

Leisure, economy and colonial urbanism: Darjeeling, 1835–1930

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ABSTRACT: This article posits that the hill station of Darjeeling was a unique form of colonial urbanism. It shifts historiographical interest from major urban centres in colonial India (such as Bombay or Calcutta) and instead attempts a greater understanding of smaller urban centres. In the process, it also interrogates the category of hill stations, which have been understood as exotic and scenic sites rather than as towns that were integral to the colonial economy. In arguing that hill stations, particularly Darjeeling, were not merely the scenic and healthy ‘other’ of the clamorous, dirty and diseased plains of India, it refutes suggestions that the ‘despoiling’ or overcrowding of Darjeeling was incremental to the purposes of its establishment. Instead, it suggests that Darjeeling was part of the colonial mainstream; its urbanization and inclusion into the greater colonial economy was effected from the time of its establishment. Therefore, a constant tension between its exotic and its functional elements persisted throughout.

Introduction

The establishment, evolution and historical trajectory of hill stations in colonial India were determined by racial distinctions and a climatic value system which favoured the hills over the plains.¹ Essentially colonial urban sites situated at mountain ridges away from the tropical plains, the hill stations were built to facilitate the recuperation of European bodies from the heat and diseases of the plains. From the mid-nineteenth century, towns like Darjeeling, Shimla and Ootacamund were established as a requisite

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¹ D. Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Delhi, 1996), 1–14; A.D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London, 1976), 165–76; J.T. Kenny, ‘Climate, race, and imperial authority: the symbolic landscape of the British hill station in India’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (1995), 694–714; Q. Pradhan, ‘Empire in the hills: the making of hill stations in colonial India’, *Studies in History*, 23 (2007), 33–82.

of colonial administration. Like many other colonial institutions, these towns developed multiple nuances and spread geographically. The British built hill towns in other tropical colonies such as Ceylon and the Malay Straits – the earliest such ‘hill station’ was at Penang in Malaya.²

These have generally been understood as a specific development of colonial social history. They have been seen as sites of colonial leisure and recreation; temperate places that represented socially, culturally and architecturally, derivations of metropolitan and imperial symbols of leisure. Accounts of Indian hill stations evoke a nostalgic sense of loss at the contemporary violation of their idyllic beauty through the rise of population and overcrowding in present-day hill stations.³ This article examines the town of Darjeeling in the Bengal Presidency and identifies it as an essential problematic of colonial urban history, not merely insulated colonial retreats that were gradually intruded upon.

In focusing on Darjeeling, the article argues that colonial urbanism had two characteristics. First was the spatial segregation between the native and ‘European’ residential areas, although the latter were intruded upon by affluent Indians in the late colonial period. The second was its integration within colonial economy. Historians have explored these features of colonial urbanism with reference to the eighteenth-century Indian port towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras which were separated into white and black towns while integrated simultaneously within the wider mercantile economy of the English East India Company.⁴ More recent scholarship in the urban morphology of colonial cities in the eighteenth century has suggested that there was an overlapping of territories between the black and white towns; in Calcutta, for instance, ‘conceptions of space and territory were constantly negotiated’.⁵ The black and white towns converged at certain points, especially once wealthy Bengalis began to invest in property within some sections of the white towns. In the process, the stark dualities between the black and white towns in colonial cities were eased, at least visually. But this also created social tensions and a greater urge for exclusivity. As Swati Chattopadhyay points out, ‘In the absence of clearly defined separation the colonizers created discrete containments for both public and private sociability.’⁶

This article argues that the spatial characteristic of colonial urbanism as reflected in Darjeeling needs to be identified with respect to its link with colonial economy. Through the example of Darjeeling, this article

² S.R. Aiken, ‘Early Penang hill station’, *Geographical Review*, 77 (1987), 421–39.

³ M. Panter-Downes, *Ooty Preserved: A Victorian Hill Station* (London, 1967); P. Barr and R. Desmond, *Simla: A Hill Station in British India* (London 1978); J. Fox, *In the Shade of Kanchenjunga* (London, 1993).

⁴ S.M. Nield-Basu, ‘Colonial urbanism: the development of Madras city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 13 (1979), 217–46.

⁵ S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York, 2005), 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*

argues that the towns that the British built in the Indian mountains were integral to the colonial political economy in which the resources of all sites, however scenic, were subject to capitalistic utilization. Dane Kennedy has provided an explanation for the eventual 'despoiling' of the hill stations in the late colonial period. He has argued that their sustenance required legions of subordinates and attracted the aspiring Indian elite, whose presence subverted their pristine quality dislodging the 'private-public distinction' between the cities in the plains and the hill stations in British India.⁷ This article suggests that the change of character that Kennedy has referred to was not anomalistic, rather symptomatic of urbanization of the Darjeeling hills. The expansion and growth of Darjeeling subverted another spatial dichotomy; that between the idyllic hills and the disease-ridden plains in official discourse and public culture. This subversion was not only occasioned by the accommodation of Indians in menial and clerical capacities within the municipal limits of the exclusive hill station. It was intrinsic to the *raison d'être* of Darjeeling as a colonial outpost; its function being not only to serve as a site of medicalized leisure for the British and Indian elite, but also to transform the surrounding newly colonized districts into commercial, revenue yielding, settled economic sites. Once this was achieved, the integration of its resources into the larger colonial economy sustained the expansion and consolidation of the town. Thereafter, the Indian elite sought exclusive urban spaces within the hill station, mimicking the status and privilege available to the British in India.

Colonial administrators planned the hill stations in the nineteenth century to create an idyllic social space away from the tropical climate and the Indianized cities in the plains. Therefore, the hill stations represented topographical, climatic, social and architectural ideals that were radically different from the cities in the plains. But the process of colonizing what were after all remote tropical mountain villages and establishing and sustaining a urban centre which, by the turn of the century, hosted an entire colonial administration for half the year subverted these ideals, and rendered the urban spaces in Darjeeling politically and economically contestable. On the one hand, the tropical mountain location, air and water deluded Europeans; they looked similar to the Alps, but were not uniformly beneficial for their constitutions. The idyllic hill towns even encouraged a few diseases that were similar to those in the tropical plains. On the other hand, the urbanized, lively, lucrative hill stations attracted investment, labour and visitors. In the process, their segregation and social exclusivity were both violated and contested by the British residents as well as by affluent Indians.

