

White Settler Culture on Hill Societies of India: A Comparative Study of Selected Works of Indra Bahadur Rai and Ganesh Saili

Bhajan Barman

MA in English Literature, Tripura University (A Central University), Tripura, India

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Abstract— *The aim of this study is to discuss the impact of white settler culture (or British colonial power) on two indigenous hill societies of India, Darjeeling and Mussoorie. It investigates how the white settler culture entered India and its establishment in hill societies of India. Through a postcolonial reading of Indra Bahadur Rai's There's a Carnival Today and Ganesh Saili's Mussoorie Medley, focused on the two hill stations of India, Darjeeling and Mussoorie. The white settlers faced the heat and the diseases of Indian plains, which were unsuitable for them. They were looking for a climate that felt closer to Europe. They chose the hill stations to escape the heat and different diseases of the plains area. With the passage of time, these places gradually developed into spaces where British institutions, lifestyles, architecture, education, administrative practices, and economic systems were established over existing indigenous social structures. The study argues that the creation of colonial hill stations transformed these regions into spaces of cultural hierarchy, economic exploitation, social differentiation, and political control.*



Keywords— *White Settler Culture, Hill Stations, Darjeeling, Mussoorie, Postcolonialism*

I. INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism focuses on the impacts of colonial rule on the nation, society, and people after imperial or colonial power is no longer dominating those regions. Postcolonialism is not just about the political freedom of the colonized countries, but rather also about the ways in which the colonizer's power still had an impact on the culture, language, identity, education, class system, and other aspects of people's lives after leaving. The legacy of colonialism was alive and well in most of the countries that were once colonized. Edward W. Said, a prominent philosopher who is acknowledged as the originator of postcolonial ideas, his work "Orientalism" was published in 1978, in which he says that the West constructed a wrong perception of the Orient. As per Said, the Oriental societies were usually presented as irrational, primitive, and enigmatic to justify colonization. The representation of knowledge played an important role in keeping the colonial dominance over the colonized societies. Power and

knowledge were interrelated since the colonizers determined the way the colonized societies were being represented. There is also Frantz Fanon, another prominent figure among postcolonial thinkers. In his book, 'The Wretched of the Earth', he analyses the psychological impact of colonialism. According to him, colonialism undermined the sense of self-respect and identity of colonized communities because they were always treated as inferior. Furthermore, he also describes the role of violence, resistance, and nationalism in anti-colonial activities. For Fanon, political freedom is not sufficient unless there is mental and cultural liberation as well. The subalternity theory was elaborated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak raises the question of whether the marginalized voices of peasants, tribal societies, and women can effectively speak out against the oppressive forces that dominate their societies. Spivak's argument is based on the idea that marginalized groups are silenced by colonialism and elite society.

White settler culture refers to the social, cultural, and institutional life created by European settlers, primarily British, in colonized territories where they established long-term or semi-permanent residence. White settler culture was never limited to India; it also arrived in other parts of the world such as, the USA, Africa, Australia, Canada etc. This is not only about governance, but also about the reproduction of European lifestyles, values and hierarchies in foreign lands. The white settler culture did not enter India in a single moment or through one event, it developed gradually through trade and political expansion. Countries such as Australia and Canada, where Europeans settled in large numbers. In India, it was a controlled, selective kind of settler presence. This makes the Indian case distinctive, the settler culture was not born out of demographic hegemony, but of institutional and spatial control. The term White settler culture can be defined as the values, lifestyle and systems that were brought in by the European settlers during the colonial rule. In the Indian context, the white settler culture was particularly evident in hill stations which were constructed by the British as places of leisure, governance and escape from diseases of plain areas of India. Later these places became sites of cultural encounter, where native traditions confronted colonial modernity. But the interaction was not equal. White settler culture describes a kind of colonisation, in which Europe exercised not just political control of a land but settled permanently. It was related to the spread of European language, schooling, religion (especially Biblical), architecture and lifestyle often exalted over traditions of plain peoples. For countries like Australia, this had involved the widespread. However, in India, white settler culture manifested in a much more regulated and organized manner. The British did not settle all over the country but carved out separate spaces like hill stations, cantonments and civil lines where they lived and maintained a European way of life and controlled the territory. The significance of white settler culture in India is its long-term impact, particularly through institutions, rather than through population. Education is one big example. With Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835), English became the medium of higher learning and Western ideas began to have an impact on Indian intellectual life. It was the reason for the collapse of the Gurukul system in India. It created a new class of Indians influenced by European thought, which still has an impact on India today.

