



Multidisciplinary Study of Kotha: An Architectural and Cultural Heritage of Garhwal Himalaya

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Abstract: Garhwal Himalaya is popularly known for its natural splendor and spiritual nature but at the same time it has a rich historical and archaeological background which is explored and established through various theories and methodologies. But still there are several important aspects are left behind. Therefore, present paper is an attempt to explore the Kotha of Garhwal Himalaya for the first time. Kotha of Garhwal is generally considered only administrative structure which were built by / for ruling class of the region. The main administrator of kotha is known as Thakdar who had received many rights and duties to control village level administration. This traditional architecture of Uttarakhand is shaped by the region's topography, challenging climates, and other natural factors. Construction materials and technological systems used in traditional architecture were more responsive to local climatic and geographical conditions in order to achieve human comfort. As part of the social and cultural infrastructure of the place, the traditional architecture of Uttarakhand forms an essential part. Traditional architecture such as Kotha is one example. Kotha is a semi royal tradition architecture found in many parts of Uttarakhand, especially Garhwal region. Despite being a vital component of the architectural legacy, the structure has not yet undergone a detailed investigation. The purpose of this paper is to examine the multidisciplinary study of the structure, including the cultural and social significance that it holds for society in general.

Key words: garhwal himalayas • kotha • vernacular architecture • thokdars,

Introduction

Garhwal, is an administrative division of Uttarakhand state which falls in Central Himalayan range. This region is famous for its sanctity, religious values and natural prosperity. It also has a rich historical and archaeological background which is evident through many historical sites, monuments, sculptures, inscriptions, coins etc. Apart from the classical form of arts, many vernacular architectures are dotted in this region. According to Verma and Brar, the vernacular architecture is one of the best examples of climate-resilience and energy-efficiency across the globe that has evolved through generations

(Verma et al., 2022). But unfortunately, despite having a range of vernacular architecture in Garhwal no attentive study has been done on it particularly on Kotha of this region. In Garhwal Himalaya, the term Kotha is considered for a residential architecture which belongs to the elite class of village society. There is difference of opinions regarding the origin of term 'Kotha'. According to some scholars, the term kotha originated from Sanskrit word *Kott*, which is used for a fortified structure (Burrow & Emeneau, 1984). Similarly, it has also been mentioned that the term *Kotha* is derived from the Sanskrit word "*kosthak*" or Brackett (in



English) which means enclosed (Dr. R. S. Negi, personal communication, July 2023). A kota or kotha is a ritual square where deities reside, which carries a lot of significance in Tantric literature. 'Kotha' in Bengali refers to a granary, storeroom, treasure chamber, or inner apartment, which comes from the Sanskrit *kostha*. The meaning of *kotha* in Bengali dictionaries is "the chamber", "the fort" (also Sanskrit: *Kota*), "the fortress" or "the room". The Sanskrit word '*kostha*' describes an enclosed room, shell, or limited space within an inner chamber (Czyżkowski, 2020). However, the above opinions indicate different routes of origin of term *Kotha*, but interestingly both the opinions are used for enclosed or fortified kind of structure. In addition to this, it is interesting to add that, the usage of term *Kot* can be noticed in the

administrative history of ancient and medieval India (citation). Thus, keeping in view the architecture of *Kotha* located in Garhwal it may be said that the term *Kotha* is a localized version of word *Kot*. Our survey shows that there are more than thirty structures in Garhwal region which can be considered as *Kotha*. The structure of *Kotha* is unique in its own sense due to its architecture, function, historical significance, and selection of site as well. Therefore, due to its significance and poor attention, the present subject has been selected for investigation.

