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AGREEMENT

CR 710139

This agreement executed on 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June 2020 between Head Department of History Pavanatma College Murickassery 685604, on one part and The Director, Jeevan Tea Factory, Calvari Mount Idukki on the other, for awarding the Fellowship for minor research.

Whereas Jeevan Tea Factory, Calvari Mount Idukki has selected Department of History for the Fellowship award of Rs. 20000 (Rupees Twenty thousand only) and now it is agreed as follows:

I, Dr. Jobi John, Head Department of History, have read the "Terms and Conditions" for Jeevan Tea Fellowship and comply with the terms outlined.

I, Dr. Jobi John, Head Department of History, certify that I meet the eligibility criteria of the Jeevan Tea Fellowship programme and will provide the verification as required.

I, Dr. Jobi John, Head Department of History, understand that my Fellowship commitment will begin from 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2019 and end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

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In case, any instance is noticed at any time of the course of the Fellowship, I shall pay back the entire Fellowship amount to Jeevan Tea.

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I shall not discontinue my Fellowship without prior approval of the Jeevan Tea.

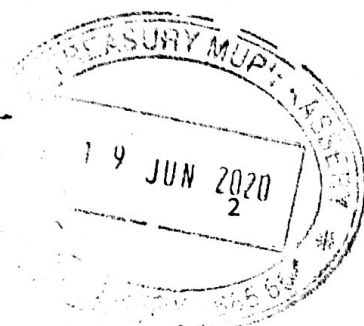
In case I discontinue the Fellowship prior to completion of the tenure, or attainment of the original objectives of the research, I shall submit my resignation to the Jeevan Tea one month in advance indicating the specific reasons for not continuing the Fellowship. If my explanation is found inadequate or unsatisfactory, I shall refund 50% of the Fellowship grant.

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Agreement, at any time if it appears to the Jeevan Tea that my conduct and the progress or the conduct of my research has not been satisfactory, Jeevan Tea may suspend or terminate my Fellowship immediately without any notice whatsoever.

Signed this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June 2020.

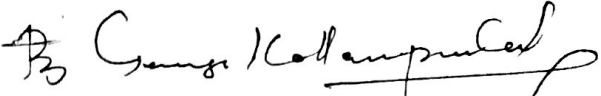
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Signed by :

Signed by:

  
Rev. Fr. George Kollamparambil

The Director

Jeevan Tea Factory,

Calvari Mount Idukki

Witness:

**Executive Director**  
**Highlands Tea Factory**  
**Calvarimount P.O- 685 515**  
**Idukki Dt.**

1) Dr. Jobi John D. J. Joby

2) Dr. K.K. Suresh 

1) .....

# **TRACING A NEW ERA: HISTORY OF PLANTATIONS IN MUNNAR**

**Report Submitted to**

**JEEVAN TEA**

**CALVARY MOUNT P. O, KATTAPPANA**

**685 515**

**BY**

**POST GRADUATE DEPARTMENT IN  
HISTORY**

**PAVANATMA COLLEGE, MURICKASSERY**



**Affiliated to the**

**Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-7</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: Tea: Historical Genesis</b>	<b>8-23</b>
Origin of Tea	8-9
Arrival of Tea in Japan	9-10
Tea in Russia	10-11
Tea in Europe	11-12
Tea in Asia	12
Tea in South-East Asia	13
Tea in Africa	13-14
Spread of Tea in Other Regions	14
Arrival of Tea Cultivation and a Tea Culture in India	14-15
Tea in North-East India	16
In Assam	16-18
Tea Industry in South India	18-21
(a)The Nilgiris	18-19
(b)Anamalli	19
(c)Karnataka	19
(d)Wayanad	19
(e)Munnar	20-21
 <b>Chapter II: Munnar Plantation: Historical Antecedents</b>	 <b>24-42</b>
Tea in Munnar	25-26

Geographical Setting of Munnar	26-27
Climatic Conditions	27-26
Soil and Early Cultivations	26-28
Poonjar Royalty	28-29
Original Inhabitants of the Land: Muthuvans,	
The Back People	30-32
The Arrival of Europeans	32-33
Poonjar Lease	33-35
Develepmental Activities in the Kannan Devan Hills	35-36
Roads and Transport	35
Kundale Valley Light Railway	36-38
The Post Office	38
Electricity	38-39
Telephone and Network	39
Electric power Generation scheme in Munnar	39
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>43-46</b>
<i>Glossary</i>	<b>47-50</b>
<i>Maps</i>	<b>51-52</b>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<b>53-54</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Tea is the most popular and the cheapest beverage consumed by two third of the world population. *Camellia Sinensis* is an evergreen plant that grows mainly in tropical and the subtropical climates. The original home of the tea is the South - East Asia in the vicinity of the river basin of the Irrawaddy. Tea is known in China as early as 2737 BC.

India is the world's largest consumer of tea in the world and the second largest producer of the tea including the world's most popular tea varieties like Assam and Darjeeling tea. During 17<sup>th</sup> century drinking tea became fashionable among Britans, who started large scale product and commercialization of the plant in India to bypass the Chinese monopoly .Tea became widely popular in India in 1950 because of the successful advertising campaign by the Indian Tea Board.

Tea is the foremost among the exports of Kerala and the second important cash crop of the state in terms of net value contributed. In the hill ranges of the Western Ghats in Kerala, we will find some of the highest tea estates in India in and around Munnar. Tea plantation and tea cultivation were introduced to Kerala by British settlers in colonial times ,when they found that temperature and the soil conditions of the hill ranges of Kerala are suited for tea cultivation .

Tea plantation in Kerala is spread over Idukki, Kottayam, Wayanad, Thrissur, Malappuram and Palakkad district. The highest tea estates in India are seen in and around Munnar which is in the hill ranges of the Western Ghats of Kerala. It was the British settlers during the colonial times who had introduced the tea plantations and cultivations in Kerala. Munnar is the most suitable place for the

tea plantation in Kerala. The tea bush is planted in 23415 hectares in Idukki district. Most of the tea estates are located in Devikulam and Peerimedu taluks. The tea estates of Munnar are of highly organized companies. But in the Peerimedu and Vandanmettu areas, there are small estates and small individual holdings. Kannan Devan in Devikulam taluk and Malayalam plantations in the peerimedu taluk are the biggest tea estates in Idukki district.

Munnar, the beautiful landscape is situated on the confluence of the three mountain streams, Muthirappuzha-Kannimalayar, Nallathanni and Kundala. Munnar was the summer resort of the British Government in the south. The Kannan Devan tea plantation not far off from Munnar town is one of the biggest tea plantations in the world. The tea plantation history of Munnar is associated with the Poonjar Royal family. The land was entrusted with a local land lord 'Kannan Thevar'. It was with him that the first explores from the European camp negotiated in the matter of getting the area leased out to them. Through two Poonjar concessions, the Europeans managed in getting the land leased out for an unlimited period; five thousand rupees in the first instance and an annual payment of three thousand rupees.

The land contained the food crops like wheat, rice, barley and plantations together with rich Sylvan resources like teak, sandal wood, ebony, rose wood and black wood was rapidly transformed into tea and Cinchona plantations. This was primarily to cater the needs of the tea industry which was managed globally by big European planters and traders.

The Kannan Devan hills situated on the high ranges of North Travancore consisted of some of the most beautiful regions of the world. Munnar is noted for its unique climate. It was the feature that attracted the Europeans to this land. The coming of Europeans to this land was decided by commercial considerations. Munnar came to be known to the outside world in the 1870s with the visit of



British President of the Travancore Kingdom John Daniel Munro. Munro visited Poonjar palace and met the head of royal family. The village of Kannan Devan hills in Devikulam taluk was given on lease on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1877 by the Poonjar Thamburan to John Daniel Munro for tea plantation. The lands and the plantations were later resumed by the Government of Kerala by the Kannan Devan Hills act, 1971.

The need of the time was to improve means of transport. The only mode of transport available was the bullock-carts, ponies or by walk. The spread of the plantation in the district needed speed transportation. In course of time, the transportation facilities began to grow. The development efforts were not in vein, tea production doubled. More and more laborers were required in the estates with the expansion of the tea plantation in Munnar.

### **Area of Study**

“Tracing the Historical Antecedents, the Development and Impact of Kannan Devan Tea Plantation in the Hills of Munnar” is the study based on the tea plantation in Idukki District of Kerala with the special reference to Munnar Hills. This study tries to explore the origin of the tea plantation in Kannan Devan Hills. The study is to trace the landscape change of Munnar and to assess the colonial impact. The study is also confined to the socio-economic aspect of the plantation and throw more light on the local history of Munnar with special emphasis on European intervention.

### **Scope of the Study**

The present study tries to examine the historical roots of Munnar in an environmental perspective. The scope of the study is to trace the establishment and

development of Kannan Devan Hills in Munnar. So far all the studies are confined to the socio-economic aspect of the plantation and the present study is expected to throw light on the local history of Munnar.

## Objectives

This study is to understand about the origin and development of tea plantations in Munnar.