While Darjeeling followed the pattern of eighteenth-century urbanism in India, it was also shaped by the specific characteristics of late

⁷ Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 14–15 and 203–4.

nineteenth-century British colonialism. Darjeeling expanded at a time when the British were far more concerned about racial segregation as well as agricultural revenue and international trade, both of which were reflected in the growth of the town.

Climate, colonization and urbanism

The theme of European survival in the tropics engaged medical and official discourses both in Britain and India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸ From the nineteenth century, hardening of racial categories and the dominance of the polygenist theory assigning the different races each to their unique climatic locations in medical and official discourse raised serious doubts about the survival of the Englishman in 'tropical' India.⁹ As David Arnold and others have suggested, tropicality itself was a colonial construction. It was a process that changed colonial perceptions of nature in the tropical world from the paradisiacal and the bountiful to dark, dangerous localities; their flora appeared simultaneously familiar to European nature and yet exotically different.¹⁰ Much like the discipline of ethnography that also developed in the nineteenth century, the study of tropical nature engaged scientific interest and facilitated colonial rule.¹¹ The contrast between the disease ridden, crowded, unsanitary towns in the plains and the pure and healthy air of the 'hills' was therefore a familiar trope of colonial discourse. The numbers of British troops in India increased after the revolt of 1857 and this lent greater urgency to the problem of high mortality among European troops in the tropics.¹² Hill stations or the new towns in the Indian hills were now built in earnest both for European civilians and for the British troops in the army.

Along with this rhetoric of acclimatization and European health in the hill sanatorium of Darjeeling, the commercial and economic benefits of British colonization in the region were also exploited. In the establishment and growth of Darjeeling, the discourse and praxis of climate, health and commerce were inseparable.

The establishment of the town of Darjeeling as well as the expansion of its trade was achieved by poaching territories from Sikkim and Bhutan. The area of Darjeeling and indeed the tracts where most of the other Himalayan hill stations in north India were located were annexed from the growing

⁸ The point has been made by D. Arnold, Introduction, in D. Arnold (ed.), *Warm Climates and Western Medicine: The Emergence of Tropical Medicine 1500–1900* (Amsterdam, 1996), 1–19.

⁹ M. Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600–1850* (New Delhi, 1999), 133–47.

¹⁰ D. Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800–1856* (New Delhi, 1970); N. Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca, NY, 2001).

¹¹ B.S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, 1996).

¹² The proportion of British to Indian soldiers increased from 1:5 or more before the revolt to 1:2 after 1857. See D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army 1860–1940* (London, 1994), 133.

Gorkha kingdom of Nepal.¹³ The rapid conquest of the hill principalities by the Gorkhas as well as British ambitions in the trans-Tibetan trade put Nepal into direct conflict with the East India Company.¹⁴ Under the treaty of Sagauli (1816) between India and Nepal, the East India Company annexed a large section of the western Himalayan terai from Nepal.¹⁵ Here, Shimla, the largest hill station and the summer capital of the viceroy, was built. Under a separate agreement, the tract of Darjeeling (treaty of Titalya, 1817) was given over to the king of Sikkim to create a buffer state between Nepal and India.

British administrators first noticed the possibilities for a sanatorium town at the site of a Lepcha village (Dorje-ling) in the eastern Himalayas. In 1828, Captain G.A. Lloyd, an army official, and J.W. Grant, the commercial resident at Malda in northern Bengal, arrived at Chongtung near Darjeeling, and found it ideal for a sanatorium town.¹⁶ In 1829, the government of India sent Capt. J.D. Herbert, deputy surveyor general, to the site to explore possibilities for the establishment of a sanatorium for British troops.¹⁷ In 1835, Lloyd had leased the area from the king of Sikkim for an annual payment of Rs 3000.¹⁸ There were supposedly about a hundred indigenous inhabitants at the site, who were mainly from the tribe of the Lepchas.¹⁹ After Lloyd had organized the labour for building the road to Darjeeling, the government replaced him with Surgeon Major Archibald Campbell, formerly assistant resident in Nepal.²⁰ Campbell was vested with wide-ranging fiscal, civil and judicial powers and oversaw its expansion.²¹

Like most hill stations, Darjeeling was established around the nucleus of a church, *cutcherry* (administrative office), bazaar and a few houses.²² Initially, Darjeeling was something of a frontier zone, offering opportunities to enterprising Europeans. Such were the Wernicke-Stolke family, for instance, who arrived in 1841 as Moravian missionaries, one of three families.²³ Their mission soon closed down, but they found other

¹³ K. Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests: The Process and Consequences of the Unification of Nepal, with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal* (Calcutta, 1991), 89–105.

¹⁴ D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal: Rise and Growth in the Eighteenth Century* (Calcutta, 1975), 332–417.

¹⁵ J. Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal: John Company at War* (Oxford, 1971), 344–8.

¹⁶ E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District with a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District* (Calcutta, 1922), 2–3.

¹⁷ *Report on Dargeeling, a Place in the Sikkim Mountains, Proposed as a Sanitarium, or Station of Health* (Calcutta, 1830), 3.

¹⁸ J.D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals: Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas etc.*, vol. I (New Delhi, 1999), 110. See also F. Pinn, *The Road of Destiny: Darjeeling Letters* (Calcutta, 1996), 119–29.

¹⁹ L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling* (Calcutta, 1907), 22.

²⁰ Pinn, *The Road of Destiny*, 174–5.

²¹ R.D. O'Brien, *Darjeeling: The Sanitarium of Bengal, and its Surroundings* (Calcutta, 1883), 14–15.

²² *The Darjeeling Guide; Including a Description of the Country, and of its Climate, Soil and Productions with Travelling Directions etc.* (Calcutta, 1845), 43.