Study area: The study area of the research is concentrated in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. This region is comprised of Seven districts, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarkashi, Haridwar and Dehradun (Figure.1)

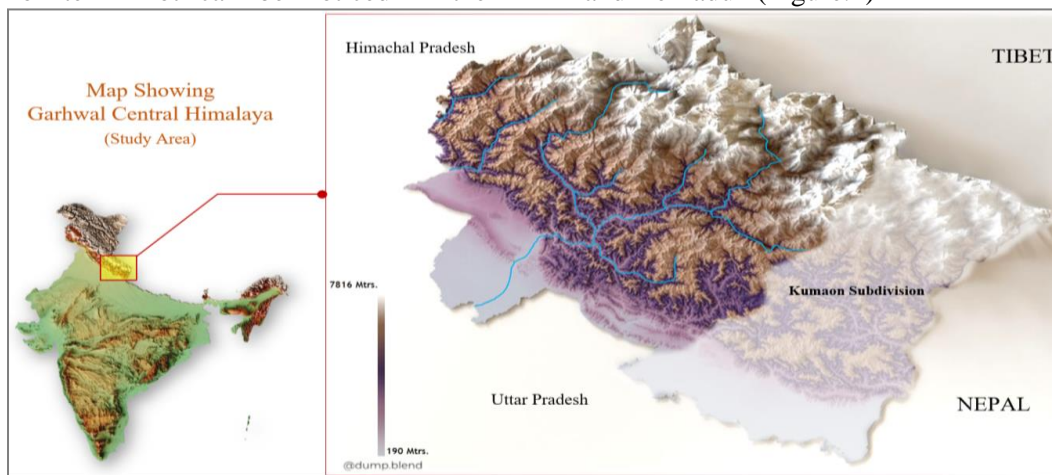


Figure-1: Map showing Garhwal Himalaya in Uttarakhand, India

Objectives of the Study

As it has been mentioned above that, the present study is focusing on the least studied subject which brings number of objectives in light to study the *Kotha* of Garhwal Himalaya. But present study is only focusing on the following major objectives which may establish a ground to study the *Kotha* from various dimensions in future. The major objectives of present study are as follows:

1. To Identify the location of *Kotha* in Garhwal Himalaya

2. To understand the architecture and feature of *kotha*
3. To analyze the cultural and historical significance of *kotha*

Methodology

The methodology for working on vernacular architecture is a comprehensive and systematic approach that involves a series of well-defined steps. It began with literature review to understand the existing knowledge and research gaps. The detailed review of literature shows that there is very limited research has



been done on the Kotha of Garhwal Himalaya particularly from architectural point of view. Although several accounts mention the kotha, but there is no focused study has been found on its architecture, history, and significance. Thereafter a series of field work was carried out to identify and location of Kotha in different altitudinal zones of Garhwal Himalaya. During filed work detailed documentation also has done which mainly includes sketches, measurements, photography, and videography. As part of the survey, a questionnaire was also prepared for the local community that consisted of basic

information about the Kotha, its history and the people associated with it.

Architecture:

It has been clearly mentioned above that the Kot/ Kotha/ Kwatha is a kind of fortified structure which were mainly constructed by/ for the local administrators of the region. During this study many Kothas reported in Garhwal region which has unique architectural style. These Kotha are two storied significantly constructed in a square shape with an open courtyard in the center which is key identical feature of it. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Aerial view of Kotha of Ida

Thus, keeping in view these identical features in consideration, there are more than 20 Kotha were explored during present study in various altitudinal zones of Garhwal. Among all these 20 kothas, only one Kotha located in village Sarkot, Chamoli Garhwal found in rectangular shape rest of all the kothas are in typical square shape. Furthermore, it has also been noticed that, the size of Kothas is not same but the shape, pattern, significance and value is same in all places. The survey has also shown that the smallest Kotha is constructed within the ancient Shiva temple complex in Gopeshwar, Chamoli which is an integral part of temple and popularly known as ‘*Rawal Niwas*’ (residence of chief priest) (Figure.3). This Kotha is constructed over a 15X15 Meter square area having traditional two stories with

one entrance in eastern direction. One of the largest Kotha of Garhwal has been found in the Ida village, Pauri Garhwal which belongs to Negi clan. It is covering a total 23 X 23 Meter area. This Kotha is again two storied and having one huge and most decorative wooden entrance in eastern direction. These two storied Kothas are constructed with the combine use of long wooden and stone slabs; which not only gives them high strength but also make them earthquake resistance (“Architecture of Uttarakhand and Construction Techniques for Affordable Housing,” 2017; Shefer et al., 2015). The number of rooms also depends on the size of the Kotha, like- there are only 22 rooms in Rawal Niwas, Gopeshwar but in Kotha of Ida a total 48 number of rooms are reported. The



size of rooms is not equal, this could be attributed primarily to the utility of the rooms such as living room, kitchen, storage etc. The

average size of room is 10 X 10 Feet in which most of the rooms are interconnected through small door in partition wall.

