwellings in the hills in sharp contrast to the regimented bungalows of the plains were designed on the model of English country cottage. Each house like an English country house was given a name that denoted its picturesque site or nostalgia for an England left behind. By 1840 the following residence were erected in Darjeeling like Mount Pleasant, the residence of Lt. General Lloyd, one Tree House known as Beechwood, which was occupied by Dr. Campbell, another named "Bryanstone" after Brin Houghton Hodgson. In "The Darjeeling Guide" of 1845 we find mention made of the following buildings-Rockvile, described as the largest house in the station, Oak Lodge, Vernon Lodge, Woodlands in which Captain Bishop, who commanded the troops, lived; the Dell in which Dr. Griffiths, the then Civil Surgeon, resided another source "The Hand Book of Darjeeling" (1863) mentioned about 70 houses in the station (Dozey, E. C: 1922: 48-49). Many admired the architectural style of the houses. The Calcutta Review praised the Swiss-Cottage-like house... with their well-trimmed gardens gracing the ridges of

Darjeeling (1857; 55:5) . Hooker was also convinced by the miserable attempt of a rest house in Darjeeling to 'unite the Swiss Cottage with Suburban Gothic' (Hooker, J.D: 1854: 11). Each house was surrounded by imported flowers with English fruits and vegetables grown in nearby gardens. Botanical garden was established in Darjeeling to test potential cash crops and to provide seeds and plants to local residents.

Because of the physical condition of the hills and cause of the many private interests engaged in constructing buildings, Darjeeling did not follow the normal pattern of colonial urbanism in India. The ridge is very narrow at top, in the gentler western slope most of the public buildings and bazaar had been built. Along with the physical space, the social space of Darjeeling, containing the indigeneous peoples like the Lepchas and Bhutias, was also shaped to fulfil the needs of British domesticity in the hills. In western imagination these mountain people were noble guardian of 'edenic sanctuaries', conveniently lacked all the vices that marked the Indians of the plains. Less indolent, less enmeshed in caste rigidity, they were the ideal complement to the ideal of separation that lay to the heart of the opposition of hills and plains (Kennedy, 1991).

As the climate of the Darjeeling's high altitude did not suit the man from plains, the British domesticity in the hills depended entirely upon the hill folk. The advent of Christianity played a significant role in moulding the indigeneous folk to suit British taste. Thus we find that only after six years of Darjeeling's cession, that is, in 1841 Rev. William Start visited the station and started working among the Lepchas. Mr. Start along with others have compiled a Nepalese and a Lepcha dictionary and translated Genesis, part of the Exodus and the Mark and John in to Lepcha. Consequently, it has been found that in 1901 census the number of native Christians had increased from 298 to 2829 (O'Malley, L.S.S. 1907).

Along with the indigeneous folk of Darjeeling hills. The missionaries also played a major role in educating them. First a school the Lepchas was opened by Mr. Start and in 1873 a school for the Bhutias was also established. The main intension of the Britishers behind this was to educate the Bhutias and the Lepchas in English so that they could help them in executing political relation with Bhutan and Tibet (Chakrabort, C. 1991).

Educating the European children in Darjeeling hills was not found to be wanting until the advantages of Darjeeling's climate were realised. Person in his note has praised Darjeeling for possessing "one advantage...inestimably beyond all others-environment suitable for the schooling of the younger children, whose parents could so escape the pain and anxiety of a separation little less than those of death". By the end of nineteenth century several English schools, numbering at least 10, were opened up for educating the children of Europeans and Anglo Indians. Most notable among these school were Lorete Convent (1846), St. Paul's (1864), Queen's Hill Girls' School (1895), St. Joseph College (1888). The European school in Darjeeling hills were secondary schools, based on the European model, which were mainly used by the classes of the community next below the class which sends its children to be educated in England (O'Malley, L.S.S. 1907:177). Another feature of these schools was that they almost entirely prohibited from enrolling Indians in them.

During the middle of nineteenth century, Darjeeling hill station did not receive any military significance; not even operated as official centre of power, even though their inhabitants and visitors were intrinsically political beings. It was perhaps in the wake of the 1857 revolt that the Britishers started viewing hill stations differently. Darjeeling had already been recognised for its climatic benefits but its strategic value was appreciated only after the works of Major General D.J.F. Newall were reported. Newall in his Report on the Military Defence of Darjeeling (4.1.1872) and in his voluminous book the Highlands of India Strategically Considered (1882) has examined the strategic importance of Darjeeling. In this book he strongly advocated the military colonisation of the hills. Subsequently, necessary measures were adopted for early and permanent construction of accommodation at Sinchal for a section of British Infantry and a Battery of Garrison Artillery.

#### POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT

Darjeeling hill city become more prominent politically when it provided head quarters of the higher officials of lower Bengal. By 1879 it had become the summer head quarters of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, of the Conservator of Forests, Bengal, and also for a few months of the Commissioner of the Bhagalpurb Division; a Superintending Engineer, Executive Engineer, and Deputy Conservator of Forests were also stationed here (Imperial Gazetteer; 1908: 179). Thus with Darjeeling's political prominence many high ranking British officers started arriving in the station which furthered the necessity to mould the social space more cautiously so as to build up Darjeeling as British hinterland.

Attempts were made to establish centres of recreation for these high-ranking officers. The Planters' Club that was founded in 1868 was converted in 1908 into a Limited Liability Co. And styled 'The Darjeeling Club, Ltd.'. Officers attached to the several services and planters were ipso facto entitled to



membership. There were four billiard tables, a large and well –appointed reading room and library, stables for members' horses and also a three-storied concrete structure for the accommodation of servants. It is interesting to note that the Club was not only exclusively meant for the Europeans but it was also hierarchically arranged that could be ascertained by the list of fees paid by its members. The fees were-rs. 70/-as entrance fee, Rs. 12/-as annual subscription, Rs. 16/- per month for temporary members , Rs. 10/-per month for Army and Navy officers of and above the rank of 1st Lieutenant and Rs. 5/-per month for members below that rank (Dozey, E.C.1922: 88). Reference of European games like cricket, hockey are available which were held at Government House ground and drew large crowds. Polo, another British game, drew fairly large crowds to the Race Course at Lebong. The idea of Golf Link originated in 1905 and Golf took its devotees each Sunday right away to the links at Senchal. Apart from European play ground Darjeeling gained fame for amusing the Englishman to the fullest possible extent. The novel and uncanny idea of a 'ghost dance' at Gymkhana Club hosted at least 60 guests including a party from Government house. The Knights – Errant each year gave an entertainment under the direction of Grand Master, at which over 200 guests, including Their Excellencies attended (Dozey, E.C. 115-118). The Darjeeling Times of 1912 has also reported the unique event of a dog show in Darjeeling hills.

All these amply show that the efforts at providing for the entertainment of the English man were met with complete success. The Britishers thus started arriving more in numbers in the hills for regaining their health and energy and to spend meaningfully their leisure time in a British environ that Darjeeling provided at that time. Consequently, the local trade of Darjeeling was practically confined to supplying the wants of European inhabitants and of the tea planters. The shopkeepers of Darjeeling dealt mostly in European piece goods, stores, glass, hardware and crockery (Imperial Gazetteers, 1908: 179). In fact, the import of European goods in the native market of Darjeeling was surely an attempt to establish an abode in which the nostalgic Europeans could feel at home.

Both the promising climate and the political prominence of Darjeeling had led to its rapid growth. On the one hand, we find the establishment of sanatoria and hospitals like Eden Sanitarium (1883), Louis Jubilee Sanitarium (1887), Victoria Hospital (1864) Small Pox Hospital (1914), and on the other hand we find the erection of public and private buildings in the hills. The extension of buildings was so rapid that it convinced Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker who later, considering this rapidity of growth, has compared the progress of Darjeeling to that of an Australian colony (O'Malley , L.S.S. 1907:35).

Political and military significance of Darjeeling soon made it a hub of imperial power and the possibility of forming a promising hill city was thus firmly established. Darjeeling municipality was established as early as in 1850 and in fact by the turn of nineteenth century Darjeeling had received almost all the urban amenities. By the middle of the nineteenth century tea industry had become the major economic activity in Darjeeling. The rapid progress of urbanization in Darjeeling hills was primarily through the introduction of tea industry in the hills. In fact, the tea industry was a deep influence upon the growth and development of the hill city. The rapid growth of tea industry in Darjeeling hills generated a huge demand of labour force and that could not be supplied by the local inhabitants, the Britishers were compelled to invite the outsiders. When Darjeeling was occupied by the Britishers it had only hundred of houses and the huge population that hosted over the years was the result of the process of immigration. Thus Darjeeling started losing its status of a royal playground and with the independence of India it acquired the status of a district of West Bengal within Indian Union.

