

# Development Versus Picturesque: Conflicting Developmental Trajectories in Simla and Darjeeling (1820-1920)

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The hill stations in India emerged in the backdrop of colonial rule, which sought to provide a retreat to the English population from the intense heat and 'the malignant tropical diseases' of the Indian plains. Hill stations of the Himalayas, such as Simla and Darjeeling, were the resting places for the contemporary weather-weary rulers of the Indian subcontinent. A regular feature from the middle of the nineteenth century was the 'exodus' of the European ruling classes to the hills. These temporary migrants left their mark on the character of these 'summer resorts' and their developmental process, constituting an important part of imperial life in India. The English sought to recreate a social environment similar to that back 'home' in Simla and Darjeeling. The forces of colonial capitalism would change the face of these Himalayan retreats, raising ecological concerns in the twentieth century and the spiralling tension between the proponents of development and the picturesque. In the present essay, the development-picturesque discourse has not been discussed in binaries but in terms of how they are interwoven into each other in a colonial setup in the hills.

The urban developments in Simla and Darjeeling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries raise interesting questions, if we compare them with the urban trends emerging in Europe or even in the Indian plains. Can these so called 'summer