²³ MSS Photo Eur 421, Asia Pacific and African Collection, British Library, 4 (APAC).

opportunities locally; 'The development of Darjeeling as a hill station, sanatorium and cantonment offered chances for anyone with initiative'.²⁴ Johann Wernicke began supplying timber from the nearby forests to government, and then providing bricks from his own kilns for building construction. He prospered with the town. His grandson Frank (his name Anglicized to Warwick) was sent to England, where he and his siblings received an expensive public school education.²⁵

Darjeeling became the base for the exploration of the eastern Himalayan frontiers of the British empire in India, both for its rich natural history as well as untapped resources and trading networks. When the botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker visited Darjeeling in 1848, he found it a pleasant town with a resident European population. He could, at the end of an eventful two-year visit, compare the growth of Darjeeling to an Australian colony; 'not only in amount of building, but in the accession of native families from the surrounding countries'.²⁶ While it proved popular with convalescent or leisure-seeking Europeans, the efforts of Campbell further established its position as a trading centre for the surrounding areas:

At the former period there was no trade whatsoever; there is now a very considerable one, in musk, salt, gold dust, borax, soda, woollen cloths, and especially in ponies . . . The trade has been greatly increased by the annual fair which Dr Campbell has established at the foot of the hills, to which many thousands of natives flock from all quarters, and which exercises a most beneficial influence throughout the neighbouring territories.²⁷

Based from Darjeeling, Hooker went on several botanizing trips in the eastern Himalayas, particularly to Sikkim.²⁸ Consent for his expeditions in Sikkim territories was reluctant, and on one trip a faction of the Sikkim court arrested him and Campbell. Their six-week captivity ended when the British government threatened an invasion. The episode resulted in cession of the annual payment of Rs 6,000 (it was doubled from Rs 3,000 in 1846) to Sikkim and the annexation of around 640 square miles to British territory at the frontier.²⁹ In 1860–61, a new treaty 'guaranteed the opening out of the country to trade, and the removal of all restrictions on travellers and merchants, . . . fixed the minimum rates of transit duties to be levied on goods between British India and Tibet'.³⁰ Subsequently, the efforts of

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, vol. I, 108–9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ David Arnold has argued that the *Himalayan Journals* represented India, particularly the eastern Himalayas, as a decisively tropical region, despite the variations in temperature and the existence of fauna of typically found in temperate regions in the area. Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, 199–201.

²⁹ O'Malley, *Darjeeling*, 29–31. See also Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District*, 4.

³⁰ O'Malley, *Darjeeling*, 32.

Campbell resulted in making the area (through Kalimpong) the centre of the trans-Tibet trade and also encouraged immigration from Nepal.³¹

The cantonment and the town of Darjeeling were established to provide a place of rejuvenation to British troops and civilians away from the heat and dust of the plains of northern India. The 'unhealthiness' of the 'plains', especially of the Bengal plains after the cholera epidemics between 1830 and 1860, became a convention of medical discourse in nineteenth-century colonial India.³² J.T. Pearson, an army surgeon who arrived in Darjeeling in 1839 when the first buildings were erected, 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.'³³ He also proposed that whatever diseases did prevail in the mountains were somehow contracted in the plains. Commonly held from the mid-nineteenth century, these assumptions persisted in medical and non-medical texts over the next century. 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, articulated the hills-plains dichotomy clearly: 'The fearful epidemics of the plains seldom penetrate the Himalayas, which, moreover, seem to have a positive exemption from endemic 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.'³⁴ Hodgson's remarks validated the need for high-altitude sanatorium towns for the British in India.³⁵ Hooker, who spent several months in Darjeeling, endorsed the rejuvenating qualities of Darjeeling for Europeans.³⁶ After 1857, cantonments for European convalescents mushroomed near all existing hill sanatoriums.

Yet, high-altitude convalescent cantonments were often unsatisfactory. The Jalapahar convalescent depot for British troops was built in 1848 and located on a narrow ridge above the Mall in Darjeeling.³⁷ In 1859, it included barracks, a hospital and officers' quarters.³⁸ The medical officer in charge, one G. Maclean, found its climate unsuitable; 'from ... December to ... October the climate here is wet, foggy and cold. From ... April

³¹ For immigration to the Darjeeling district, see T.B. Subba, *The Quiet Hills: A Study of the Agrarian Relations in Hill Darjeeling* (Delhi, 1985), 10–17.

³² Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 19; Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, 42–54.

³³ J.T. Pearson, *Note on Darjeeling* (Darjeeling, 1839), 11–12.

³⁴ B. Hodgson, 'On the colonization, commerce, physical geography etc. of the Himalaya mountains and Nepal', *Selections from Records of Government of Bengal*, 27–32, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 15.

³⁵ The distribution of cholera as well as malaria was held to be affected by altitude. See M. Harrison, 'Tropical medicine in nineteenth-century India', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 25 (1992), 299–318.

³⁶ Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, vol. I, 110.

³⁷ Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District*, 30.

³⁸ War Office: Army Medical Department: returns and reports, The National Archives, Kew (TNA): PRO/WO/334/171, 1

to the end of September the rains pour down incessantly.³⁹ The efficacy of the climate that was meant to regenerate invalided British soldiers from the diseases and debility experienced in the plains came into question. A second cantonment was built in 1844 at Senchal, close to Darjeeling.⁴⁰ The army began to build permanent barracks at Senchal in 1857 and they were partially completed in 1859, when Maclean intervened. He pointed out that the troops which had been in India for a period were unused to the extreme cold and dampness; they had not the physical resilience to recoup in extreme cold in the heights of Darjeeling. This was a reaffirmation of the logic of physical weakening of the white man in the tropics: but the solution did not appear to be an absolute acceptance of the reversal of climatic zones; indeed, such was hardly possible. A too literal interpretation of the hills–plains duality posed problems the army had to confront in tropical mountain sanatoria. Nevertheless, troops suffering from fever, ague, diarrhoea as well as dysentery, bronchitis and pthisis continued to be sent to Jalapahar as well as Senchal, where the climate was even worse.⁴¹ David Rennie, an army surgeon stationed at Darjeeling during the Anglo-Bhutan war in 1865, also dwelled on the fog and the dampness, the fevers and ague among the British.⁴²

The cantonment at Senchal was finally abandoned in 1867 and transferred to Jalapahar among rumours of several suicides by soldiers 'owing to the excessive isolation and bitter cold'.⁴³ The survival of the Jalapahar cantonment demonstrates the tenacity of the hills–plains dichotomy in official discourse. The abandoned Senchal cemetery was a grim reminder of the limitations of mountain sanatoria as convalescent depots in British India, but this did not inhibit the expansion of the hill station of Darjeeling.

Leisure and commerce

The two dichotomies that characterized colonial habitation in India; race (as demonstrated in the eighteenth-century white and black towns) and climate and geography (the nineteenth-century healthy hills and unhealthy plains) were both present in the urbanization of Darjeeling. Yet at the same time, they had their limits and were often breached. In the hill station, a conflation of the spatial and the racial dichotomies occurred. The undistinguished verses below, for instance, evoke the 'hills–plains' dichotomy, a generalized colonial trope for the survival of the white races

³⁹ TNA: PRO/WO/334/171, 2.