1. To study the historical background of the tea plantations.
2. To trace the factors responsible for tea cultivation in Munnar.
3. To examine the social and ecological changes through the growth of tea plantations.

## Review of Literature

For the study on Munnar, primary sources were collected from the Idukki District Collectorate, Painavu, 'Vigasana Rekha' from Munnar Grama Panchayat. The District Hand Book – Idukki provides essential information on Idukki District in general and Munnar in particular. The 'Vigasana Rekha' provides adequate information regarding the functioning of Munnar Grama Panchayat.

Secondary sources are also used for the completion of the work. It includes many books written by different authors. This helps to analyse the perspective of another person on the same subject.

'Story of Munnar' written by Sulochana Nalapattu gives an overview on the history of the Kannan Devan Hills. She presented the book in a narrative manner combining her personal experience in an interesting manner. The book gives the description of the aboriginals of the land i.e., the tribal population and

opening of new roads and new infrastructural facilities. She used the title ‘Story of Munnar’ instead of ‘History of Munnar’ might be because of her narrative style.

Another dependable book on the plantation is the ‘Centenary of planting in the Kannan Devan Hills Concession 1878-1978’ written by Amita Baig and William Handerson. The book concentrates on the plantation and its roots. It gives clear view on the tribal population called the Muthuvans, developmental activities of the planters, their ecclesiastical affairs and various rain creations. The work presents hundred years success stories of the pioneer planters.

‘The History of Indian Tea Industry’ written by Sir. Perceval Griffiths is another work that gives a world overview of the history of tea. The book vividly describes how the plantations developed in India. It also analyses the history of tea from its origin in china. The book brings a short but use full information on tea plantation in the south. The work gives information on labour welfare in an Indian context.

‘Tea Cultivation to Consumption’ is an edited work by K.C. Wilson and M.N. Clifford the book thoroughly studies the history of tea in china and its way to India. It gives a clear picture of tea plantation in Assam.

‘The Path to the Hills; Plantations in the Southern Western Ghats’ is the work written by George Abraham Pottamkulam gives an overall idea about the history of Kerala. It specifies the establishment and development of plantations in Munnar.

‘Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram’ written by J. Kurias is one of the most important source about Idukki District. It clearly mentions the history of Munnar.

‘Munnar rekhakal’ the work written by T. Damu provides information about the establishment, development of Kannan Devan Hills. It also mentions the impact of these plantations in Munnar.

## **Methodology**

For the completion of the entitled “Tracing the Historical Antecedents, the Development and Impact of Kannan Devan Tea Plantation in the Hills of Munnar”, the researcher used various methods for the collection of data. The study tries to use historical explorative and analytical method. Both primary and secondary sources are used for data collection.

Primary data are collected through observation method, interview method, field study, oral history etc. Datas are also collected from secondary sources. It includes datas from books, internet and official documents from research centers. The researcher also prepared a questionnaire to interview the officers of various departments related with tea industry and also the people who have sufficient knowledge about the topic.

## **Hypothesis**

Munnar is a geographic unit that has several geo-political peculiarities. The area received attention with the arrival of the European planters. The hills largely has to reveal the story of the colonial interventions. The plantation industry has brought serious changes in the material, geographical and environmental conditions of the region. Plantation was an augmenting factor in this process. Colonial intervention brought changes in the landscape and caudated establishment of transportation and communication facilities like monorail, light rail, ropeway etc.

## **Research Questions**

In this project, the following questions are attempted to answer.

1. What was the world context in the emergence of plantation?
2. Why Munnar was selected the Europeans for opening plantations?
3. What were the factors behind the establishment of tea Plantations in Munnar?
4. How the Europeans played a key role in the development of Kannan Devan Hills in Munnar?
5. To trace the impact of tea plantations in Munnar with the spread of Kannan Devan Hills Production?

## CHAPTER I

### TEA: HISTORICAL GENESIS

#### Origin of Tea

Tea is cultivated by the Chinese people for more than 2000 years. It has been cultivated by the Chinese people not on land tea plantation. They are cultivated in small plot.<sup>1</sup> The term tea is derived from the Chinese word 'tea'. The Chinese calls it as 'kia'. The original home of tea is in South-East of Tibetan platory, Yu-nan, Burma and North- East India. In South-East China tea has been used as a beverage between 2000-3000 years. It is claimed to have found wild tea in China proper.

The tea plant, 'Camellia Sinensis' has been cultivated for so long that its home as a wild plant is a matter of speculation. The tea plants, usually found in clusters, are relics of previous cultivation in the unrecorded past. Considering the localities in south-east Asia where various types of tea are now established, it is likely that they have the dispersed from a center near the source of the Irrawaddy and have been spread out fanwise into south-east China, Indo-china and Assam. According to Kingdon-Ward it is probable that this locus was only a secondary one and that the indigenous species had its origin further North. The greater part of the tea conforms to an individual type.<sup>2</sup>

The Buddhist monk Luyu wrote the first authentic account of tea. This book is known as 'Cha Ching': this means 'Tea Book'.<sup>3</sup> Chinese Tea was grown by small farmers. It is related to their household activity. The tea seeds were brought by a Buddhist priest Yeisei. He was known as 'Father of Tea' in Japan. From being traditional peasant cultivation in the Far East, tea culture has developed into an important plantation industry employing considerable capital and controlled at the present time mainly by limited liability companies of European origin.

The tea found growing in a 'wild' state within the territory of the East India Company, from Sadiya to the borders of the Chinese province of Yuman.<sup>4</sup> The tea imported from China were locally discovered types. The industry was built up on the basis of the limited liability to the company. In China, tea was centuries old business and there developed in to a flourishing industry.<sup>5</sup> It was a bold step, therefore, to venture into competition with that country, particularly as the first essential for the successful cultivation of tea.

In the reign of Yuen Ty in the dynasty of Tsin an old women was accustomed to proceed every morning at daybreak to the market-place, carrying a cup of tea on the palm of her hand. The first authenticated reference to tea in China is found in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and it is clear that its medicinal use was then well known. In 5<sup>th</sup> century a Chinese annalist refers to a mountain on which grows the tea reserved for the Emperor as tribute tea. Tea soon caused to be considered as a medicine and its popularity as a beverage increased so steadily during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries that the revenue authorities in China levied a duty on it.<sup>6</sup>

### **Arrival of Tea in Japan**

The history of tea in Japan began as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when the first known reference to tea was made in Japanese records. The Buddhist monks Kukai and Saicho might have been the first to bring tea seeds to Japan. The first form of tea brought from China was probably brick tea in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Industrialization and automation transformed Japanese tea industry into a highly efficiently operating industry, capable of producing large quantities of tea despite Japan's limited arable land area.

In Java, following the initial importation of seed from Japan in 1824, six journeys were made between 1827 and 1833 by a government envoy to collect seed and workman from China. Tea cultivation was a government monopoly, and continued as such until 1860.<sup>7</sup> In Japan, on the other hand, tea was an exotic

introduced by Buddhist priest between the sixth and eight centuries A.D. and regarded initially as a medicine. Japanese priest, however, soon realized that apart from its medicinal qualities, it was a pleasant drink and it began to be cultivated in many temple gardens. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, tea became a part of the Japanese imperial tribute. Now tea acquired an important place in the Japanese social life.<sup>8</sup>

Ordinary caravans were drawn by two hundred and three hundred camels; each of them carried from chests of tea. The journey took 3 years. Tea in Japan, as in China, was to a great extent grown for domestic use by the small farmer “in hedges and detached parts of his farm, which are less favourable for tillage”.<sup>9</sup>

### **Tea in Russia**

In 1567, Cossack atamans (chieftains), Petrov and Yalyshev, visited China, where they tried a local drink — tea. In 1638, an ambassador, Vasily Starkov, brought a present to the Russian Tsar from one of the Mongol khans — 64 kg of tea. In 1665, when the Tsar Alexey Mikhaylovich got stomach aches, the court doctor, Samoylo Kallins, treated him with tea.

Tea was brought to Russia from Northern China, where it was called ‘cha-i’ or ‘cha-e’, i.e. why, in Russia the drink got the name ‘chay’ (tea). Originally, though, in Russian records, tea was often called ‘the Chinese herb’ or ‘the Chinese dry herb’. Two kinds of tea were brought from China: brick-tea and loose tea (baykhovy).<sup>10</sup>

Russia now counts as one of the chief areas where tea is grown. In 1913 a measure of 730 ha is recorded and the latest estimates reach 74,700 ha in Russian Transcaucasia on the shores of the Black Sea. Russians are a tea –drinking nation. Every year, Russians use 170000 tons of dried tea leaves to make a tea, which is more than the British. Russian drink mostly black, fermented tea. To prepare this kind of tea, leaves are crumpled and twisted to squeeze out some juice, which



accelerates fermentation. Japan integrated the act of preparing tea with Zen philosophy, creating the famous Japanese tea ceremony.<sup>11</sup>

## **Tea in Europe**

In 1516, the Portuguese, who were the pioneers of eastern commercial expansion, reached China and in due course they were permitted to settle in Macao. In the middle of the century, reports of a somewhat 'bitter, red, and medicinal' beverage, called 'cha' were brought back to Europe.<sup>12</sup> The Persian traveller's account of tea is the most of the early writings on this subject, its medicinal qualities were strongly emphasized. Scattered account of tea occur in a number of European languages, particularly in the writings of the Jesuits. The Dutch writer, Van Linschoten book *Itinerario*, published in 1596 and at once translated into English.