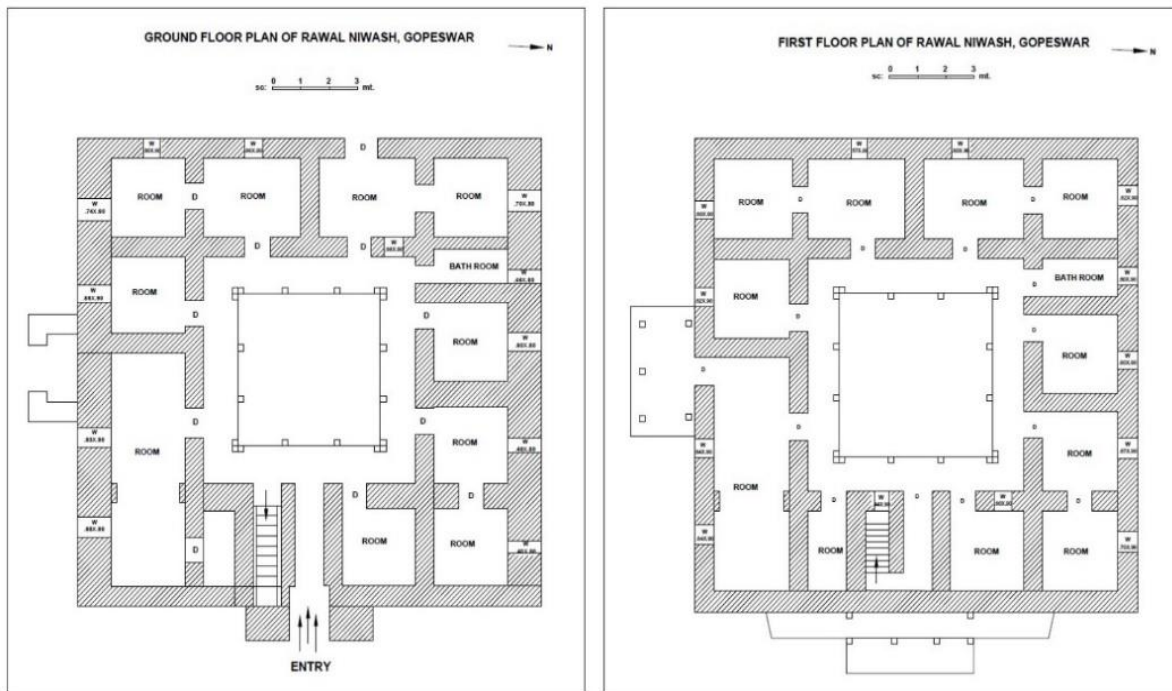


Figure.3.Plan of Ground floor and first floor of Rawal Niwas, Gopeshwar (Image Courtesy Archaeological Survey of India, Dehradun circle)

Architectural Features of Kotha

Verandah with Dandyali, Tibari and Chajja: Traditionally, Kotha is constructed with two-stories in which the upper floor features an extended space referred to locally known as the Chajja/Dandyali/ Tibari having different appearance and utility. This elevated platform or veranda serves multiple purposes, making it a significant part of the Kotha. The appearance of these extended verandah also indicates the development in the architecture of Kotha. The pillars adorning the verandah of the Kotha are not merely structural elements; they are exquisite works of art that play an important role in elevating the architectural grandeur of the entire structure. The Dandyali can be visualized as a rectangular verandah with a length that surpasses its width. This architectural design emphasizes a longer expanse, creating a distinctive and elongated outdoor space. The pillars within the Dandyali