⁴⁰ Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District*, 151.

⁴¹ TNA: PRO/WO/334/171, 7.

⁴² D.F. Rennie, *Bhootan and the story of the Dooar War* (London 1866), 302–49.

⁴³ Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District*, 15. In 1868, of the 142 admissions to Jalapahar cantonment hospital, 50 were for 'miasmatic diseases', 19 for diseases of the 'digestive system' and 12 for 'diseases of the nervous system'. See TNA: PRO/WO/334/40.

in the tropics even in the twentieth century, when climatic and miasmatic theories were on the wane. A Welcome:

When you feel, below, dead-beat,
Overpowered by trying heat,
Worn by day, at night no rest;
Then, 'tis surely manifest,
That you should at once take train;
Come above, and health regain!⁴⁴

Colonial towns in the hills, such as Darjeeling, Shimla and Ootacamund, hosted seasonal visitors and a smaller number of European residents and inspired adulatory prose as well as poetry.⁴⁵ Kenny has argued that the rush for these hill stations in the nineteenth century reflected the need to carve out a social space that was European and sanitized, as the towns in the plains of India increasingly came to be identified with dirt and filth. There was an architectural and social distancing between Indians and Europeans in these towns: the native bazaars were always located separately, and at a lower elevation from the European habitations. Physical distance was expressive of social distance.⁴⁶

The urban space of Darjeeling replicated sites of leisure in Europe. The historiography of colonial hill stations have emphasized their distinctiveness as hybridized mock-European mountain sanatoria, transposed to the tropical colonies and finally subverted by colonial realities. As this section will demonstrate, the morphology of the hill station also has an older history, borrowed from early colonial town planning. Despite this sanatory and tranquil location in the remote hill tops, it was also intrinsically connected with colonial commercial and revenue enterprises.

British society in India had a notion of leisure that was distinct. Indeed, the world of the sahib (and the memsahib) when not on tour revolved round the club of the civil station which offered him the company of other Europeans, whisky, beer and gin; afternoon tea, bridge, tennis, as well as the occasional cricket match. In the hill stations, these pursuits remained similar and moreover replicated many Victorian pleasures of the upper classes – the amateur theatre, the occasional grand ball, the daily promenades on the Mall. The forests around Darjeeling also inspired sporting men as much as it did naturalists.⁴⁷ In the early nineteenth century, the idea of sport was associated with leisure pursuits and a sporting

⁴⁴ J.A. Keble, *Darjeeling Ditties and Other Poems: A Souvenir* (Calcutta, 1908), 14.

⁴⁵ See K. Philip, *Civilising Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South Asia* (Hyderabad, 2003), 46–7.

⁴⁶ Kenny, 'Climate, race, and imperial authority'.

⁴⁷ When the Darjeeling Natural History Society was founded in 1923, the articles mostly comprised hunting anecdotes. See 'Game birds of Sikkim including the Darjeeling district and of the Jalpaiguri district, Bengal', *Journal of the Darjeeling Natural History Society*, 1 (1926), 1–3, and 'Ethics of shooting game with aid of Artificial Light', 8, and 'Tiger stories, leopard stories; two incidents', in *ibid.*, 2 (1927), 15–17.

world came to constitute the various outdoor pursuits of 'hunting, racing, shooting, angling, cricket, walking'.⁴⁸ The discourses of leisure in early modern Europe included the educational, legal and political debates on leisure, the religious-moral discourse which identified leisure with waste of time and finally the medical discourse, which emphasized the benefits of leisure in terms of gains in health and the psychological necessity for rest and recreation.⁴⁹ Urban settlements such as Darjeeling embodied ideal conditions for recreation as well as rejuvenation for the European elite, but they were also the consequence of the evolution of colonial town planning in India from the eighteenth century onwards.

Colonial hill stations, with their characteristic architecture and topography as distinctive urban spaces, in fact carried forward a tradition of civil stations and European segregated spaces from the main urban towns in the plains. From the seventeenth century, the colonial ports of Madras and Calcutta and to an extent Bombay retained distinctions between the Indian and the European residential parts of the town.⁵⁰ P.J. Marshall has argued that 'although they never achieved the kind of segregation that Europeans later established in some Indian towns, by withdrawing to the cantonments and civil lines, the British in Calcutta always aimed to live in their own town and were largely successful in this aim'.⁵¹ After the revolt of 1857, the morphology of many Indian towns was deliberately marked out into the native parts and the European enclave. Therefore, the civil lines, the cantonments, the wide roads and the sanitary regimes of colonial Lucknow were self-consciously different from the maze of old lanes and crowded bazaars of *nawabi* Lucknow.⁵² Kanpur had a similar trajectory, although established less formally than in Lucknow. When the various British-owned industries in Kanpur took off in the nineteenth century, their owners and managers lived in riverside houses that were secluded and airy and grew in their kitchen gardens all sorts of English vegetables for their tables.⁵³ They created minor enclaves that were clearly marked out European residential areas in Kanpur. Similarly, the British in nineteenth-century Benaras stayed two miles away from the crowded old town in a new suburb where they built sprawling bungalows open on four sides to let the air in.⁵⁴ After 1857, medical opinion and political and administrative expediency encouraged the sustenance of hill stations such as Shimla, Ootacamund and Darjeeling. Although

⁴⁸ P. Burke, 'The invention of leisure in early modern Europe', *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), 136–50.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ M. Kosambi and J.E. Brush, 'Three colonial port cities in India', *Geographical Review*, 78 (1988), 32–47.

⁵¹ P.J. Marshall, 'The white town of Calcutta under the rule of the East India Company', *Modern Asian Studies*, 34 (2000), 307–31.

⁵² V. Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow* (Princeton, 1984).

⁵³ C. Joshi, *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories* (Delhi, 2003), 24–7.

⁵⁴ B.S. Cohn, 'The British in Benares: a nineteenth-century colonial society', in B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1987), 422–62.

unique topographically, the mountain sanatoria or the hill stations were functionally similar to the 'white towns'. They evoked a romantic idyll that was scenic and yet were intensely urban. 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 such as trout fishing and hunting – 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 to the town lent its social space glamour and urgency. That is why the hills–plains dichotomy survived in medical discourse and official policy despite contradictory evidence.