Linschoten work is a link between the old and the new, from this time the influence of Portugal in the Far East declined and that of Holland took its place. The Dutch established trading settlement in Japan and there are some grounds for thinking that it was from China, that they took the first tea to Europe- Holland- somewhere about 1610. By the middle of the seventeenth century tea was well known in Holland and was indeed a regular article of export by the Dutch East India Company to that century from China and Japan.

Arthur Reade in 'Tea Drinking' states that tea came in to England in 1610. The authority for these statements has not been traced. The one clearly established fact is that the first public sale of tea in England was conducted by Thomas Garway in 1657. In 1663 onwards reference to tea began to appear in the court minutes and other books of the East India Company. In 1669 import of tea from Holland into Britain was prohibited by law.

Tea and Coffee were introduced into England at about the same time and the growth in the popularity of tea in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries

was largely due to the influence of the coffee house. The first London coffee house seems to have been opened in St. Michael's Alley in 1652. In the second decade of the eighteenth century, the importation of the cheaper, green tea led to the spread of tea drinking to all classes.

In the eighteenth century the smuggling of tea into England presented the authorities with an even more difficult problem than adulteration. The East India Company have been so far deprived of their monopoly in tea, that upon the most moderate computation smugglers and the company in 1783, shared the tea trade equally. The transactions are mainly important as showing the regular growth of tea-drinking in eighteenth century Britain.

The sale of tea was then handled largely by small dealers and it has been started that before the end of the eighteenth century there were thirty thousand wholesalers and retailers of tea in England. The tea –drinking habit grew rapidly amongst the well-to-do in Persia and impressed itself forcibly on the mind of Captain Mignan in 1829. Tea drinking had behind it a history of nearly two hundred years in England, of rather longer in India and Persia, and of centuries in the Far East.<sup>13</sup>

### **Tea in Asia**

The first authenticated references to tea in China are found in the fourth century AD, and it is clear that its medicinal use was then well known. Tea soon ceased to be considered as a medicine and its popularity as a beverage increased so steadily during the seventh and eight centuries that the revenue authorities in China levied a duty on it. Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world. Asian tea dates back to a Chinese work from 59 BC. The tea later spread east to Korea, Japan and India some time during the Tang Dynasty in ninth century.

## **Tea in South - East Asia**

The extension of the industry in its modern form started in India. Between 1818 and 1834 several private individuals and government officials had interested themselves in the possibilities of tea cultivation in north-east India, primarily as a main source of revenue. But because of the relations with China, the sole source of commodity for European trade, was disturbed, and from time to time normal trade was suspended. The wild tea had been discovered in Nepal and Manipur district. Representations were made to the governor - general which resulted in the formation of a committee of Tea culture in 1834 consisting of 'gentleman of high character and great intelligence' in Calcutta. After experimenting at the Calcutta Botanic Gardens with a consignment of tea seed from China attention was turned to tea of the East India Company, from Sadiya to the borders of the Chinese province of Yunnan.

In Java, following an initial importation of seed from Japan in 1824, six journeys were made between 1827 and 1833 by a government employee to collect seed and workmen from China. Tea cultivation was a government monopoly and continued as such until 1860. It was unremunerative and remained so until the introduction of Assam types in 1878. The foundation of tea culture in Sumatra was inaugurated in 1909 by a British firm.<sup>14</sup>

## **Tea in Africa**

In Africa tea was being grown at the Durban Botanic Gardens in 1850 and developed into a local plantation industry of small extent in Natal after a coffee failure in 1877 similar to that in Sri Lanka. New and more extensive plantations are being built up, under the auspices of the South African Industrial Development Corporation, on the Eastern slopes of the mountain massif at elevations between 900 m and 1200 m in Eastern Transvaal and Natal.

The oldest continuing tea industry in Africa is that of Malawi. From an introduction of tea seed in 1878 there were no survivors, but the Church of Scotland Mission produced seed via Kew and Edinburgh in 1886 and 1888 respectively, and from the progeny of the tea plants thus raised the first estate was planted in 1891.

Specimen plants were being raised in the East African territories at Limuru (Kenya), Entebbe (Uganda) and Amani (Tanzania) at the turn of the century. Between 1921 and 1925 three companies started work on the eastern and western escarpments of the Rift Valley in Kenya, which immediately established a lead in tea production that it has never lost. In 1924 a commercial estate was established near Tukuyu in the Southern Highlands province of Tanzania and in 1931 in the Usambara mountains.

### **Spread of Tea in Other Regions**

Russia now counts as one of the chief areas where tea is grown. In 1913 a measure of 730 ha is recorded and the latest estimates (1962) reach 74700 ha in Russia Transcaucasia (Georgia) on the shores of the Black Sea. Precise and statistical information about the extent of tea culture in the traditional tea countries of China, Japan and Indo-China is not easily available since the general pattern in these countries is that of a peasant cultivation. In addition to the major tea-producing territories there are almost a score of others where tea is now grown or has been given a trial. Their wide dispersion is evident from the following catalogue of localities: Malaya, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Mauritius, Zaire, Rhodesia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, St. Helena, Brazil, Peru, Argentine, Cameroons, Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Fiji, Iran, Australia, Turkey and Corsica.<sup>15</sup>

### **Arrival of Tea Cultivation and a Tea Culture in India**

India is the world's largest consumer of tea in the world – and the second largest producer of tea – including the world's most popular tea varieties - like

Assam and Darjeeling tea. However, the growth of tea as an industry in India has been relatively recent. Historical records indicate the prevalence of tea drinking in India since 750 BC.

In 1689 onwards that English East India Company imported tea directly from China. The commencement of the tea industry in India can be largely related to the refusal of the Chinese government in 1833 to renew the old agreement and granting the right of monopoly with Britain in tea trade. Now the British turned their full attention to India.<sup>16</sup>

After the phase of short-sighted exploitation of Bengal by the East India Company's servants had ended, the practical mind of Warren Hastings clearly realized that if the company were to prosper it must promote industrial development. In 1778 Sir Joseph Banks was asked to prepare a series of notes for the East India Company on the cultivation of new crops, and in them he advocated the cultivation of tea in India.

The 9<sup>th</sup> century was anxious and not very profitable time for the Indian tea industry. The reports of the Indian Tea Association at this time contain four sets of figures showing tea company result-one set forth in the Home and colonial Mali dealing with sterling companies; a statement from the same source concerned with rupee companies; a statement of Barry and company.

In 1813 the Charter Bill was passed in the House of Commons, and under this Act the Company's control of its territories and revenues was renewed for twenty years, including its monopoly of the trade in tea with China, though other trade monopolies were abolished. When parliament abolished its monopoly with China in 1883, it turned its attention to India more seriously. Lord William Bentinck's original minute of 24<sup>th</sup> January 1834, to the council of the East India Company in which he proposed the formation of the Tea Committee to investigate the possibilities of growing tea in India.<sup>17</sup>

## **Tea in North - East India**

Tea Industry were naturally conditioned by the circumstances of recruitment. Every aspect of garden life had the manager as its focal point. In 1901, cotton's remarks were less temperate, and led to a protest by the Association to the government of India. The attention of the government of India was again drawn to conditions on tea gardens in 1903 and statistics were collected for the years 1809 to 1903 by the government of Assam.<sup>18</sup>

### **In Assam**

The Assam Company's formation was in 1839. Starting from its earliest trading settlement in India, the government of the whole country was in the hands of the East India Company, known more familiarly as John Company. In 1784 the British government established a Board of Control to superintend the administration of the court of directors of the East India Company.

In 1813 the charter Bill was passed in the House of Commons, and under this Act the company's control of its territories and revenues was renewed for 20 years, including its monopoly of the trade in tea with china, through other trade monopolies were abolished. This Bill was replaced in its turn by the Charter Act of 1833, for a period also of twenty years, and under it all trade monopolies were abolished, which opened the door to commercial private enterprise Robert Bruce was trading in Assam and the first to penetrate as far as the Muttock and Singhpoo countries. He was privileged as an employee of the East India Company, in his capacity as Major in the Bengal Artillery to be in Assam.

In early years India was divided into the three presidencies, of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The Governor of Bengal was also the Governor-General of India. Assam was part of the presidency of Bengal and was under the local jurisdiction of the Agent of the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier.