II. HILL SOCIETIES UNDER COLONIAL INFLUENCE

There are many hill stations in India, which was developed by white settler culture in the colonial period of India. The British developed many hill stations in India mainly for health, administration, and recreation during the colonial period. These places were cooler than the plains and later became centers of "white settler culture". In the northern India, there have many prominent hill stations, such as 'Shimla' which was summer capital of British India, 'Mussoorie' which was popular mainly for resort for British officers, 'Nainital', famous for lake town developed by the British, 'Dalhousie', which was named after Lord Dalhousie, 'Dharamshala', a prominent place for British military settlement, 'Kasauli' a cantonment town, 'Almora' an administrative center under British, 'Ranikhet', a British cantonment, 'Lansdowne', a military hill station, and 'Chail', a summer retreat after Shimla. In the northeastern India, there are also many hill stations, such as, 'Shillong,' which is called Scotland of the East, 'Darjeeling', famous for tea and British sanatorium, 'Kalimpong', which was a trade and missionary center, and 'Haflong', the only hill station of Assam. In the western India, there are many prominent hill stations, such as, 'Mount Abu', the only hill station in Rajasthan, 'Mahabaleshwar' the summer capital of Bombay Presidency, 'Panchgani' mainly an educational hub, and 'Matheran', which was developed as eco hill station. In southern India, examples of some hill stations are 'Ooty (Udhagamandalam)' can be called as queen of hill stations, 'Kodaikanal', which was developed by missionaries, 'Coonoor', a tea plantation center, and 'Yercaud' famous for coffee plantation hub. And in the eastern & central India, also have few hill stations, such as 'Netarhat' the 'queen of Chotanagpur', 'Pachmarhi', a British cantonment hill station, 'Ranchi', a summer retreat of British officials. The British established these hill stations mainly to escape the heat of the plains, and to recreate European lifestyle in India. Places like Shimla and Ooty (Udhagamandalam) became symbols of colonial power and administration, while others served as military, missionary, and recreational centers. 'Darjeeling' and 'Mussoorie', these two hill stations are selected for this research, to highlight the impact of white settler culture, through studying two texts, Indra Bahadur Rai's fictional novel 'There's a Carnival Today' and Ganesh Saili's non-fictional work 'Mussoorie Medley'.