Medical discourse in the late nineteenth century continued to endorse Darjeeling's distinction from the plains.⁵⁵ When fevers occurred they were attributed to the 'plains'.⁵⁶ The virtues of the climate and situation of Darjeeling were sometimes even held to surpass that of Europe.⁵⁷ One consequence of the healthy hills discourse was in the formulation of diseases supposed to be unique to the 'hills', such as 'hill-diarrhoea'.⁵⁸ Hill-diarrhoea was supposed to occur not only in the Indian mountain sanatoria, but any elevated town (including in Natal and Hong Kong).⁵⁹ The consequence of 'hill-diarrhoea' could replicate that tropical malady that Europeans were fleeing from – a general 'debility'.⁶⁰ One physician contemplated an 'upper limit to the diarrhoea region', and recommended escape to heights above 12,000 feet to avoid hill-diarrhoea.⁶¹ Yet another concluded that 'Elevation being the principal cause of the disease, all that is necessary for the cure is a return to a lower level . . . Men suffering severely from hill-diarrhoea in Simla have no recurrence . . . of it if they go down to Syree or Solon.'⁶²

The diagnosis and nomenclature of 'hill-diarrhoea' were descriptive. Descriptive nomenclatures were common in contemporary medical discourse – for instance, 'Pali plague', 'Burdwan fever' and 'Simla trots', the last being the colloquial for hill-diarrhoea in Shimla. But the formulation of 'hill-diarrhoea' also highlights a tendency to construct particularly 'hill' diseases because it was unacceptable that simple diarrhoea, an affliction sadly pervasive in the tropical plains, should also invade the mountains. 'Hill-diarrhoea' simultaneously subverted the idyll of the uncontaminated

⁵⁵ O'Brien, *Darjeeling*, 22–3.

⁵⁶ S.O. Bishop, *Medical Hints for the Hills* (Darjeeling, 1888), 64.

⁵⁷ O'Brien, *Darjeeling*, 24.

⁵⁸ Wellcome Library, London, WMS 3 MS 6933, 54.

⁵⁹ Any residence on an elevated space, even a mound, was preferable to the flat earth anywhere in the 'tropics'. See G.M. Giles, *Climate and Health in Hot Countries and the Outlines of Tropical Climatology* (London, 1904), 2.

⁶⁰ W.G. Macpherson, 'Memorandum on hill diarrhoea and its treatment by perchloride of mercury', *Indian Medical Gazette*, 22 (1887), 193–4.

⁶¹ 'The relation of elevation to hill diarrhoea', *Indian Medical Gazette*, 27 (1892), 254.

⁶² A. Crombie, 'The treatment of hill-diarrhoea', *Indian Medical Gazette*, 27 (1892), 129–32.

hill station and served to keep the disease environment of the hills distinct from that of the plains.

This construction of specific 'hill-diseases' is further illustrated with the formulation of 'hill-malaria'. Long after the dissemination of the theory of mosquito-vector transmission, 'hill-malaria' existed as a separate category in medical discourse.⁶³ Even though most hill stations experienced regularly epidemics of cholera and small-pox, the sustenance of a distinct disease-environment for the 'hills' helped retain the hills-plains dichotomy in medical and official discourse.

As its expansion and the glut of seasonal visitors testified, Darjeeling retained its reputation as a sanatorium town where leisure, governance and a healthy lifestyle all appealed to the British and, eventually, to the Indians as well. The 'Eden Sanitarium and Hospital' was founded in 1882 to cater exclusively to Europeans and the Lowis Jubilee Sanitarium for Indians was set up within five years, in 1887.⁶⁴ The Eden Sanitarium allowed self-referrals and catered mostly to patients suffering from 'anaemia and debility'. Essentially a site for medicalized leisure, it competed with local boarding houses for clientele; like them, its occupancy rose and fell according to the weather and the exchange value of the rupee that determined the annual traffic 'home' for many British in India.⁶⁵

The 'Lowis Jubilee Sanitarium', set up with donations from the Indian landed aristocrats, performed a similar function for affluent Indians. The racial etiquette that excluded sometimes even the highest placed Indians (and extended to people of mixed race) from key social spheres in British India formed the basis of support among the upper echelons of Indian society for the nationalist movement. This contest for social space also translated to an appreciation of mountain sanatoria for the health of Bengalis in the twentieth century. In 1906, the civil surgeon of the town ruled against a 'pthisis ward' in the Lowis Jubilee Sanitarium on the grounds that the climate of Darjeeling would make consumptive patients worse, and the governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, endorsed his opinion. Consequently, questions were raised in the Bengal legislative assembly and *The Bengalee* demanded, 'Are we to understand that what is good for the Eden Sanitarium, to which only Europeans are admitted, is not good for the Lowis Jubilee Sanitarium which is resorted to by "natives" only?'⁶⁶ The government gave in and the pthisis ward remained in place. By the end of the nineteenth century, Indian elite, particularly Bengalis, staked a claim on Darjeeling. In 1880, a prominent landlord like the maharajah of Burdwan possessed a fine summer palace in Darjeeling.⁶⁷ Professional men such as civil servants and barristers also

⁶³ See C. Strickland and H.P. Chaudhury, 'More on hill malaria', *Indian Medical Gazette* (1936), 267–9.

⁶⁴ O'Malley, *Darjeeling*, 188.

⁶⁵ IOR/P3184 (APAC), 136; IOR/P/3418 (APAC), 7.

⁶⁶ *The Bengalee*, Tuesday, 27 Nov. 1906, 3.

⁶⁷ H. Sanyal, *Darjeelinger Itihas* (Calcutta, 2005), 25.

owned property in Darjeeling. Many others visited during the summer, staying at one of the several boarding houses that sprang up to cater to Indian visitors.⁶⁸ Similarly, Shimla also burgeoned and accommodated Indian, most contentiously native, princes from the neighbouring Punjab.⁶⁹

Kennedy has stressed the Edenic sanctuary aspect of the hill station, and argued that the British understood the Lepchas, the indigenous people as the 'guardians' of the Edenic sanctuary, because they did not confront annexation militarily and were amenable to missionary activity and domestic servitude in the British-Indian households in Darjeeling.⁷⁰ However, the demography of the entire Darjeeling hill area as well as the town itself changed drastically after its annexation to British India, heavily influenced by immigration from eastern Nepal. This was the consequence of a policy adopted by Campbell to populate and settle the entire district and to provide the labour to sustain the European habitation of the town. Darjeeling expanded in concert with extension of imperial control over eastern Himalayan economy and trade.