There were many Government officers in the province who assisted and encouraged the founding and development of the Tea Industry in Assam, but foremost amongst these was Jenkins, under whose direction C.A. Bruce held his first appointment as Superintendent of Government Tea Barries in 1836.<sup>19</sup>

The discovery of tea plant in the forests of upper Assam in a wild state marked the beginning of tea plantation in India. There is an extra ordinary controversy between Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India regarding the discovery of the tea plant. The rival claimants for the discovery were C.A Bruce and Lt. Charlton.<sup>20</sup> In 1823, Major Robert Burce, who was residing in Assam came to know about the tea plants. It was introduced to him by a singhpho chief, Beesa Gaum. He became aware that the natives were in the habit of drinking the water boiled with the dried leaves of this wild growing tree. Later, along with his brother C.A.Bruce sent samples of these plants to the Botanical Gardens of Calcutta.<sup>21</sup>

Out of these, only those planted at Gharwal and sirmoor showed some degree of success. In the south almost all the saplings died. In August 1809, C.A.Bruce brought his famous, 'Report on the Manufacture of Teac and the Extended and produce of Tea Plantations in Assam'. He identified about one hundred and twenty vtea tracts in Assam. The first successful tea garden was started at Jaipur in Assam.<sup>22</sup> In the year 1838, the first shipment of Indian tea was sent to U.K.

In 1839, the administration of upper Assam completely came under the British East India Company. Now onwards private enterprises were welcome into this fields. Several companies were formed in Calcutta and London in 1839. These companies were merged to form the 'Assam Company'. The Companies was formed with a capital of 200000.<sup>23</sup> The success of Assam Company attracted Jorehaut Tea Company. By 1860, there were more than fifty private enterprises engaged in tea production. Tea cultivation in the Himalayan foothills

started in 1842. Plantations started in Surma Valley in 1856, and soon spread to other parts of North-East India.

The pioneer in this aspect was Maniram Diwan. He was followed by Rameswar Burua, who started six gardens in sibsagar District of Assam. During the depression days he sold his entire gardens to the European planters. Another one was Hemadhar Barua, his son Rai Bahadur Jagannath Barua, Rai Bahadur Sib Prasad Barua etc. started tea gardens in Assam. Mechanical packers were also introduced. For further improvement in tea production, a research station was opened in upper Assam. This station was shifted to Tocklai in 1911.<sup>24</sup>

### **Tea Industry in South India**

The colonial history of the tea plantation in the south India began with the dispatch of two thousand saplings from the Botanical Garden of Calcutta. Six boxes of first saplings were sent to the Nilgiris, six to Coorg, six to Mysore and two to the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Madras. The situations in North India and South India were different. In North-India, the plantations were opened in the plains. The tea was subsidiary crop in South India. In South India the plantation was opened in the Nilgiris, which is the junction in between the Eastern and Western Ghats. The Kannan Devan Hills in central and South Travancore is also a prominent planting district. The hills lie in between 2000 to 8000 ft. height. Another important site is Wayanad, which is about 3000 ft. high above the sea level.

#### **A) The Nilgiris**

The story of tea in South India began in the mountains. This plantations start in 1832, when Dr. Christie of Madras noticed the growth of Camellia. In 1834, he made a request to the Botanical Garden of Calcutta for providing tea plants. The



first full scale cultivation of tea was started in Thiashola and Dunsandle estates in 1859. John Sullivan, the Collector of Coimbatore was the first European resident in Nilgiris. The authentic information about the Nilgiri plantation is available from 'Moral and Material Progress Statement 1876-1877'. It mentions about the existence of three thousand one hundred and forty two acres of tea in Nilgiris.<sup>25</sup>

#### **B) Anamallai**

The area extended to 389 sq. kms and is covered by hills ranging from 900 to 1600 meters. The Anamalli is wedged between Tamil Nadu and Kerala, across the hills from High Ranges. The early pioneers of the area were Carver Marsh and C. R.T. Congreve. They came to the district in 1857 and put up a came at Paralai.<sup>26</sup> The Attakati and waterfall estate were earliest among them.

#### **C) Karnataka**

The first coffee in India had been planted at Chikamagalur in Karnataka. Plantation in Karnataka goes back to 1841; Thomas Cannol planted coffee at Belur. Tea was planted mostly in Chikmangalur in the Baba Budan hills of Sahyadri Range.

#### **D) Wayanad**

Wayanad lies between Northern and Southern eco-regions of Western Ghats. The first commercial plantation was started by G. J. Glasson. Now the planters in Wayanad turned their attention towards tea. But in the early 1880s there was a false speculation about the gold deposit in Wayanad. Many new companies bought the tea and coffee estates at Cherambadi, Devala, Pundalar. In 1897 gold speculation had ended and plantations were restricted and now full concentration was given to tea plantation.

### **E) Munnar**

The tea districts in South India were located in the hills and slopes of the Western Ghats. The Kannan Devan Hills were situated higher up the hills in the Travancore at an elevation of 5000 feet. The first European to visit the Kannan Devan Hills was the Duke of Wellington. In the year 1790, General Meadows, to annihilate Tipu Sultan, sent Col. Arthur Wellesly to Kumali Gap. Tipu retraced his step; Wellesly now adopted a plan to return through North over the Cardamom Hills.

In 1862, Sir Charles Travelyan, who was the governor of Madras instructed Col. Douglas Hamilton to inquire into a suitable place for establishing a sanatorium and for developing revenue earning projects in the land. But more significant from the point of history was the expedition of the ever exploring John Daniel Munro, who had been the Superintendent and Magistrate of the Cardamom Hills division of Travancore. John Munro was impressed by the nature, climate and the inhabitation that is Muthuvans whom he called as 'wild shikkari' of the area.<sup>27</sup> He made a detailed report on the hills titled 'The High Ranges of Travancore' and submitted on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1877. He found that much of these worthless lands were fit for cultivation. He concluded that coffee, tea and cinchona would grow better in this climatic condition.

The commercial viabilities of the land, John Daniel Munro produced a tract of land from Kerala Varma Valiya Raja of Poonjar on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1877, which came to be known as 'First Pooniate Concession of 29<sup>th</sup> Mithunam 1052'. By this agreement the Pooniate chief granted a large tract of land called 'Kannan Devan Anchanatu Mala' to J. D. Munro. It was with a payment of RS.5000 and an annual payment of RS.3000 as rent.<sup>28</sup>

Good jungle soil was there in plenty, but the only problem has found was absence of roads to reach the land. The development of the land and found out that the owner of the hills was one of the Pooniate Raja, who lived in the village of

Marayoor. With great enthusiasm he set out to meet this man who was the Kannan Devan Zamindar. He pointed out that the big forests of the Kannan Devan Hills inhabited by so many wild beasts and that little use as they were not be opened up for cultivation.

Later Turner brothers along with J.D.Munro registered the North Travancore Land planting and agriculture society in 1879 with a capital of RS 500000<sup>29</sup>. The Kannan Devan concession, the Diwan N. Nanoo Pillai declared certain terms and conditions with the concerned parties. A part from payment of annual rent, the grantee was required to pay half a British Rupee per acre to the Sarkar for the land granted. The annual tax should be payed on last day of 'Audi' of each year 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August to the Tahasildar of the district resided at Meenachil<sup>30</sup>. The cultivation of new crop shall not refrain the production of cardamom .

The 'Second Pooniate Concession' was signed on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1879 with Munro and the pooniate chief. The second concession the society held 227 sq. miles of land called as 'Kannan Devan Concession Land'. By this agreement the grantee agreed to pay 5000 British Rupees and 3000 British Rupee annually and additional of one of half British Rupee per acre of land. By this treaty full right over the land was ceded to the European planters. Cincona and coffee were the earliest crops planted in Munnar. In 1897, the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company purchased the whole estates from the old consolidated companies and acquired a number of new estates in the High Range. With the spread of the plantations new factories needed to meet the increased supply of tea leaves.

## **End Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> K.C Willson and M. N. Clifford, *Tea Cultivation to Consumption*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1992, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> T. Eden, *Tea – Third Edition*, Long Man Group Ltd., London, 1976, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, Great Britain, 1967, p. 4.
- <sup>4</sup> T. Eden, *Tea – Third Edition*, op. cit., p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> H. A Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, T and A Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1957, p. 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, op. cit., p. 2.
- <sup>7</sup> T. Eden, *Tea – Third Edition*, op. cit., p. 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Griffith Percival, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, op. cit., p. 7.
- <sup>9</sup> K. C Willson and M. N Clifford, *Tea Cultivation to Consumption*, op. cit., p. 3.
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.apollotea.com/tea-articles/tea-history/15-russian-tea-history>, Accessed on 06-04-2018.
- <sup>11</sup> T. Eden, *Tea – Third Edition*, op. cit., p. 4.
- <sup>12</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, op. cit., p.14.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp.16-20.
- <sup>14</sup> T. Eden, *Tea – Third Edition*, op. cit., p. 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Corsica - Localities where tea is at the present known to be grown.
- <sup>16</sup> Sib Ranjan Misra, *Tea Industry in India*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986, p. 1-2.
- <sup>17</sup> H.A Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, op.cit., p.1.
- <sup>18</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, op.cit., p.376.
- <sup>19</sup> H.A Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, op.cit., 1-2.
- <sup>20</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, op.cit., p.35.
- <sup>21</sup> K. Narinder Singh, *The Role of Women in the Tea Industry of North East India*, Classical Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2001, p.14.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid p. 15.
- <sup>23</sup> Sib Ranjan Misra, *Tea Industry in India*, op.cit., p.2.
- <sup>24</sup> Jijo Jayaraj, *Tea in Munnar: Tracing the History of Ecological Imperialism*, Unpublished M. A Dissertation submitted to the M. G University, Aluva, 2012, pp. 38-42.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>26</sup> Thomas chacko and Priya Darasini, *Forest Gold – The Story of South Indian Tea*, op. cit., p. 25.
- <sup>27</sup> Jijo Jayaraj, *Tea in Munnar: Tracing the History of Ecological Imperialism*, op. cit., p. 45-47.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, op. cit., p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> Jijo jayaraj, *Tea in Munnar: Tracing the History of Ecological Imperialism*, op. cit., p. 48.