are characterized by their simplicity, lacking elaborate ornamentation. It exhibits a basic and unadorned design, contributing to the overall straightforward aesthetic of the structure. These type of verandah can be seen in the kotha of Ida, Pauri Garhwal. Another kind of verandah is distinguished by the arrangement of four pillars. These decorated pillars are strategically positioned to give rise to a grand open window, referred to as "*Tibari*," which essentially comprises three individual windows. Here it is important to add that, as the term *Tibari* refers to four pillared three elongated window similarly there are concept of *Dwibari* (Two elongated window with three pillars), *Chaubari* (Four elongated window with five pillars) and it continues up to *Naubari* (Nine elongated windows with ten pillars) as per the resourcefulness and prosperity of the owner. But the *Tibari* is the most adopted pattern in Garhwal Himalayan region (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Tibari in Dandyali with Chajja at Rawal Niwas, Gopeshwar

Figure 5. Chajja on the outer wall of the Ida kotha

This particular feature of *Bari* (Elongated windows) is not confined to the Kotha only, it can be seen in other residential buildings of the region. A notable illustrative dwibari is evident in the Kotha of Gopeshwar positioned towards the southeast. This deliberate design of *Dwibari* choice not only ensures practical considerations like natural light and ventilation for the Rawal's space but also imparts a unique and distinguished character to the overall structure. There is a distinctive extension known as a "Chajja." This feature is essentially a small projection from the second floor, crafted entirely from arranged stone slabs to create a narrow lane-like feature (Figure 5). This type of extension can also be seen in all kothas and other kind of double storied traditional houses in Garhwal Himalaya.

Pillars

Pillars are often one of the major components in architecture. It not only gives strength and stability to the structure but also enhance the aesthetic part of buildings. This significance of pillars can be seen in the Kotha of Garhwal region. significantly, every kotha located in Garhwal Himalaya necessarily have decorative pillars in tibari. However, sometimes undecorated pillars also can be observed in dandyali. Present stage of knowledge indicates that, the tibari is the most important and

mandatory feature in Kotha architecture which is adorned with at least four most decorated pillars. The design and size of pillars varies as per the overall size of kotha as well as the status of the proprietor. All these pillars are made on locally available wood like deodar, tun etc. which are carved with floral and geometric designs. The pillars installed in Kotha exhibit a meticulous division into three distinctive sections. The base is called *thala*, a square stone foundation that provides stability to the pillar. Moving upward, the shaft, known as *yasthi*, takes on an ornate character with octagonal or hexagonal designs, showcasing a high degree of decoration. The upper part of the pillar is seamlessly integrated into the foil-shaped arch or façade, commonly referred to as *mehrab*. This segment, too, is characterized by intricate decorations, adding a layer of sophistication to the overall aesthetic. In essence, the tibari represents a more evolved and decorative manifestation of the dandyali, with its meticulous attention to detail and artistic embellishments (Y. S. Kathoch, personal communication, October 2023). This indicates that, these pillars are not just functional elements of a structure but it also can be seen as powerful symbols of cultural identity and architectural innovation in the region. (Figure 6)

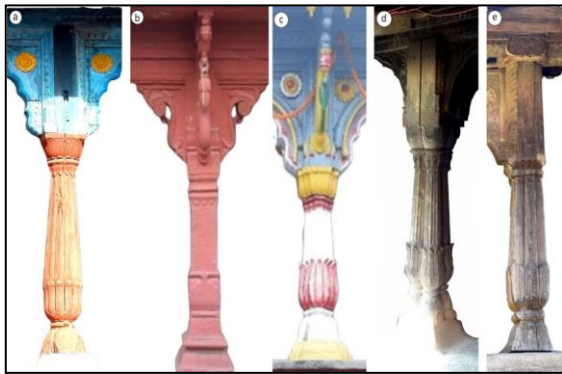


Fig 6. A range of Pillar found in the Kotha Gopeshwar)

(a- Bharpur kotha-Tehri Garhwal, b- Rawal Niwas, ground floor-Gopeshwar-Chamoli, c- Rawal Niwas, first floor-Gopeshwar-Chamoli, d- Ida kotha- Pauri Gahrwal, Rajgarhi kotha-Uttarkashi)

Entrance Gate: Entrance gate is the most significant part in any structure it is not merely considered as a key component of architecture but the size, design and motifs incorporated at it also reflects the identity and status of the structure and its residents as well (Sadanand et al., 2021). Therefore, it is constructed in such a fashion which follows traditional rules of directions, size, proportion and