The town of Darjeeling became the centre as well as the symbol of transformation of the entire region. The British encouraged trade between the borders and even fuelled dreams of a trans-Tibetan trade, the subject of many treaties with Nepal as well as with Tibet. Nepali immigration proved useful when the tea plantations, an enormously labour-intensive industry, took off commercially in the region in 1856. At first, many crossed the border to work for a season.⁷¹ Gradually, many settled in Darjeeling. The successes of the tea plantation industry made Darjeeling critical to the colonial economy, notwithstanding the scenic landscape. The 'Edenic sanctuary' was always a part of the colonial economy – not just a refuge from the ills of the tropics. Not just within the town, but even in the outlying regions, the indigenous Lepchas were pushed out of the area 'partly due to their inability to stand Paharia competition for land and partly due to the daily increase in population of the place' by the more enterprising Paharia (Nepali) immigrants.⁷² The Lepchas practised *jhum* (shifting) cultivation, which the colonial officials looked upon with suspicion and disdain, because their aim was to settle the land with permanent rent-paying cultivators. But even those Lepchas who tried to cultivate permanent fields were driven out by the Nepali money-lenders who usurped their land, by the turn of the century.⁷³

Campbell introduced tea, which contributed most to the transformation of the economic base and geographical space of the entire Darjeeling

⁶⁸ K.C. Bhanja, *Darjeeling at a Glance – a Handbook Descriptive and Historical of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Tibet* (Calcutta, 1942), 77.

⁶⁹ P. Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (Delhi, 1990), 95–104.

⁷⁰ Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 63–87.

⁷¹ See O'Malley, *Darjeeling*, 317.

⁷² Memorandum of manager, government estate to deputy commissioner, Darjeeling, 20 Jun. 1898, general department, collection G, file no. 32 (Record Room, Darjeeling).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

hills.⁷⁴ This industry brought about the demographic transformation and encroachment within the town itself. The expansion of the tea plantation in Darjeeling was linked to the explorations of the frontier territories of the region. He distributed tea seedlings to various British settlers in the Darjeeling hill region, and many succeeded in cultivating it.⁷⁵ He also experimented with the manufacture of coarse paper by importing artisans from Nepal, using material available locally.⁷⁶ He even tried to grow cotton in the region.⁷⁷ There were also plans to establish cinchona plantations through private enterprise.⁷⁸ Moreover, government took over large sections of the land in Darjeeling district and demarcated them as reserved forests. It expected forest management to 'supply the station of Darjeeling and the cantonment . . . with timber, firewood and charcoal' and eventually supply the requirements of the tea industry.⁷⁹ After his retirement, Campbell recounted: 'When I took charge there were not more than fifty families in the whole tract . . . In 1861, when I left Darjeeling, the total population was estimated at 60,000.'⁸⁰

The sanatorium town as well as the Darjeeling district became a part of the colonial economy. The completion of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 1881 reduced the travelling time for visitors as well as providing for the transport of tea and timber.⁸¹ While towns like Shimla and Ootacamund served as the summer capitals for the governments of India, Punjab and Madras respectively, Darjeeling served as the administrative capital of the government of Bengal which shifted from Calcutta to Darjeeling during the summer months. There was a constant tension, therefore, between the idyll of a sanatorium resort and the reality of a commercially busy and politically vital colonial hill station. This tension was reflected in its population as well. Although Darjeeling itself came to embody the entire lifestyle of a leisured, rejuvenated class of Europeans, they were nevertheless not *of* the leisured classes but included traders,

⁷⁴ A. Campbell, 'Note on the culture of the tea plant at Darjeeling', *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, 6 (1848), 123–4. See also *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, 7 (1849), 31.

⁷⁵ J.A. Crommelin, 'A brief account of the experiments that have been made with a view to the introduction of the tea plant at Darjeeling', *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, 8 (1852), 91–5.

⁷⁶ *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, 1 (1842), 210–21.

⁷⁷ A. Campbell, 'On the cultivation of cotton in the Darjeeling Morung; and the capabilities of that tract for the extensive growth of superior cottons', *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, 7 (1850), 287. The cultivation of the superior variety of cottons in India was a very crucial component of scientific agronomy in colonial India.

⁷⁸ J.A.H. Louis, *The Gates of Thibet: A Bird's Eye View of Independent Sikkim, British Bhootan and the Doars* (Calcutta, 1894), 8.

⁷⁹ D. Brandis, *Suggestions Regarding the Management of the Forests in the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts, Bengal* (Simla, 1880), 14.

⁸⁰ A. Campbell, 'On the tribes around Darjeeling', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, 7 (1869), 144–59.

⁸¹ *Darjeeling and its Mountain Railway: A Guide and Souvenir* (Kolkata, 2002).

administrators, planters, soldiers and professionals in nineteenth-century India.

Darjeeling marked a break from the European concepts of sanatorium. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in Europe, sanatoria in the mountains were culturally understood in Romantic terms; consumption was seen as a disease of the self. Cultural authority and aesthetic sensibilities, particularly of the upper classes (later, of the middle classes in imitation) were invested in Italy and southern France as sites of cure for consumption.⁸²

In the colonial context, the mountains changed meaning. The European self here was articulated in terms of the landscapes and the mountains themselves. The Europeans cultivated 'English' gardens and built Swiss-style cottages in the Himalayas. The colonial context of the construction of this hills–plains dichotomy was imbued with ambiguities. Yet, the social mores of the Victorian middle classes in Britain were replicated in some manner in the hill stations. This included the social and political spaces inhabited in the hill stations. They did not entirely exclude, but had very limited connections with, other classes of Europeans in India: the British troops lodged in the cantonment convalescent homes, for instance. Some distinctions were certainly subsumed in the colonial context because planters and officers, soldiers and merchants all belonged to the 'ruling class'.⁸³

The fundamental tension between the romantic sanatorium town and the colonial hill station was heightened in magnitude from the turn of the century, when its absorption within the larger colonial economy was entrenched with the successes of the tea and timber industry, its popularity as a resort and the ever-increasing business of the colonial bureaucracy. These tensions were played out in negotiations for urban spaces within the town.