DEPT. OF HISTORY PAVANATMA COLLEGE

## **CHAPTER II**

### **MUNNAR PLANTATION: HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS**

Tea is cultivated by the Chinese people for more than 2000 years. It has been cultivated by the Chinese people not on land tea plantation. They are cultivated in small plot. The term tea is derived from the Chinese word 'tea'. The Chinese calls it as 'kia'. The original home of tea is in South-East of Tibetan platory, Yu-nan, Burma and North- East India. In South-East China tea has been used as a beverage between 2000-3000 years.<sup>1</sup> The Buddhist monk Luyu wrote the first authentic account of tea. This book is known as 'Cha Ching': this means 'Tea Book'.<sup>2</sup>

Arthur Reade in 'Tea Drinking' states that tea came in to England in 1610. The authority for these statements has not been traced. The one clearly established fact is that the first public sale of tea in England was conducted by Thomas Garway in 1657. In 1663 onwards reference to tea began to appear in the court minutes and other books of the East India Company.<sup>3</sup>

India is the world's largest consumer of tea in the world – and the second largest producer of tea – including the world's most popular tea varieties - like Assam and Darjeeling tea. In 1689 onwards that English East India Company imported tea directly from China. The commencement of the tea industry in India can be largely related to the refusal of the Chinese government in 1833 to renew the old agreement

and granting the right of monopoly with Britain in tea trade. Now the British turned their full attention to India.<sup>4</sup> In 1778 Sir Joseph Banks was asked to prepare a series of notes for the East India Company on the cultivation of new crops, and in them he advocated the cultivation of tea in India.<sup>5</sup>

The Assam Company's formation was in 1839. Starting from its earliest trading settlement in India, the government of the whole country was in the hands of the East India Company, known more familiarly as John Company. In 1784 the British government established a Board of Control to superintend the administration of the court of directors of the East India Company.<sup>6</sup> In 1839, the administration of upper Assam completely came under the British East India Company. Now onwards private enterprises were welcome into these fields. Several companies were formed in Calcutta and London in 1839. These companies were merged to form the 'Assam Company'. The Company was formed with a capital of 200,000.<sup>7</sup>

## **Tea in Munnar**

The state manual of Travancore, 1940, describing the High range, in south India said, "fifty years ago these lands were practically unexplored regions covered by thick, fever-haunted forests, the abode of elephants, tigers, bison and leopards, having no means of communication".<sup>8</sup> The land of Munnar was first investigated by the British and this was a colonial agenda in charting courses on exploitation of natural resources and landscapes. It is in the memoirs of Lt. B.S. Ward made his first record of

the high ranges in November 1870 and was later published in his memoirs in 1891.<sup>9</sup> They came for the purpose of the ‘Great Trigonometrical Survey’ on the peaks of the high range. The next man who made a detailed report on the high range was John Daniel Munro, who was the superintendent of the Cardamom hills. He was the British resident in the Travancore province from 1811 onwards. He came to high range in 1872. His purpose was to settle the boundary dispute between the Travancore and Madras Presidency in the high ranges. He submitted his report on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1877, titled “The High Ranges of Travancore”.<sup>10</sup>

### **Geographical Setting of Munnar**

Munnar is located at the north-eastern side of Idukki district of Kerala bordering Tamilnadu. Part of Ernakulam and Idukki districts the area was from a long time known as the Kannan Devan Anchanaad Mala. Munnar is a green delight of gentle rolling hills, tea estates with panoramic views and high mountains. Geographically, bio-geologically mythologically and historically the Kannan Devan Hills has carved a niche of its own in the Western Ghats. The name Munnar comes from the confluence of three rivers. ‘*Munn*’ in local language means three and ‘*Aar*’ means river. The rivers are Muthirapuzha, Kundala and Nallathanny. Munnar is situated mostly on the inner slopes of a basin-like plateau, these estates lie at elevations varying from about 1300m to 1900m above mean sea level. Munnar is at about 1500m. Some of the tea fields at 2100m are among the highest in the world.



The story behind the name Kannan Devan has two versions. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century *Anchanad* area-north east of Munnar had a head man named Kannan Thevar. The five villages of Anchanad were Pallanad, Marymoor, Koviloor, Kanthaloor and Vattavada in Kerala and Tamilnadu. The traders coming from Tamilnadu were the main people crossing Anchanad and the majestic mountains to enter Kothamangalam valley and further west into Travancore. They named these areas *Kannan Thevar* hills in his memory as he used to help them in every possible ways and was a very popular headman. The name later became Kannan Devan by common usage. Another version is that the pioneers who came up the hills were helped and supported by two *muduvans* named Kannan and Thevan. So the pioneers named it Kannan Devan hills of high ranges.<sup>11</sup>

### **Climatic Conditions**

The climate of the Upper Hills is very bracing. In the months of March and April and also in November, December and January the thermometer range between 45 degree and 60 degree in the former months, and between 29 degree and 60 degree in the latter. In March and April there are often heavy showers and mist, but the climate is delightful. November is for the most part wet and in December and in early January the nights were usually frosty. From December to the middle of February the East winds blow strong and make it trying to natives. Devyqualm and Wattawada at a height of 6000 feet are the most pleasant of the spots.<sup>12</sup>

## **Soil and Early Cultivations**

The soil of these Hills especially in the valleys is good, and wheat, barley and potatoes would no doubt grow well. Potatoes have been grown by the Muthuvans of a size and flavor quite equal to Neilgherry ones. In the upper Unjenaad villages onions, garlic and wheat were grown. The wheat is of a coarse quality but finds a sale among the traders from the Coimbatore side. The paddy and raggy are grown mostly in the lower villages but both are cultivated as high an elevation as Wattawudda. In the lower villages the Jack, Mango, Limes and Oranges as well as Sandal wood are grown; plantains of a coarse kind are cultivated. The Sandal trees were small but the wood was strongly scented. It is collected for the private use of the puneate chief.

The soil throughout Unjenaad is good, and there appears to be enough waste land to support a much larger population, especially in the valley of the Pambaur. The trade with Unjenaad is in the hands of Mussulmen from Odumella Petta in Coimbatore and Bodynaikenoor, and is arranged by barter, rice, wheat and garlic being given to the trader for clothes, chillies and brass vessels. Coffee has been tried on the Upper Ranges, but the site selected was too high nearly 6000 feet and failed and Tea and Cinchona would grow in some of the forests.<sup>13</sup>

## **Poonjar Royalty**

According to historians Poonjar was an independent kingdom founded by the Pandya King Manavikraman in AD 1155-1160.<sup>14</sup> The royalty of Poonjar too had

acquired the land originally 'on payment', a practice not too prevalent among the ruling classes of those days. Such holdings were mostly obtained by grant from the royal houses. This particular royal family traces its antecedents back to the Pandian rulers of Madurai. The Chola king invaded Madurai and the Pandian king Manavikraman was defeated. His proud deeply wounded, the latter fled the land handing over charge to his younger brother. The entourage, apart from family members and helpers, consisted of some *Muduvans* too. The party settled in a safe place near Gudalore. Here they were once again attacked by a notorious bandit of those days called Udayan when a young soldier riding a horse appeared from nowhere and chased the intruders away.

Later the young man appeared to the king in a dream and requested his presence with his soldiers on a particular day at Ettumanoor where the famous Shiva temple is situated. That night the very same bandit with his band came to loot the temple. The horse rider too appeared on the spot and together they were able to turn Udayan away. The king's young benefactor is supposed to have advised him that plenty of land was available in and around these hills. It belonged to several holders who were fighting among themselves. The *raja* bought about 4000 sq. miles of land and settled in Poonjar. It is believed that the young soldier was none other than Lord Ayyappa.<sup>15</sup>

## **Original Inhabitants of the Land: Muthuvans**

Munro in his report dated 8 March 1877, puts the total population of the Kannan Devan Hills as roughly 2400. His table looks exhaustive with several tribes mentioned and includes '2 mussalmans'.<sup>16</sup> History says that by 900 AD century the inhabitants were Muthuvans, and Puliyaars and an unidentified tribe of very small population.<sup>17</sup> The muthuvans are described as a fine 'handsome race' and are the most important as far as the history of Munnar is concerned. From the pioneering days until date, they have contributed substantially to the development of the gardens and preservation of wildlife.<sup>18</sup>

The Muthuvans are living inside the forest for many generations, doing small-scale agriculture and gaming of wild animals. Their ignorance in modern farming methods and their inability to invest money for large scale agriculture are being exploited by the British. The Muthuvans constitute the major tribal community in Munnar.<sup>19</sup> According to the legend, the Muthuvans were the loyal subjects of Madurai. They were not indigenous to the hills but were cultivators from the plains of Madurai, forced to seek refuge in the mountains during the wars of the Pandyan Rajas, that is about nine hundred AD.<sup>20</sup> Their tribal legends show that they were the loyal servants of a section of the royal dynasty of Madurai and that they carried the idols of *Madurai Meenakshi* for the fleeing royal members on their backs, which are known in Tamil as *Muthuku* and hence *Muthuvans*.<sup>21</sup> 'The black people' settled in a series of small villages in and around what are now Pullivasal, Kundale and Panniar.