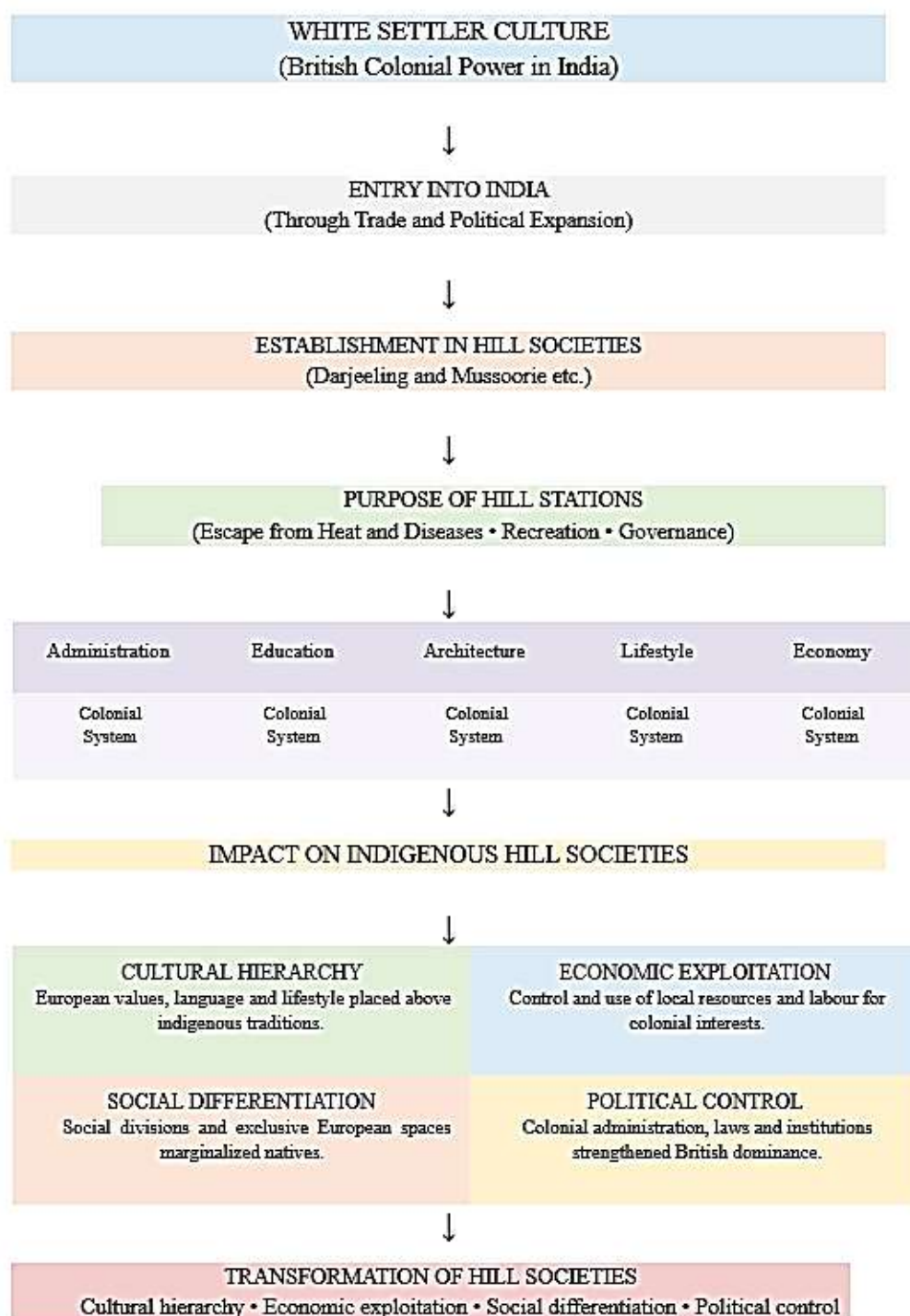


Fig 1: The Impact of White Settler Culture on Hill Societies of India

III. WHITE SETTLER CULTURE IN DARJEELING

Darjeeling is a most important hill station of India, which has a very interesting history. The name 'Darjeeling' was coined in Tibetan language, Dorj means 'thunderbolt' and ling means 'land or place'. It literally means 'land of thunderbolt'. The name 'Darjeeling' came from 'Dorje Ling Monastery', which was founded by the 'Denzongpa tribes'

in 1765. Before the invasion of 'Gorkhas' of Nepal in the 1790s, the area was with the part of the state of Sikkim, and the local tribes were called Lepchas. After the Sugauli Treaty was signed in 1815 made Nepal give away one-third of its territory to the British, Darjeeling became a sanatorium. Tea planting in the region was initiated by Dr. Arthur Campbell of the Indian Medical Service in 1841. This led to the establishment of several tea estates in the