Urban expansion and struggle for exclusivity

By the early twentieth century, a recurrent theme in the writings on Darjeeling, both by the British as well as the Indian elite, was the 'overcrowding' in Darjeeling. The population of the town had been rising steadily, with more British settlements, residences and clubs of tea plantation managers, summer retreats of the Indian elite. Simultaneously, there was a steady inflow of Nepalis and other 'natives' who migrated to Darjeeling in search of livelihood. As a colonial urban settlement that

⁸² C. Lawlor and A. Suzuki, 'The disease of the self: representing consumption, 1700–1830', *Bulletin of History of Medicine*, 74 (2000), 458–94.

⁸³ For the working-class backgrounds of Scottish entrepreneurs in Bengal and their gentrification in the colonial context, see D. Chakrabarty, 'On deifying and defying authority: managers and workers in the jute mills of Bengal circa 1890–1940', *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 124–86.

sought to retain its spatial exclusivity, Darjeeling acquired a strong class character. The population rose from 94,996 in 1872 to 249,117 in 1901.⁸⁴

The town was located on a Y shaped ridge.⁸⁵ It had 70 'villas' and large houses in 1870, and in 1922 this number rose to 351.⁸⁶ The Mall, the highest point in the town, skirted the Government House while parallel roads wound below, accommodating 'European' hotels, 'villas' and offices. One end of the Mall followed a path to the Bhotia monastery, flanked by 'Bhotia busti' at the bottom of the ridge; where the local Lepchas as well as immigrant labourers lived. The Commercial Road largely comprised of 'European' establishments, including the Senchal Dairy Farm, Ottewill's Millinery Establishment, Smith-Stanistreet (pharmacists), the post-office and the Planters' Club and led down the hill side to the Cart Road and market square (the bazaar). The bazaar accommodated Indian commercial concerns, including Marwari wholesale grocers and suppliers. It was close to the railway station. Beyond the bazaar was Chandmari, the 'Indian' quarter of the town, occupied by Bengali clerks and professionals. The Indian boarding houses and hotels were at the bottom of the ridge. Aristocratic Indians such as the zamindar of Darbhanga and the maharajah of Koch Behar owned large houses located on the road skirting the Mall. By the 1920s, 'Southfields' was the property of the Bengali industrialist Sir R.N. Mukherjee, while the Koch Behar mansion was transferred back to the government.⁸⁷ Generally, while Indian landed men such as the raja of Digpatia or the maharaja of Bardwan preferred to build palaces at a distance from town centre, affluent professional Bengalis preferred residences closer to the Mall, in the 'European' part of the town.

The increase in numbers of both residents and seasonal visitors reflected the composite character of the population of the town; greater numbers of British visitors and residents, managers of the burgeoning tea plantations in north Bengal and Indian elite and migrant labourers. During World War I, Darjeeling was also a military and air base for British troops.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it was the poorer sections within the town who acquired visibility as the undesirable 'crowd'. From the turn of the century, the municipal government and the elite in Darjeeling sought to limit the short-term visits by middle-class Bengalis as well as economic migration by casual labourers to the town.

Once the therapeutic value of a salubrious climate for Indians was established, one way of retaining the social exclusivity of town for the British and affluent Indians was to develop alternative hill sanatoria for them. In 1903, the municipal commissioners of Kurseong, a small town at a lower height in the Darjeeling, appealed to the government to develop

⁸⁴ *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Bengal*, vol. II (Calcutta, 1909), 197.

⁸⁵ Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District*, p. 39.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ 'Hill depot, Darjeeling', AIR 29/493, TNA.

it as a hill resort.⁸⁹ The government agreed that Darjeeling was 'greatly in need of relief from overcrowding', and that the climate of Kurseong 'is better adapted than that of Darjeeling to many constitutions, especially those of Indian gentlemen'.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, 'Indian gentlemen' well ensconced in Darjeeling also sought to keep out their countrymen of a different class. Indeed, the maharaja of Burdwan contributed Rs 20,000 for the extension of the hill cart road to Kurseong and offered further assistance.⁹¹

In 1909, a few eminent Bengalis met government officials to discuss the establishment of sanatoria for the benefit of the 'poorer classes'.⁹² They included the maharaja of Bardwan, Kailash Chandra Bose (lawyer and a philanthropist), and Dr Nil Ratan Sarkar, a prominent physician and the founder of the Indian Medical Association). They asked the sanitary commissioner of Bengal to draw up a project for a sanatorium town for lower-middle-class Indians in forested plateaus of Bihar. The maharaja of Bardwan contemplated that the proposed sanatorium town would be 'purely for people of the poorer classes, such as the low paid clerical staff'.⁹³ This was to prevent Darjeeling being overrun with cheap boarding houses which now accommodated the lower middle classes who thronged the hill town at its edges. The proposed alternative locations were at Madhupur, Deoghur and Simultola; all small towns in the hills of Bihar.⁹⁴

The perception of an overcrowded Darjeeling was enhanced when a major landslide occurred, causing fatalities among the British as well as the Indians, and was attributed to deforestation within the town. As a result, the 'native' settlements within Darjeeling were pushed to new areas. In 1906, the district official appealed to the government to allow construction at the Toong Soong Basti, condemned as an unsafe area by the Landslip Committee of 1906.⁹⁵ The government refused to relax building restrictions at that site.⁹⁶ But the town continued to grow at the edges. In 1919, a survey of the town by government recommended the appointment of a health officer for Darjeeling.⁹⁷ With stretched conservancy and sanitary arrangements, small room sizes in hotels and boarding schools, the urban pressures of the colonial cities were now re-enacted in the hill towns. The upper-class Bengalis felt it as keenly as the British. In 1917, prominent Bengalis who belonged to the Brahmo church petitioned for the removal of a fish market from its vicinity.⁹⁸ The government had no knowledge

⁸⁹ Address presented to the lieutenant governor by the municipal commissioners of Kurseong and reply, 23 Jun. 1903, IOR/P/6565 (APAC), 47–8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Government of Bengal proceedings, municipal/medical, May 1909, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata (WBSA), 39.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁵ Government of Bengal proceedings, municipal/municipal, 1906 (WBSA), 9.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ IOR/P/10521 (APAC), 49.