These settlements are called kudis. Presently there are muthuvan kudis in Vagavurrai, Viripparai and Rajamalai also. W.S.S. Mackay, a senior officer of James Finlay & Co. considered a good friend of the muthuvans, writes as follows in 1966, “Disputes amongst the muthuvans are referred to the men of each village or ‘*kudi*’, who convene informal councils, presided over by the eldest and most influential members. Advice is sought from the ‘*Mooppans*’ or sub headmen, and in exceptional cases from the ‘*Mel Varkan*’ or king of all the muthuvans himself.”

Muthuvans follow the matriarchal system and have an innate fear of outsiders and strangers. They used to be shifting cultivators of ragi and rice. They are also adept at hunting and trapping game. Over the years, they developed a symbiotic relationship with the environment. With the inflow of foreign capital into these hills and the influx of landless labour from the drought-affected districts of Tamil Nadu, the traditional way of life of the muthuvans had to change. They could no longer continue their slash and burn cultivation and the hunting fields in course of time became wild life sanctuaries. Muthuvans are a proud race and were unwilling to work in the restricting environment of the expanding plantations. However, from the inception of these plantations, they have served as guides, trackers and game watchers.

Muthuvans are Hindus and their chief deity is Palaniandy, the ruling deity of Palani temple. “Of the demons they fear Muniyandi, the evil spirit of the forests and rocks, but their primary fear is reserved for ‘Nymaru’ a particularly diabolical demon

who inhabits the upper reaches of Nymakad,”according to M.R.P. Lappin the last white man to hold the post of General Manager of the Company.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Arrival of Europeans**

The first Europeans set foot on the Kannan Devan Hills in 1790. Col. Arthur Wellesley subsequently became the Duke of Wellington. Wellesley, along with a small force lay in wait at the Kumali Gap to trap the redoubtable Tipu Sultan of Mysore, whose forces were devastating the borders of Travancore. The Wily Sultan, however, gave them the slip and made good his escape through an alternate route. His plan foiled, Wellesley decided to return to Coimbatore through the Kannan Devan Hills. He moved north over the Cardamom Hills by way of Bodinayakanore and marched up a cattle track to reach the Surianelly Valley. There, setting up camp at the foothills of Devimalai, smarting under the humiliation of being out-manoeuvred by Tipu, he tried to somewhat retrieve the situation by commencing to build a small entrenchment-all for the glory of the East India Company.

However, things were just not going right for the man; half way through the task he received orders to return immediately. The half-finished stone structures can still be seen on the slopes of Devimalai. The route he took was through Munnar, Vagavurrai and Eravikulam onto the British Anamalais and then to the plains of Coimbatore. The journey took the soldiers past dreamlands that would later be

christened Hamilton's Plateau and Turner's Valley, after General Hamilton and the Turner brothers who arrived a century later.<sup>23</sup>

South India was surveyed by Laubton in 1810 with trigonometric method. Lieutenants B.S.Ward and Lieutenant Peter Ire Cannor of Madras Infantry, who were entrusted to survey the hills of Travancore was on the High Ranges with the great trigonometric survey in November 2, 1817. Their survey is still considered as wonderfully correct, which has helped many explorers access these ranges.<sup>24</sup>

### **First Poonjar Lease**

John Daniel Munro, the superintendent of Cardamom Hills leased the Kannan Devan hills from the Poonjar raja in 11<sup>th</sup> July 1877.<sup>25</sup> It was in 1877 that the question of boundaries arose. J. D. Munro, an officer of the independent kingdom of Travancore and designated Superintendent of the Cardamom Hills came with the express purpose of determining the unsettled boundary between Travancore and Madras Presidency. The tract belonged to the poonjar rajas, as far as ownership could be exercised in a practically uninhabited and unapproachable wilderness. This boundary check confirmed the land as Travancore territory; it was also the beginning of the plantation era in these hills.<sup>26</sup>

Munro approached the Poonjar Raja and obtained the first Pooniat concession for the sum of Rs.5000 and perpetual annual payment of Rs.3000. The vassals need the permission of Travancore government for granting land to the foreigners. The

Travancore diwan granted permission in 28<sup>th</sup> November 1878. The second Pooniat concession was obtained in 1879 and Munro occupied 227sq.km area of land. The Henry Gribble Turner and William Turner of the Madras Civil Service travelled throughout the Anamallias and joined with Munro in 1879 and they established the North Travancore Land planning and Agricultural Society.

After giving foundation to the society one among the Turner brothers go back to England for giving publicity to the plantations. By this, the British those who are interested in plantations came to India.<sup>27</sup> William Turner harnessed a small labour force from Tamil Nadu and started clearing and preparing the land below Devimalai; he planted coffee, cardamom and sisal there. The society soon ran into financial problems and they decided to start selling land, initially in the periphery in order to preserve the borders; they advertised in all papers, particularly in the U.K.<sup>28</sup> The first land sold was Manalle to Baron Otto Von Rosenberg and his sister who was related to the Turners by marriage; this was later developed by Baron John Von Rosenberg.

A.H. Sharp came next and “Parvathi”, an estate right in the wilds, was opened in tea, the first ground to be so used. In 1881 E.J. Fowler came to the district, felled one of the jungles and laid out what they chose to call Aneimudi Estate. The following year C.O. Master opened and established Sothuparai; C.W.W. Martin accompanied by his nephew A.Ff. Martin, came in 1883 via Kodaikanal and opened an estate under the lee of Chittavurrai from which the estate took its name and found a short – lived Chittavurrai Planting Company. The previous year, G.W. Claridge had



opened Harehatch in cinchona later introducing tea to that end of the district and Mr. Kindersley from Ooty opened a cinchona estate at Guderale.<sup>29</sup>

Because of the severe financial difficulties in which the planters found themselves, the concession rights were sold to the influential Scottish tea producing and trading enterprise James Finlay and Company. James Finlay Company was an old establishment firm with estates and managing agencies in India and Ceylon. With the land lease with Munro and Turner Brothers, the history of Kannan Devan hills entered a new phase.<sup>30</sup>

## **Developmental Activities in the Kannan Devan Hills**

### **a) Roads and Transport**

The Finlay Company brought in better amenities to the hills, as more people came forward to work on the hills. New roads were again opened within the hillock networking the estates. According to records the first roads were traced out by Colonel Valentine in 1881.

In 1942 preparation for a possible Japanese invasion of India, the British began improvements to the road to facilitate its use as an evacuation route from Berijam Lake near Kodaikanal along the Southern crest of the Palani Hills to Top Station. Existing roads then continued to Munnar and down to Cochin where ships would be available for evacuation out of India. The road was operative till 1990 but was

ignored by both the Forest Department and Highways Department in a dispute over its inter-state ownership.<sup>31</sup>

**b) Kundale Valley Light Railway**

In Mr. Buchanan's time the mono rail was replaced by a light railway running on a two foot gauge line from Munnar town and the present headquarters to top Station, a distance of twenty-two miles. The rare achievement by the company, a railway was set up on the hills. The Kundale Valley Light Railway was laid from Munnar town to Top Station in 1908 with G.W.Cole as the chief engineer.

Interesting notes by Cole on the railway; 'In 1908 it was decided to lay down two gauge light railway and indents were made out and sent home for the rails, sleepers, sidings, wagons, two locomotive and ancillary equipments for the same was placed with Messers. Orienstien & Koppel a German firm, who specialized in manufacture of light railways for plantations and mines came. The huge engine parts, bogies and rails were imported from Germany in knocked down condition pulled up to Bodimettu through the forest, latter assembled in Munnar.

It was hoped that it would be possible to run the locomotives on wood fuel, assisted if necessary with oil applied in the fire boxes by jet burners. But in practice this was not been able to do so due to the gradients and the sharp curves of the line. The supply firm sent one of the engineers from Calcutta to help the company in the matter of fuel but after various experiments it was eventually decided to rely upon a

mixture of Indian coal and firewood for fuel as wood fuel and oil could not maintain the steam required on the gradients and curves. The track was laid from Munnar towards Top Station as the work of laying had to be so arranged that transport between these two points should be interrupted minimally. When the track had been laid as far as Madupetty, the two locomotives had been assembled with the aid of mechanics lent by the South Indian Railways Co. The locos were put in service with wagons available to transport good and produce to rail head where they were transferred to the mono rail tramway to finish off the journey to Top Station, or alternatively from railhead to Munnar.