#### List of urban centres in Darjeeling Hills:

Towns	Year of getting town status	Present Status	Population in 2001
1)Darjeeling	1850	M	107530
2) Kurseong	1879	M	40067
3) Kalimpong	1931	M	42980
4) Mirik	2001	M	9179

Source: [http:// www.darjeelingtimes.com](http://www.darjeelingtimes.com)

## DARJEELING TOWN

Darjeeling town is situated on the district of Darjeeling, the northern most district of the state of West Bengal. The town is the headquarters of the district and is the largest among the hill towns situated in the district. It spread over an area of 10.7sq km. and comprises of 32 wards. It was established in the year 1850 by the British and thus is one of the oldest municipal towns in the country. As per the provisional figures of the census of India (2001) the town houses about 1.03lakhs of souls with additional average diurnal floating population of 20500-30000 mainly comprising of the tourists and visitors. The principal mode of transport to the town is by road, with the nearest airport located at a distance of 90kms at Bagdogra. The nearest neighbours of Darjeeling town are Kurseong (about 35 kms. away) and Kalimpong towns (about 55 kms. away). Siliguri the major trading centre and the gateway to Northeast and mainland India is about 72 km. south of the town.

## KURSEONG TOWN:

Kurseong town, which grew up as a halting station for military and civil personnel, when the East India Company was developing Darjeeling as a sanatorium for its soldiers. It was declared a municipality in 1879 with a population of 2836. Kurseong municipality which is over 125 years old is the main civic administration body for the town of Kurseong. The municipality is divided in to 20 wards and each has a ward commissioner who is in charge of the individual ward. Kurseong has its own munsif magistrate court and has the police station and town outpost in P.B road. The Sub-divisional officer is the head of the administration at present for the town.

## KALIMPONG TOWN:

Kalimpong is known for its educational institutions many of which were established during the British colonial period. It used to be a gateway in the trade between Tibet and India prior to China's annexation of Tibet and the Sino-Indian war. Kalimpong and neighbouring Darjeeling were major centres calling for a separate Gorkha land state in the 1980s.

Earliest of the hill stations originated as sanatorium for the expatriate British elite, and also originated to serve military and administrative purposes. Urbanization of Kalimpong did not happen that way. There was no significance of this place either from the strategic military point of view or as an administrative centre. Infact it was turned in to a Sub-Divisional headquarter when in 1916 a new Sub-Division was established as a pre condition to urban development. Trade was one important life line, but urbanization as a natural off shoot of a thriving trade centre did not happen to Kalimpong. Location or climatic condition did not seem to attract the British to open another sanatorium township. Kalimpong grew up much later when the hill station had already taken shape in India. Why then Kalimpong did not become yet another hill station in the Darjeeling hills, this is a question that one cannot reach a definite answer.

## MIRIK TOWN:

Mirik emerged as towns in the census as late as in 2001. This is a small hamlet nearly one hours drive from Siliguri. It situated at an elevation of nearly 1767 metres. It is a small hill resort where easily accessible from Siliguri, Kurseong or Darjeeling and is centered on the Sumendu Lake. Boating under the shadow of mountain Kanchanzangha makes for a most leisurely holiday. Remeetay dara, deosi Dara view point nearby. Tea gardens are trip to Pashupati market in Nepal are two of the favourite past times of all tourist. The famous trek of Sandakphu originates from Maneybhanjan the base camp for trekking close to Mirik. Places of interest are Sandakphu, phalut, Tonglu, Gouribas, Palamazua and Kalopokhori which are all assessable from Maneybhanjan, Jorepokhori, Lepchajagat and Sukhiapokhori are also hereby and can be accessed from Mirik as well as Darjeeling. The road to Darjeeling via Mirik is pictures and is traversed by many. Any way Mirik is relatively a new lake Town.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Urbanization itself is an indicator of development. But development will be sustainable only when the growth of urban population is in proportion to the growth and development of the infrastructural facilities available in the urban centres. Development may be sustainable if the city or the urban centre is generative in nature, sustainable development is an approach or even a strategy by which communities seek economic development that also benefits their local environment and quality of life.

2. As the development and progress of the rural economy precedes urbanization in the endogenous process, it is necessary to develop a strong rural economy. This will directly influence the health and functioning of the town by supplying it with the goods and checking the migration of livelihood. The development of modern strong villages is a part of town planning to reduce the burdens and problems in large and small urban centres in the hills. The issue is more relevant when a reverse migration trend starts, as seen in Sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of India, where some urban people are interested in having residences in rural areas. There are many causes of such a phenomenon, among which the polluted environment of town is the primary cause followed by the high price of land and congestion in towns.