⁹⁸ IOR/P/10306 (APAC), 27.

of the market.⁹⁹ Evidently, it had sprung up to meet the demands of resident Bengalis. The perceptions of the 'overcrowding' of Darjeeling brought about comparisons with the typical urban problems of the cities in the plains of India. For instance, in 1918 the municipal commissioners of Darjeeling thought it necessary to raise the fine for begging in the town 'for discouraging professional beggary' from Rs 10 to Rs 50, a sum that exceeded the monthly salary of government clerks, for the second offence.¹⁰⁰

Despite a real growth in its population at the turn of the century, Darjeeling nevertheless remained a privileged and exclusive urban space that replicated the structural municipal benefits enjoyed by civil stations such as well-maintained roads, provisions for sewerage, and electric lighting and generous government grants to maintain the facilities. In 1921, the government noted that 'Improvements were effected in the water supply, drainage, electric lighting and municipal buildings.'¹⁰¹ In the same year, the government was making special efforts towards preserving the greenery of Darjeeling: 'arboriculture, as carried out in the town of Darjeeling, differs from that work as done elsewhere in Bengal ... the Darjeeling Improvement Fund ... devoted their attention to planting up the slips and other bare areas, with a view to ensuring the safety of the hillsides ... [which] have added to the beauty of the town'.¹⁰² Therefore, despite the fears of the British and the Indian elite, Darjeeling retained its exclusivity as a colonial town. The prosperous settlement of Europeans and Indians within the town and the high municipal rates augmented with generous government grants ensured that Darjeeling remained cleaner and better provided with municipal amenities than most towns in Bengal. In 1923, facilities within the municipality of Darjeeling were robust; 'Improvements were effected in the water supply, drainage, electric lighting and municipal buildings.'¹⁰³ Despite elite concerns about the overcrowding of Darjeeling, the town enjoyed municipal provisions that were exceptional in Bengal with its unique institutions like the Eden and Lowis Sanitariums, the governor's residence and the Planters' Club.

Darjeeling remained exclusive because it remained the site of the elite of colonial India; in administrative, political terms, and also as a commercial hub. Although conceived of as an idyllic site of leisure and recreation, Darjeeling and possibly other hill stations like Shimla claimed a unique position in the colonial urban landscape. The development and expansion of the hill stations involved related developments. The first

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ IOR/P/10520 (APAC), 49.

¹⁰¹ IOR/P/11304 (APAC), 48.

¹⁰² IOR/P/10980 (APAC), 22.

¹⁰³ IOR/P/11304 (APAC), 48. Harrison has pointed out that in the case of Calcutta, the Indian elite who controlled the municipality of Calcutta in the late nineteenth century refused increased rates needed to implement sanitary provisions. M. Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine 1859–1914* (Cambridge, 1994), 202–26.

was the integration of the hill town within the larger colonial economy. This involved the introduction of large-scale commercial agriculture through the establishment of tea plantations with government land grants and revenue concessions, as well as the emergence of Darjeeling as the nodal point for local trade in the region. The latter was achieved through government initiatives in settling revenue-paying immigrant Nepali peasants and opening the trans-Tibet trade routes. While these developments changed the ecological and demographic character of the entire district, they also provided necessary impetus for the urban expansion of the town itself, which process further escalated when it became the summer capital of Bengal.

The tension between the intensely urbanized Darjeeling and the idyll of the scenic mountain sanatorium was played out in official discourse and policy, which attempted to retain the exclusivity of Darjeeling. The exclusive spaces that did remain in the town were re-affirmations of the two principal problematics of colonial urbanism: race and geography. While Darjeeling experienced migration and settlement of non-Europeans into the town, the hills–plains dichotomy was nevertheless maintained. This duality was sustained because, as we have seen, the idyllic sanatorium town was integral to the colonial economy. The exclusive spaces became a reconfiguration of Darjeeling as a sanatorium town for the colonial elite, both British and Indians. Darjeeling remained famed as a sanatorium town and a social hub of the elite, inhabited by coolies, clerks and petty traders and surrounded by the tea plantations.

Conclusion

Darjeeling was no idyllic Edenic sanctuary; it was a bustling sanatorium town and the provincial capital for half the year. The larger colonization and settlement of the Darjeeling hills was reflected in the urban development of Darjeeling. From its very inception, the town was based on logistics that included the presence of large numbers of 'natives'. They served as domestic labour for the Europeans and clerks for the civil administration, as well as plantation workers and as casual labourers for timber merchants, grain traders, suppliers to the military bases. Its administration looked to improve municipal facilities such as water, sanitation, well-kept arboreal spaces, restricted begging and monitored its sanatoriums, constantly contesting intrusions from less desirable residents and visitors to the hill station. Here, it differed from many other district towns in the Bengal Presidency towns that remained administrative headquarters. Its residents included civil officials and retired personnel as well as sections of the Indian elite who were able to pay higher municipal rates to ensure a higher standard of roads, arboreal seclusions and other municipal services that were not available to most other *mofussil* district capitals in colonial India. At its edges, the hill station

accommodated migrant labourers, transporters, grain traders and timber merchants, lower-middle-class Bengali convalescents as well as *cutcherry* clerks, railwaymen, domestic servants, wandering mendicants and native encroachers of all kinds. The hill station's exclusivity was subverted by its success as the focal point of a thriving economy within the larger district.

The attempt to create Europeanized hill stations in the colonial tropics was a multifaceted endeavour. In colonial India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were attempts to create segregated habitations that were articulated in medical, social, sanitary and strategic terms. These were permeable and paradoxically integrated with its surrounding areas and with the colonial economy. At the spatial level, they were nevertheless distinct habitations that set out clearly the distinction between the crowded native bazaars and the large, scenic European cottages. Socially, they provided an exclusive environment to a select few; balls and theatre, outdoor entertainment such as scenic walks, trout fishing and hunting that mimicked the pleasures available in the 'home country'.

Despite dissimilarities in architecture and the lay-out between the civil lines and the hill stations, in crucial aspects the hill stations in fact duplicated the civil lines – their marked architectural difference and physical distance from native towns and settlements, free, airy spaces and the availability of sewerage – all of which contributed to their perceived salubrity. So the hill town of Darjeeling needs to be seen as a part of the continuum of colonial urbanism from the eighteenth century. And when medicalized leisure at hill stations became an ostentatious indicator of exclusivity, the aspiring Indian elite staked claims over the hill stations as they did over many other British institutions of privilege in the major urban centres. In the process, they interpreted the racial understanding of acclimatization in the mountains as also healing for Indian bodies. This provided a continuum of Darjeeling in terms of its salubrity rather than in the context of its colonial urban history.