Construction staff under Mr. Aurbuckle and Wynyard-Wright camped out on the spot and reduced the interruption caused in track laying as interchange goods by head load packers over the sections where rails were being laid, this was tackled many times by drawing coolies from the nearest estate. The General Manager Mr P.R. Buchanes and his devoted wife gave all the encouragement possible and after the rails were laid up to and beyond Madupetty a weekly tiffin party at railhead was a feature of the job and kept everyone connected with the work, happy in their endeavors and on their toes. It took one and a half years to complete and to make the whole services ready, which is a wonderful act of engineering considering the terrains.

Top Station to Munnar was a 35 km journey on the narrow gauge enjoying the panoramic views. It would take four hours so long as the engine did not run on the line, which however did in many times, including on the opening day. The Train had

1st and 2nd class and also carried tea, supplies, and building materials. There were for engines named 'Buchanan', 'High Ranger', 'Anamudi' and 'Kundale'. The High Ranger was reserved for top Europeans who visited the hills, which had first class. The stations were Munnar, Mattupetty, Kundale and Top Station.<sup>32</sup>

**c) The Post Office**

The Planters communication with the outside world was by way of 'anchal' service of the Travancore government where runners took mail from place to place. This was inadequate once the plantations came into being on these hills. Representing the matters to the government, they got the first post office opened in 1902 at Devikulam estate on an experimental basis. A second post office opened at Yellapatty very soon. Afterwards other post offices came up. The company arranged for the carriage of letters and parcels to the respective places by coolies.<sup>33</sup>

**d) Electricity**

Finlay Company changed the face of the Munnar, and it was about to print its name in the map of the world's fine tea growing area and also as a preferred English retreat on the hills. Electricity railway and communication was introduced rapidly at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A small hydro electricity generated for estate use was experimented in Kanniamallay estate in 1899 and successfully used.

The first hydro electricity power in Kerala was generated by Kannan Devan Hill Produces Company at Pallivasal site in 1904. The hydro power generated was

200 kilo watts used for the factory, the main offices, managers bungalow and later for the ropeway. In 1910 a second hydro generation project was set up in Periyakanal estate.<sup>34</sup>

**e) Telephone and Network**

With the advent of the ‘Magneto Telephone’ system in Europe and America, the company installed the latest equipment in 1908. Over a period, the essential stations were connected by this internal telephone system. The switchboard operator could make up to a 100 connections at a time. The network was operated by crank phones. The Magneto Telephone system worked with commendable efficiency until the Integrated Digital System replaced it some 10 years ago.

**f) Electric Power Generation Scheme in Munnar**

The first power house came up at Pullivasal in 1904. It suffered severe damage in the floods of 1924 and was moved a little farther from the river after the floods and remained there until the new machinery was put up in 1926-1927. In 1910, a second powerhouse came up in Periyakanal, another boundary of the concession land. In Kannimalai, which is centrally located and Vagavurrai at the northern end, factories ran on power generated by pelton wheels. Madupatty and Yellapatty generated their own electricity by means of a turbine. Many years later, in 1983, the hydro-electric station at Vagavurrai was commissioned.

Mackay observes that the Kundale Dam was ready and the work on Madupatty Dam was progressing. The Kundale Dam Mackay mentions happens to be the first arch dam in the country and came up at Sethuparvathy Puram, near Top Station, in 1940 as part of the Pullivasal Hydro-electric Project. With the commissioning of Madupatty Dam in 1955-56 the old factory, labour lines etc. were submerged.<sup>35</sup>

## **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup> K.C Willson and M.N Clifford, *Tea Cultivation to Consumption*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Griffith Perceval, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, Great Britain, 1967, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Sib Ranjan Misra, *Tea Industry in India*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986, p. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> H. A Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, T and A Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Sib Ranjan Misra, *Tea Industry in India*, op.cit., p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Amita Baig, William Handerson, *A Centenary of Planting in the Kannan Devan Hills concession 1878-1978*, Tata Finlay Ltd., Calcutta, 1978, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> George Abraham Pottamkulam, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, Stayhomz, Kottayam, 2011, p. 419.

<sup>12</sup> Amita Baig and William Handerson, *A Centenary of Planting in the Kannan Devan Hills Concession 1878 – 1978*, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 123-124.

<sup>14</sup> George Abraham Pottamkulam, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, op.cit., p. 419.

<sup>15</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *Story of Munnar*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikkode, 2009, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> George Abraham Pottamkulam, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>18</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

<sup>19</sup> Amita Baig and William Handerson, *A Centenary of Planting in the Kannan Devan Hills Concession*, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> *District Hand Books of Kerala – Idukki*, Department of Information and public Relations, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 2017, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op. cit., p. 59.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> George Abraham, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, op. cit., p. 424.

<sup>25</sup> J. Kurias, *Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram*, A.K.C.C. Diocese of Idukki, Idukki, 2012, p. 79.

<sup>26</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> J. Kurias, *Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram*, op.cit., p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Amita Baig and William Handerson, *A Centenary of Planting in the Kannan Devan Hills Concession*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Aiswarya R. Krishna, Kannan Joseph (ed:), D. C Books, Kottayam, 2017, *Kannan Devan Hills: The Early Historical Genesis*, On Presenting(in/g)Histories, Sebastian pp. 607- 608.

<sup>31</sup> George Abraham, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, op. cit., pp. 441 - 442.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 447 – 448.

<sup>33</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>34</sup> George Abraham, *The Path to the Hills; Plantations in Southern Western Ghats*, op. cit., p. 447.

<sup>35</sup> Sulochana Nalapattu, *The Story of Munnar*, op.cit., pp. 87-88.



## CONCLUSION

The tea, camellia has been known to man for a long time. It has been cultivated by the Chinese people not on large plantations, but in thousands of small plots. The origin of the word 'tea' goes to China. The original home of the tea is in an indefinite area to the South-East of Tibetan plateau, including Szu-chuan, Yunnan, Burma, Siam and the Assam variety in North-east India. Gradually the tea plantation began to spread to other parts of the world like Japan, Russia, Africa and so on. The first tea to reach Europe came through the Dutch and they brought the first consignment of tea to Holland in the early phase of 17<sup>th</sup> century. The commencement of the tea industry in India can be largely related to the refusal of the Chinese government in 1883 to renew the old agreement and granting the right of monopoly with Britain in tea trade. Now the British turned their full attention to India.

The discovery of tea plant in the forests of Upper Assam in a wild state marked the beginning of tea plantation in India. But by 1839 onwards, the administration of Upper Assam completely came under the hands British East India Company. Now onwards the private enterprises were welcomed into this field. By the discovery of Kannan Devan Hills in Munnar the tea plantations in the South India began to flourish.

The culture and richness of Munnar is noticeable in the history of Kerala. By studying the history of Munnar, it helps to study the whole geography and also to measure the amount of change that happened in Munnar by the establishment and development of Kannan Devan Hills. Munnar has a story to reveal. It is of the biodiversity richness that was seen in the pre-Colonial era. The year 1817 was a watershed in the ecological history of Munnar. This particular year marked the arrival of the first European into this jungle. It was the two English men namely Mr.

Ward and Mr. Connor who came for the purpose of the Great Trigonometrical Survey. The pre-Colonial history of Munnar is a story of its natural richness. Kannan Devan Hills was noted for its unique biodiversity. The soil always remained alluvial and fertile with good organic content. The existence of three rivers made the land with sufficient water channels. One of the notable aspects was its climate, that varies between six to twenty six degree Celsius along with eighty percent of humidity.

Teak, rosewood, ebony, Sandalwood etc., were plenty in the forest. The number of different types of fauna including elephants, gaur, panther, spotted deer, sambar, giant grizzled squirrel, rabbit, Nilgiri langur and lion tailed macaque will elevate the status of Munnar into a sacred grove. Until the year 1817, Munnar remained separated and untouched by the mainstream population. In the real sense it remained as a scared grove untouched or unpolluted by the outsider. The tribal population including the Muthuvans, Kadar's, Mannans, Palliyers lived in harmony with the forest. They had followed their own primitive customs and mannerisms. With their crude weapons they cleared the forest and earned for their daily life. But all these did not damage the forest.

By the arrival of Britishers, the plantations in Kannan Devan Hills began to grow. The first crops planted in these hills were coffee, sisal, cinchona. But the plantation of these crops were not successful, so they turned towards the tea plantation. John Daniel Munro, the superintendent of Cardamom Hills leased the Kannan Devan Hills from the Poonjar Raja in 11<sup>th</sup> July 1877. The tract belonged to the Poonjar Rajas, as far as ownership could be exercised in a practically uninhabited and unapproachable wilderness. This boundary check confirmed the land as Travancore territory; it was also the beginning of the plantation era in these hills.

Munro approached the Poonjar Raja and obtained the first Pooniat concession for the sum of Rs. 5,000 and perpetual annual payment of Rs. 3,000. The Travancore diwan granted permission in 28<sup>th</sup> November 1878. The second Pooniat concession was obtained in 1879 and Munro occupied 227 sq.km area of land.