Fig 7. Entrance gate of Rawal Niwas (*Kotha* of

installation/carvings of various motifs. According to (Belz, 1995)elaborate designed window and door are one of the major characteristics of traditional Himalayan architecture (Figure 7). Furthermore, the Kotha of Garhwal Himalaya typically has only single entrance gate mostly in Northern or North-Eastern direction. Following the tradition, the doorframe of these entrance gates is found decorated with various religious, geometric and natural symbol and motifs. Doorways consists of three major elements - doorframe, vertical doorpost and two horizontal parts of threshold at the bottom and lintel at the top.



Figure 8. Entrance gate of Ida Kotha, Pauri Garhwal, of Ida Kotha

Single entrance serves as a noteworthy element in Kotha architecture. This feature not



Figure 9. Decorated Doorlimbs (*Dwarshakha*)

only contributes to the structure's aesthetics but also plays a strategic role in enhancing the



security of Structure and inhabitants. Generally, the gateways of these kotha are artistically very rich. These gates connect the main entrance to the residence area or the courtyard in the center of building. The materials used to construct an entrance are often a combination of wood and mud, but some kothas has their entrances made on wood only (Figure 8). This magnificent gateway is not merely a singular door frame; rather, it boasts grandeur through the incorporation of six door limbs or *dwarsakhas*, each adorned with distinct and elaborate designs. The innermost *sakha* is embellished with a *patrasakha*, featuring a captivating pattern resembling leaves. The second *sakha* is adorned with a combination of flowers and leaves, known as *pushp-patrasakha*, adding a floral elegance to the gateway. Continuing the ornate theme, the third *sakha* showcases a *jymitikshaka*, characterized by intricate geometric patterns. The subsequent *sakha* is adorned with *latasakha*, emphasizing a graceful vine-like pattern. The fifth *sakha* reintroduces geometric designs, providing a captivating contrast, while the final one is embellished with *pushpsakha*, featuring intricate flower patterns. (Figure 9)

This meticulous attention to detail in the diverse decorations of each door limb contributes to the overall richness of the gateway. This gateway stands out as a unique architectural marvel in various aspects. Notably, a *chaubari*, characterized by four windows, graces the second floor of the gateway. This distinctive feature creates a sense of elevation, with the gateway commanding a higher position than the adjacent Kotha. Interestingly, a similar type of *tibari*, marked by its design and characteristics, is also present at the entrance of the Kotha in Gopeshwar. This architectural element creating a harmonious aesthetic and functional connection between the two structures. The thoughtful incorporation of both *chaubari* of Eda kotha and *tibari* element of Gopeshwar Kotha underscores the sophistication and architectural ingenuity displayed in this gateway. An additional noteworthy feature is the presence of the *lalabimb*, the upper section of entrance gate adorned with an image of four handed Lord Ganesha seated on a miniature platform decorated with arch, dome and pillars surrounded by floral cum geometric design (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Image of Lord Ganesha at the top of entrance gate

Figure 11, 12. Small and Narrow decorated windows in Kotha of Garhwal (view from outside)

The artistic intricacy of the deity's carving may not be extravagant, its significance surpasses mere aesthetics. The purpose behind this carving holds paramount importance, as Lord

Ganesha is considered auspicious and is believed to play a crucial role in safeguarding the Kotha. This intentional incorporation of Lord Ganesha's image not only adds a



religious and cultural dimension to the gateway but also underscores the spiritual beliefs associated with protection and well-being. The presence of Lord Ganesha in the *lalatbimb* serves as a symbol of auspiciousness and invokes a sense of divine protection over the entrance, contributing to the holistic and sacred atmosphere surrounding the Kotha.