area. The British and the Sikkim had differences, which led to the annexation of Darjeeling to the British Empire. In the 19th century, Nepalese immigrants were brought in to work on tea plantations and in construction. It became a noted resort and was named the 'Queen of the Hills'. In 1827, there was a conflict between Sikkim and Nepal. The Sikkimese King wanted help from the British Governor-General in India as the Treaty of Titalia, which was signed in 1817. British then sent two of its officers Captain Lloyd and Mr Grant to settle the dispute. That time Caption Llyod went to Darjeeling for a few days in February 1829. That time it was called the 'Old Gorkha Station of Darjeeling'. The place was nothing like what it is today. It was a lonely land of mountains and dense forests. Caption Llyod saw Darjeeling as a great sanatorium or health resort for the British officers. Soon a proposal was sent to the British Governor-General and was soon approved. Llyod was now promoted to the rank of General. He was again sent to negotiate with the Chogyal (King) of Sikkim the transfer of Darjeeling to them. General Llyod was successful in his mission and finally in 1835 Chogyal was persuaded to give Darjeeling as a gift to East India Company as a friendly gesture. In return the company gave an allowance of Rs.3000 to Chogyal which was later raised to Rs 6000 per annum. That sounds like a small amount now, but it was big money back then. In 1839, a British officer Dr. Archibald Campbell, he was a resident in Nepal was brought to Darjeeling and later he was given the charge of administration. At that time, he was mainly responsible for the initial development of Darjeeling. His responsibilities were to construct roads, began hill corps to maintain law and order. He also did away with bonded slavery in Darjeeling. In the years preceding there were still minor skirmishes between the Sikkimese and the British. Finally, after 1866 Darjeeling became much more peaceful and that brought an all-round development of the hill station. Later farming was improved and communication improved. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railways, which was launched in 1881 and later it provided easy access for the people who usually travel to the plains. Finally, the town of Darjeeling was developing and prospering. The British changed Darjeeling from a quiet mountain area into a hill station mainly for Europeans. They made it a place for rest and relaxation, where British officers could escape the hot weather of the plains. Because of this, many European-style buildings, churches, schools, and clubs were built, which gave Darjeeling a strong Western look. This is how it became known as the 'Queen of the Hills'. Economically, the British started tea plantations, which made Darjeeling famous for tea. They brought many Nepali workers to work on these plantations and in construction. This changed the population of the region and created an economy controlled mostly by the British, where

local people often had fewer rights and lower status. On the social and cultural front, the dominant culture of the white settlers brought in English-speaking schools, languages, and lifestyles that became an integral part of Indian society. Many institutions for education have been built, like St. Paul's School Darjeeling which was set up in 1823 but shifted to Darjeeling in 1864, Loreto Convent Darjeeling founded in 1846 by Loreto Sisters, St. Joseph's School North Point which was started in 1888 by Jesuit missionaries and was formerly called St. Joseph's College, Mount Hermon School Darjeeling, which was founded in 1895, St. Robert's Higher Secondary School Darjeeling founded in 1934 and was run by missionaries, and it continued British-style education system, 'St. Teresa's Girls High School Darjeeling' established during colonial period by Roman Catholic nuns, 'Maharani Girls' High School Darjeeling' founded in 1908, supported by Indian elites but influenced by colonial education model, 'Ghoom Boys Higher Secondary School' founded in 1910, 'St. Michael's School Darjeeling' etc. The British also improved infrastructure by building roads, administrative systems, and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which connected the hills with the plains and helped trade and tourism grow.

The novel 'There's a Carnival Today' is a piece of literature, which portrays its characters within a real location and a specific era might provide insight into the underlying social and political aspects of that era. The book focuses on the setting of 'Darjeeling' in postcolonial India. In this context, the term "carnival" in the book means a protest held by some Darjeeling locals against any discrimination experienced by some workers in a tea plantation. Workers in the concerned tea plantation were involved in an altercation with the plantation manager due to their demands for higher wages and shorter working hours. These workers were then prosecuted in court for assaulting the plantation manager in an attempt to murder him. The novel captures the socio-cultural setting in Darjeeling around Janak Man Yonzan and Sita Shrestha. Sita, who comes from Dhankuta, visits Darjeeling for studies and falls in love with Janak, whom she meets after his return from studying in Calcutta. The two get married and settle down in Darjeeling. The community in which Janak and Sita live depicts the lifestyle of different kinds of people living in Darjeeling. Most of the people depicted as inhabitants of Darjeeling are speakers of the Nepali language, and their culture and religion are very much linked with that of hilly areas of Nepal. Janak's creditor is a Marwari, while one of his friends and neighbour is a Bengali man named Ajoy Das. Pasang-la who operates a restaurant nearby belongs to Tibetan descent. During the time of Janak's youth, which coincides with recent independence of India from the British rule, most old people had mixed feelings towards the