3. It may be seen that Darjeeling hills has largely developed due to the exogenous process of urbanization. Rapid urbanization has led to several problems in the towns which also serve as the central focus for the urban settlement of the district. Other problems are also experienced in hill towns. Therefore proper planning is essential to solve the existing problems and prevent future problems.

4. The principle of small towns has to be followed for all hill urban settlements, because the hill ecosystem cannot support big towns. The optimum small size will be determined on the basis of the potential of the region. Therefore, two towns are better than one overgrown town. If the size of a town is about to cross the critical limit, another settlement should be built to accommodate the over population of the existing town so that its population and expansion remain within manageable limits and the environment does not face degradation. A small town is undoubtedly governable, functional and practical in the hilly region.

5. For a better and more comfortable life for urban dwellers, the concept of a balanced neighborhood should be followed. The maximum possible urban amenities and functions have to be provided within a locality to reduce pressure on the central business district (CBD) and other important places where congestion and pollution of the environment are present.

6. Rapid urban Sprawl, road and house building are not only eating up forested hill-slope but are creating a detestable ugly landscape, defacement of aesthetic and scenic beauty around the major towns in particular Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong etc. So the town scape should be in harmony with the local environment and culture, even if it is the result of the exogenous process. It should not appear as a land of different culture in the local framework. Also local aspirations, history and language should be considered while naming towns.

7. The principle of Urban renewal has to be adopted in those parts of the town, generally limited to the inner city and slums. Such rebuilt works are necessary for the good health of towns and their citizens. Destroyed buildings should be similarly treated.

8. Towns are important, but should be at the right place and at an optimum size. There should not be a township at the cost of the environment, forests, fertile lands, villages or rural areas and wetland. Because these areas have their own resource value and none of them can be scarified for a town to be established.

9. If possible the effort should be made to develop all the functions of a town as required for its healthy functioning, so that it can act as a viable and effective centre or growth point in the hierarchy of settlements and all three sectors of the economy.

10. Darjeeling town is the district headquarters and it plays an important role in urbanization. On the other hand Kurseong and Kalimpong the two urban centres and are sub-divisional headquarters. So, it is seen that administrative activities have a great influence in Darjeeling hills urbanization. New administrative headquarters should not be declared and created for the sake of the name, unless all urban amenities and functions are brought there. If necessary, the potentiality for such a town must be seen in the area. The only feature in locating such towns will be premature in birth.

11. An ecological balance has to be achieved by maintaining a harmonious relationship between small towns and modern strong villages and between urban centres and natural environment. It is only possible if rural and urban systems are seen as two sides of the same coin, or the total economic activities of a region. Similarly urban development should not be detrimental to the environment.

12. Finally, A lesson on local environment of the area should be included in school curriculum, so that students will be aware of their local environment and can act accordingly.

## CONCLUSION:

The growth and development of Darjeeling and other hill cities were something different from the cities of the plains. The hill cities were primarily seasonal trip of the Britishers where as the cities of the plains were multifunctional. In a certain sense the Britishers selected the hill cities for their own needs of comfort and control, for enjoying both bodily comfort and control over hill recourses. Thus on the one hand they tried to develop Darjeeling as a social space which could replicate the idea of a European country side and on the other hand they tried to form a closed social space based upon the idea of difference of hills and plains for securing control by scarcely allowing the plainsman in the hills except in the form of a few

labourers, businessman and managerial staff. It is interesting to note that while the Britishers has scarcely allowed the plainsman to interface in to the Darjeeling, the native Maharaja were the regular visitors of this place and they had also their summer resort in Darjeeling. British resident did not entirely object to the princes' entry in to the local sense. For example, both the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and Burdwan took special interest in the field of education. Maharaja of Cooch Behar also played a major role in Starting a social club in 1903 in Darjeeling. They had their own properties in the hills. in a certain sense the native Maharajas were more British than the Britishers. The formation of Darjeeling as an isolated British hinterland was based upon the ideology of differentiation materialized not only physically but also socially, culturally and even politically.

In fact, Darjeeling hills reached its zenith in terms of its development, prosperity and fame as a major hill city in India as long as this difference was maintained. The point is that the history of Darjeeling hill urbanization in colonial India provides a fertile field of innovative research which might open up new vistas of through about Indian social history in general and Indian modernity.

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