As per the development of tea plantations, the Munnar began to develop. The roads and transport spread throughout the tea estates. The Finlay Company brought in better amenities to the hills, as more people came forward to work on the hills. The Kundale Valley Light Railway was another development in the Kannan Devan Hills. It was the first railway in Munnar which helped to carry goods to other parts. The planters communication with the outside world was opened by setting up of the first post office in 1902 at Devikulam by the government in Munnar. Electricity railway and communication was introduced rapidly at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. A small-hydro electricity generated for estate use was experimented in Kanniamallay estate in 1899 and successfully used and it also spread to other parts of Munnar. The introduction of Magneto Telephones also helped to make communication with the outside people.

By the development and spread of tea plantation, the need of workers also increased. The UPASI was established in 1883. The UPASI started its own labour department; it was the time when workers were being recruited for the gardens in Malaya, Fiji and Ceylon. By the 1940s trade unions became a powerful force on the gardens. The 1939 UPASI yearbook details conditions of recognition of unions. It says the union has to be registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926 and existing for a certain period. The book further stipulates that the union should be pledged to peaceful, legitimate methods and that the number of outside members in its executive committee should not be over one-third. In 1961, there were not less than 55 trade unions in the South Indian Plantations.

With the development of Kannan Devan tea plantation there were certain impacts in Munnar. The education was provided to the childrens of the estate workers. The Kannan Devan estate established primary schools and feeder schools. They also setup Srishti. These are school-cum-rehabilitation centers for the mentally and physically challenged of the plantation. They also opened vocational training centers. They also provided health and welfare facilities to the workers. The hospitals were opened and treatments were provided for Malaria, small pox, plague, cholera etc. The establishment of scientific education also help to decrease the spread of diseases. By the development of tourism the economic condition of Munnar began to change. The people find self-employment opportunities for earning income. Tourism was one of the major attractions in Munnar.

The tea plantation of Kannan Devan Hills paved way for all developmental activities in Munnar. Even though there are negative impacts too. As Munnar developed it affects the natural richness. Over population, Traffic, pollution were the main threats faced by Munnar. The plastic wastes, wastes from hotels are thrown to river streams. This results in the destruction of its natural vegetation. A well planned strategy is necessary for the protection of Munnar's ecosystem. As it is a plantation sector large quantities of fertilizers and pesticides are used.

## **GLOSSARY**

Black Tea	- Fermented tea.
Brick Tea	- Chinese packaged tea in compressed bricks for ship transportation and as such retains the flavor.
Chinnadurai	- They were the European assistant.
Cinchona	- Large genus of South American trees and shrubs of the madder family. The dried bark of the tree contain alkaloids such as Quinine and being used especially formerly as a specific in Malaria, and antipyretic in other fevers etc., also called as 'Jesuits bark', 'Peruvian bark'.
Green Tea	- Is popular in China, and is the best drink for sultry summer as it is cool and fights of reclamation. The tea leaf is picked around April.
Kanakkappilla	- He was the chief accountant of the company.
Kanganies	- They recruited the labors from the villages of South India. They were natives who worked not only as middlemen but the supervisors of the laborers in the plantations.

Kannan Thevar	- A local Zamindar lived in Marayoor village who owned the Kannan Devan Hills, and these hills named after him.
Kudies	- The settlements of the tribe Mannan is called as the Kudies. Ariyan Raja Mannan was the head of the forty four Kudies.
Layam	- They are the place where the workers of the plantation live. It may be a single roomed one where the entire family live and only have a single room to cook, eat, sleep etc.
Maistry	- It means a supervisor.
Mannan	- Tribals lived in the Kannan Devan Hills. They also claim that they came from Madurai. The King of the tribal kingdom in the entire State is living at Kovilmala of Kanchiyar Panchayat in Udumbanchola Taluk of Idukki District.
Munnar	- It means three rivers, that is, Nallathanni, Kannimala and Kundala.
Muthuk	- Means back in Tamil and Malayalam. The name Muthuvan originates from this word since

they carried Goddess Kannaki on their back and also refer to their name Muthuvan one who carries children on their back.

Muthuvan

- The 'black people' came from Madurai are the earliest inhabitants of Munnar and followed a primitive way of living.

Nilgiri Tahr

- Known locally as Nilgiri Ibex, is an ungulate that is endemic to the Nilgiri hills and the Southern portion of the Western Ghats in South India. In Tamil it is called 'Varayaadu'.

Periyadurai

- They are the big masters in the plantations.

Pombilai Orumai

- It means the unity or co-existence of women.

Ragi

- Annual plants, widely grown in the arid areas. It was cultivated by the Mannans and was their major staple of food in the early days.

Sesilara Kangani

- He was the assistant supervisor of the company.

Sholas

- Patches of stunted evergreen patches of tropical and sub-tropical moist broad leaved forest.

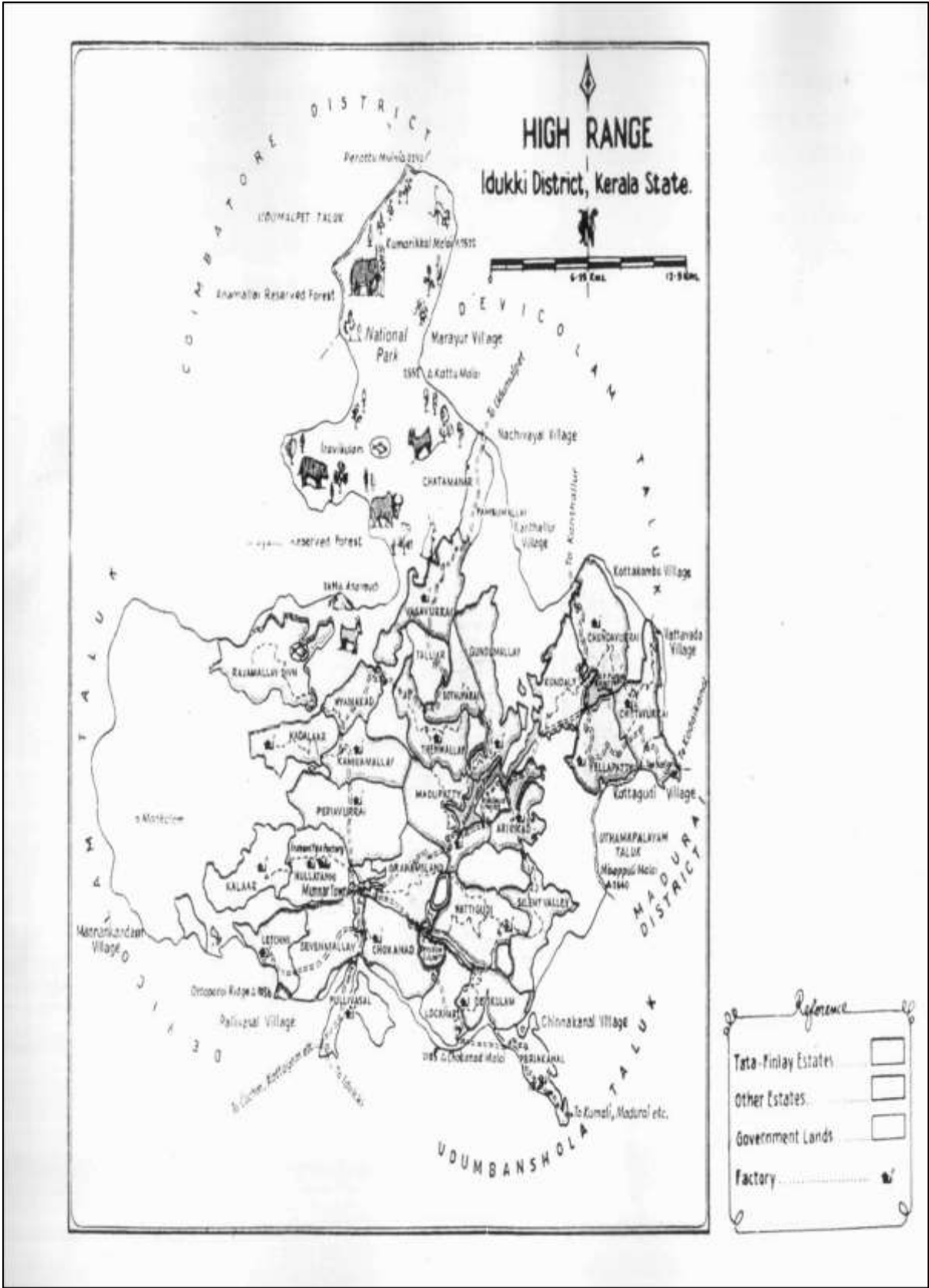
Trigonometrical Survey

- It was the longest measurement of the great Indian arc of the Meridian under taken in 1802 and was the longest measurement of the Earth's surface. In India it was put under The Great Trigonometric Survey of India. It lasted almost fifty years and covered thousand and six hundred years.





Map 3 : Devikulam Block Panchayat



Map 2: Map showing Munnar, Tea Estates and adjacent places

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