British. Janak's mother wonders: "Would they really quit a Raj that they made through their own so much warfare, intelligence and effort, just because people demand it?" (Rai, 2017, p.4). Janak replies: "Our country is our home. You tell me, Aama, what would you do if a thief were to enter our house?" (Rai, 2017, p.4). In a similar way, the members belonging to the generation of Janak also differ considerably from the previous generation with respect to the observance of tradition. The point here is that Ratna Bahadur disagrees with his wife during Amrita's marriage ceremony regarding the replacement of old instruments known as pance-bajas (the five instruments) by loudspeakers and poor observance of the strict rules of religion by the new generations. The political situation of Darjeeling in its earlier days can be deduced from the political views and activities of Janak and Bhudev. Thus, for example, Janak's engagement in politics is driven by the concept of a revolutionary transformation resulting from peaceable protests organized by prominent personalities, such as Mahatma Gandhi. Such political views of Janak are a result of the impact made on him during his teenage years by the process of gaining independence. Unlike Janak, Bhudev frequently advocates resistance bordering on violence, which Janak considers outrageous. He calls on people to react to violence with equal violence.

IV. WHITE SETTLER CULTURE IN MUSSOORIE

'Mussoorie', also known as 'Queen of the Hills', has a fascinating history that shows how hill stations in India changed over time. Before it became a popular tourist spot, the area was mostly covered in thick forests and small, scattered settlements. There was no real town or organized structure, and the area was mostly known for the people who lived there, who used it for grazing and small-scale living. The name Mussoorie does not originate from any religion or historical event. Despite having a variety of views, it is the historians' opinion that the sole reason behind this name is due to abundance of mansoor plants found in these hills, hence, it was named 'Massura'. Consequently, the name Mussoorie came into existence. It is a fact that the original name was Messorie but later it got distorted, and thus Mussoorie gained popularity. The name Mussoorie in English address whereas 'Mansoorie' in local address. Another reason is that the Doon Superintendent Captain F.J. Shore visited this place in 1825 during his vacation when he learned about Mussoorie because bushes named 'Mansoor' were plenty in Mussoorie. The hill residents used to graze their livestock on those bushes. Because of these plants, the name Mussoorie became popular. Prior to the British regime, there were names of hills in the present Mussoorie

town. But before 1825, the original names of Mussoorie town were Kumaitri (Kumaiti), Joorapani, Dunkol, Satrawadi, Johar, Kholri, Bijotri, Kolri, Sitari ki Tonkri, Kingad and Surada Pani, etc. Besides these, Hathi Paon, Tibba, Jabar Khet, Bhilhadu, Binog, Bata Khat, Suwakheli, Landhor, Bhadraj Hubli, etc., continued to be used even after the arrival of the British, owing to which the natives also refer to Pari Tibba as Achhari Banda. During the Gorkha Raj period (1803-15) the easiest route for the British to visit Mussoorie from Badbal was through Kalsi, Shailakui and Premnagar area. There is another reason to visit it and that is the presence of a Bhadraj Temple at the hill range above the Doon Valley and a temple of Surkanda in the east parallel to the hill range. The period of modern history of India starts from 1707 when the East India Company started establishing political domination on the nation. The East India Company maintained its economic and political domination from 1757 till 1857. In case India continued to be under the control of the company, then it facilitated urbanization of the coastal regions, but when the entire nation was brought under the rule of the British government, then there was a special emphasis on city development. The urbanization during British era was affected by the conditions prevailing in Britain. In the 19th century, some cities of Uttarakhand had vanished since the British government attempted to create hill stations within these regions. From 1814 to 1816, the chances of development within the Himalayas became available through the people from Britain. The town of Dehradun was an unusually big city within the Himalayas, which appeared since 1966. Within the 19th century, the British government used hill stations for military camps, summer camps, and administration.

'Mussoorie Medley: Tales of Yesteryear' by Ganesh Saili is a nostalgic historical account of the "Queen of Hills" during colonialism. It tells the story of Mussoorie and Landour how they changed over time, using careful research, local stories, tales of colonial charm, and 146 old pictures. It includes people like Captain Young and famous places like the Savoy Hotel. There are three sections in the book, every section explores the history and nostalgia of the hill station Mussoorie, through three distinct sections: the main narrative of tales are described in section one, archival research and records are described in section two, and a visual picture diary is described in section three, which captures the transition from British summers to modern times. In the first section, there are eleven chapters, which depict from the creation of hill station and its growth to transformation. Ganesh Saili describes Mussoorie Medley as a rich, nostalgic recreation of Mussoorie and Landour, not just as hill stations, but as living cultural landscapes shaped by colonial history, migration, memory, and change.