Centre Courtyard: Courtyards is another important part of residential architectures but it becomes most required feature for an enclosed structure like Kotha. The central courtyard is identical element in Kotha of Garhwal which is also known as inner courtyards or atriums. Central courtyard seems a multipurpose space within the Kotha . The incorporation of a central courtyard in building design offers a variety of benefits that enhance both sustainability and the overall quality of life for its residents. Bringing natural light and ventilation deep into the interior decreases the need for artificial lighting and air conditioning. This multi-functional space serves as a versatile venue for community events, cultural activities, and educational programs, fostering a dynamic and inclusive environment. Serving as the heart of the structure, the courtyard contributes to the Kotha's distinct identity, reflecting local culture and traditions. Furthermore, it acts as a noise buffer, reducing external disturbances and creating a serene living environment. In regions with extreme climates, the courtyard functions as a passive climate control system, offering thermal regulation and ensuring comfort for residents throughout the year.

Windows: The windows of Kothas are characterized by their shallow design, with a

relatively limited depth. This architectural feature serves both functional and aesthetic purposes. The shallow nature of the windows allows for the penetration of natural light into the interior spaces while maintaining a level of privacy and security. Apart from it, small windows are also good for energy efficiency as smaller windows controls the heat in both winter and summer time. These windows are also decorated with various geometrical designs (Figure 11 and 12).

Ornamental elements: Kotha is a royal structure of its age which has various architectural features described above. Many of these features are decorated with various symbols and motifs. The most decorated part of each Kotha is its entrance door, tibari, pillars and windows. All these features are ornate with the flower pattern, medallions, animal figures, lattice designs inspired by flower patterns, divine figures and human figures (Figure 13). Another noteworthy element are the animal figurines used as the decorative elements below the chajja of the kotha of Gopeshwar. These elements increase the aesthetic elements of the kotha. The delicate craftsmanship is a testament to the artistic finesse of the region, and these pillars stand as tangible expressions of the cultural heritage they represent. Moreover, these pillars hold a profound cultural significance, reflecting the rich history and traditions of the region. The motifs and designs carved into the pillars often carry symbolic meanings, telling stories of the community's past, its values, and its connection to the land.

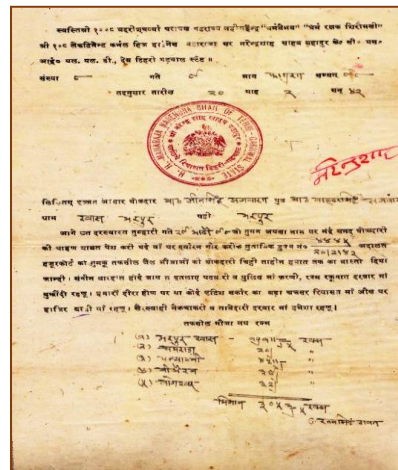


Figure 13. Various symbols, motifs and other decorative art forms incorporated in Kotha of Garhwal
Figure 14. An official document released by King Narendra Shah to Thokdar of Bharpur Kotha
(Image courtesy: Mr. Surendra Singh Sajwan, Bharpur, Tehri Garhwal)

Significance of Kota /Kotha: It is clearly mentioned above that, the Kotha is a unique kind of architecture found in various part of Garhwal Himalaya. It is very significant from architectural point of view with its many indignations and classical features. Additionally, apart from its architectural significance there are many other significant aspects of Kotha can be observed which mainly includes followings-

Administrative significance: The fact is mentioned above that, the Kotha in Garhwal Himalaya belongs to local administrator appointed by the ruling class. Therefore, it may be considered as a part of administrative structure of the region. The architectural significance of Kotha is described above which includes various feature only found in royal houses *e.g. Tibari, Dandyali and decorative entrance etc.* In this context, Paw has also mentioned in his 10th settlement report of Garhwal that, most of old *Tibari* are the property of Thokdars (Pauw, 1896). Paw has drawn a parallel between Thokdar, Kaminn and Sayana of Garhwal with Zamidars of Plains who were only responsible for ruler or king (Pauw, 1896). Similarly, according to Traill (Traill, 1851) Thokdar is a hereditary position that is appointed by the ruling class, to manage local level administration.

