

## Days of the Raj: Medical Tourism, Recreation and Medicalized Leisure Culture in Colonial Darjeeling

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### Abstract:

During the colonial regime the British made some important changes in the character of Indian tourism, recreation and leisure culture. A sense of satisfaction was created among the British when they became successful to establish domination in Bengal during the last stage of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The British became involved deeply in travel, leisure and recreation. They decided to construct Darjeeling as popular hill station and health sanitarium of Bengal Presidency. They wanted to enjoy the quality leisure time there. Every type of comfort, amusement and recreational facilities were available in Darjeeling to satisfy the British aristocrats. Different types of *dak bungalows*, coffee houses, and hotels, restaurants were constructed for food and lodging. British administrators and aristocrats started club culture and introduced various sports to pass their leisure time. Besides British, the maharajas, land-lords, Bengali *Babus* and well educated people of Bengal started to imitate the British culture of travel, recreation and leisure. By starting tourism, recreation and leisure culture in colonial Darjeeling the British tried to regulate the native mindset and culture. The major thrust of my article is about why the British explored Darjeeling as a hill station and health sanitarium of Bengal? How tourism, leisure and recreation informed an agenda in Colonial Darjeeling? Why and how Darjeeling emerged as a popular tourist destination in Colonial Bengal? Who were the key players in tourism, leisure and recreation in Colonial Darjeeling? What was the interlocking relationship between tourism and recreation? Did tourism, leisure and recreation forge out a cultural space that could be approximated as modernism in Colonial Darjeeling? Did it influence all the people of Darjeeling Society? This research article is all about finding answers to these questions.

**Key Words:** Colonial Darjeeling, Tourism, Leisure, Recreation, Bengal Presidency, Hill Station, Sanitarium, Dak Bungalow, Club, Coffee-House, Hotel, Restaurant, Bengali Babu.

### INTRODUCTION:

The 'hill stations' were created in colonial India as a part of the British imperialistic project. From the historical perspective these hill stations were the product of British Colonialism. Mainly two things were closely related behind the rise of the hill stations-a) a discovery of scenery and b) reconstruction of natural environment. Dane Kennedy rightly said, "Hill stations



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