The book doesn't go in a straight line. Instead, it moves through stories, places, people, cemeteries, schools, bazaars, and forgotten buildings to create a picture of a town that used to be elegant but is now stuck between the past and the present. In the first few chapters of the book, Mussoorie comes out as a settlement created during the colonial era; that is, it was created by the British as a place to take refuge from the heat and dirtiness of the plains of India. It was designed to be like England in the hills, with the same institutions, such as clubs, churches, and cottages. Initially, the chapters explain the efforts of the British to make the place habitable through the construction of roads and institutions. This colonial Mussoorie was deeply structured by clubs and institutions like the Happy Valley Club and Himalayan Club reflected exclusivity and hierarchy. Cemeteries and memorials recorded lives cut short, often those of young soldiers, administrators, and settlers who never returned home. Schools and churches reinforced British cultural continuity in an unfamiliar land. At the same time, the narrative does not ignore the presence of Indians. Local workers, traders, and service communities quietly sustained this colonial world. Over time, bazaars like Landour Bazaar grew organically, representing a parallel, indigenous economy and culture alongside the colonial elite. In the second section of the book Saili describes John Northam's 1884s' guide. He describes how Mussoorie and Landour were transformed from an untamed wilderness to a leading colonial resort. The story starts with the 'hillward flight', whereby the travelers had a tough task of getting to Mussoorie from the Saharanpur railway station. Their journey would involve negotiating the Siwaliks range and Mohan Pass, a very difficult route which would require one to swear profusely as well as exert oneself greatly in order to overcome. After reaching the staging post in Rajpur, the travelers would leave their horse-drawn conveyances behind and move on to ponies, jhampans or dandies to ascend the final seven miles in a tortuous zigzag path. The ascent is described by the author to be a "kaleidoscope" of people who would use the services of local carriers who would help transport not only luggage but also such heavy items as pianos. Historically, the station traces its origins back to 1823, when Captain Young and Mr. Shore first visited the area on a hunting trip. Captain Young is credited with building the first small hut. By 1827, he established the first permanent residence, naming it "Mullingar" after his Irish home. Around the same time, Landaur was developed as a military sanitarium to help European soldiers recover from the heat and diseases of the plains. The text explores the stark geographical contrast of the station, noting that the southern slopes were pleasant and wooded, overlooking the Dehra Dun valley, while the northern cliffs were rugged and bare, offering awe-inspiring views of the snow-capped

Himalayan peaks. Socially, this guide presents a busy society with focus areas such as the Library, the Himalaya Club, and the Whymper & Co. Brewery. The third section, titled "Mussoorie Memoirs: A Picture Diary," offers a nostalgic journey, through the evolution of Mussoorie and Landour, shifting from their days as British social hubs to their modern roles as educational and administrative centers. The story is based on the changes that happened to big estates, especially the Charleville Hotel. The grounds were once a literary retreat, where Rudyard Kipling spent time in the late 1800s. In 1959, it became the site for administration, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy, where India's civil service officers now start their careers. There are many stories of "Fancy Fairs" and grand balls at the Savoy and the Skating Rink on Camel's Back Road that show what life was like back then. These events weren't just fancy parties; they were also important ways to raise money for local groups like Woodstock School. The stories also show how 'modern' technology was at the time. For example, the Electric Picture Palace had projectors and ventilation that were as good as the best theatres in London.

V. CONCLUSION

However, even in the post-colonial era, these dynamics continue to evolve. In the fictional novel 'There's a Carnival Today', which was written by Indra Bahadur Rai presents that Darjeeling continues to bear the structural imprint of colonialism even after political independence. The plantation economy, which was introduced under British rule, emerges in the novel as a central site of exploitation and inequality. Similarly, Mussoorie Medley by Ganesh Saili offers a historically layered and emotionally resonant account of Mussoorie's transformation from a colonial enclave to a modern urban space. Saili's narrative, grounded in memory, archival detail, and personal observation, reveals how colonial influence persists through physical structures such as buildings, roads, cemeteries, and institutions. These two texts have shown both colonial and postcolonial life.

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