According to Stowell, the term Sayana, Kamin and Thokdars are used for same person initially but they all had different rights and duties (Stowell, 1928). Kamin is used for the person who used to collected revenue from the villeges under his authority where he does not owns any land while sayana does have land in the few villeges from where he collects revenue (Dabral, 1973). The Thokdars is responsible for designating a village head, referred to as the "padhan," to handle the collection and direct accounting of the village's cess (additional tax) on their behalf (Traill, 1851). The padhan could be replaced at any time by the Thokdars or Kamin and Syana. This system ensured a direct link between the thokdars and the village's financial matters, with flexibility in the appointment of the Padhan (Pauw, 1896; Traill, 1851). Thokdars had significant role in the society but after Sudarshan Shah's consolidation the kingdoms following the last settlement of Garhwal, it significant effected the property rights of Thokdars. While their influence remained substantial, due to their superior standing in the caste hierarchy, the changes were notable (Saklani, 1987). After the last settlement of Garhwal in 1856 the privileges of the thokdars were broken down. Traill initially reduced thokdari dues to 3



percent of the revenue, but this change was not effectively implemented (Traill, 1851). Thokdars originally held both revenue and police duties, but these responsibilities were later transferred to padhans due to the inefficiency of thokdars in policing.

Thokdars, representing esteemed families, were seen as the nobility of Garhwal, though their significance had diminished compared to feudal times. Despite their diminished role, thokdars were viewed as essential for preserving societal diversity. Their increased dignity came from their supposed entitlement to possess arms without a license, although this was clarified as an exemption under the Arms Act, not tied to their role as police officers. The Thokdars held a pivotal role in history, particularly as landholders and proprietors of numerous Kothas. It is significant to add that, the Thokdars' rights and responsibilities are personal to them and cannot be transferred in any mode. For example, in the matter concerning Daulat Singh thokdar of Kota Malla (Malla Badalpur), the Board, led by Mr. H. D'O. Moule, issued the following directive:

"While the duties performed by a Thokdar may not be highly significant, it is undeniably service tenure. The rights and responsibilities associated with the position are personal to the Thokdar and cannot be transferred through sale or mortgage to another. I would rather view Daulat Singh as temporarily suspended from the Thokdar office. His reinstatement would be contingent upon redeeming the mortgage on his Thokdaridues, thereby freeing the office from an encumbrance it was never meant to bear. I propose giving Daulat Singh a reasonable time frame, say a year, to accomplish this" [Order of the 14th October, 1898 (Stowell, 1928)]

There are many documents which provide information related to the ownership of Kotha. These documents are commonly written in Garhwali language/dialect addressing thokdars about various issues (Figure 14). It gives

information about local administration up-to village level. According to Vikram Singh Negi (decedent of Thokdar of Kota, Malla Badalpur, Pauri Garhwal) the Thokdar of Kota had authority over 84 villages of the region, he also had judicial power to control the crime and other illegal activities in the region (Vikram Singh Negi, personal communication, September 2023).

Socio- Cultural Significance:

The Kotha served not only as residential structures but also as center for Socio-Cultural activities. These Kothas played important role in facilitating various activities associated with the temples, serving as integral spaces for religious ceremonies, gatherings, and community events. The symbiotic relationship between the Kothas and nearby religious structures underscored their importance as cultural and spiritual focal points within the community. In numerous locations, Kothas served the dual purpose of not only being residential structures but also functioning as the abode for the chief priest of the temple. A notable illustration of this practice can be observed in places like Gopinath Temple-Gopeshwar, Badrinath Temple and Omkareshwar Temple-Ukhimath etc. In these instances, the Kothas were designated as the dwelling place for the principal priest overseeing the respective temples. These structures, strategically situated in proximity to the sacred temples, not only provided living quarters but also served as integral centers for religious activities and rituals conducted by the main priest. It is interesting to note that the Kotha located near temple are named differently like the Kotha of Gopeshwar is known as Rawan Niwas (house of priest). Similarly, many Kothas are located on ancient pilgrim routes like Bharpur and Gangol; even Gopeshwar, Ukhimath and Badrinath are ancient temple which has Kotha in their periphery (Figure 15-). Similarly, it is also found that the Kotha at Nrisingh Temple at



