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## ■ From Forests to Plantations – Changing Landscape of Munnar

Radhika Lal\*

### Introduction

The establishment of British Empire in India is akin to the appropriation of the aboriginal resources and tribals of India. The natural resource base of India acted as a laboratory to the Western science and technology. While political imperialism followed ecological imperialism in all other colonies of Britain, the vice versa was their strategy in India. But the hill stations of India witnessed the same plan of action as that in the other colonies, i.e., ecological imperialism was succeeded by political imperialism. The archived and textualised past of Munnar fragmented and well organised in forms of original records and secondary reflections is a veritable source of understanding for analysing the history of Munnar. The imperial gaze of the English, individual and collective subjected the pristine landscape for an extensive and rigorous scrutiny of the Empire resulting in the reconfiguration of the native landscape in the way of making it a garden, tea garden suitable for the exploitative networks of plantation industry and its commercial agents. The paper specifically examines the ways in which the British imperialism crept into the hills of Munnar and appropriated the nature and life of Munnar.

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