Joshimath served as the residence for



Figure 15. Kotha located near Gopinath Temple, Gopeshwar

In addition to this, it has also been found that, the Kothas, hold a profound social and functional significance within their cultural context. Serving as important center for community life, these spaces become focal points for various social gatherings and events. Beyond merely hosting these occasions, Kothas actively contribute to their success by acting as resource centers. The multipurpose nature of these establishments is evident in their use of ground-floor rooms as storage units, accommodating large vessels for substantial gatherings. This dual functionality not only emphasizes their adaptability but also highlights their integral role in the practical aspects of community events. Kothas, therefore, emerge as more than physical spaces; they embody cultural importance, acting as community centers that foster a sense of unity and tradition. In seamlessly blending social and practical elements, Kothas become dynamic expressions of community life, preserving traditions while meeting the diverse needs of the people they serve. The status of the Kotha is socially high as the people residing inside the it was called Kothabhitari and this nomenclature persists to identify families associated with it. The fact that residents of the Kothas were referred to as "Kothabhitari" suggests a level of recognition and respect within the community. It has also

Shankaracharya and the Rawal of Badrinath.



Figure 16. Cultural performance in

been noticed that, some of the Kotha are still in use for social and religious performances like the festival of Holi, procession of goddess Chandika is celebrated in kotha of Gopeshwar. (Figure 16)

Discussion and Conclusion

The paper delves into the intricacies of the Kotha, a distinct architectural and cultural feature of the Garhwal Himalayas, emphasizing their significance beyond mere residential structures. These buildings hold a unique historical and cultural value within the community, serving as venues for ceremonies, accommodations for community leaders, and facilitators of cultural rituals, thus playing a pivotal role in preserving the region's cultural identity. Initial surveys highlight a pattern where Kothas were strategically placed at the outset or in the heart of villages, indicating their dual functionality as accommodations for pilgrims and crucial stopovers for travelers embarking on sacred journeys like the Chardham Yatra. The research identifies two primary functions associated with Kothas: religious and royal.

Kothas with royal connections operated under the Thokdari system, overseen by appointed Thokdars responsible for maintenance and governance, including administrative and financial duties. Conversely, Kothas with



religious affiliations were under the influence of figures like Rawals, who administered revenue collection alongside spiritual responsibilities, demonstrating the intertwined nature of religious and administrative roles.

This dual governance structure reflects the complex societal organization of the Garhwal Himalayas, with Kothas symbolizing tangible expressions of the region's rich history and social fabric. The deliberate placement, multifaceted functions, and roles of Thokdars and Rawals underscore the intricate tapestry of cultural, religious, and administrative aspects woven into the society. Overall, the study sheds light on the profound significance of Kothas in shaping and preserving the cultural heritage of the Garhwal Himalayas.

The architecture of kothas in the Garhwal Himalayas is a captivating fusion of beauty and tradition. It speaks to the artistic prowess of the community while preserving and celebrating the historical and cultural legacy of the region. The architecture of kothas in the Garhwal Himalayas is indeed a captivating fusion of beauty and tradition, a testament to the artistic prowess of the community and a celebration of the region's rich historical and cultural legacy. In addition to this, the thoughtful arrangement of the building components and the use of traditional construction techniques contribute to making the entire structure earthquake-resistant. The strategic placement of load-bearing elements and the overall layout work in harmony to absorb and dissipate seismic forces, showcasing the deep understanding of the local builders regarding the geographical challenges of the Himalayan region (Bothara et al., 2019, 2022). The pillars, with their ornate carvings and symbolic motifs, encapsulate the very essence of the Kotha's cultural identity. Adding in architectural features it has also been found that, except entrance gate all doors are positioned to face courtyard and the windows of ground floor facing courtyard whereas the window of first floor opens in

both sides. Here, keeping in view the Kotha of Kota, Badalpaur, Pauri Garhwa it is pertinent to add that there is one specific room constructed in first floor which is called *Eewaan*. According to Vikram Singh Negi this room was used for administrative meetings with elite class. Thus, present paper shows that, the Kotha of Garhwal are great source of history and culture of this region. present paper exhibits that, there are two distinct types of Kothas were constructed in Garhwal Himalaya one for Political purpose and another one for religious purpose and it is interesting to state that most of the administrative/ political Kothas are now deserted but the Kotha associated with religious landscape are still in use with good condition.

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