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ARCHITECTURE, URBANISM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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**KUMAONI ANUBHAV,
DECIPHERING THE KUMAONI TERRAIN**
Sub-Theme: Cities' Identity Through Art and Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Uttarakhand, popularly known as Devbhoomi (land of God) is divided in two regions; Kumaon and Gharwal. The Kumaon region has always lacked identity in terms of their art forms and architecture, in the past due to the rule of Gorkhas (Nepal rulers) in Kumaon and the British empowering over Gharwal region. In the current scenario, Gharwal is home to most of the tourist spots and popular places. This research will look on the aspects of growth of local artist, art forms, food, culture, architecture and built spaces through traditional housing typology and community spaces. This paper will also help us in understand the pattern of local markets which are either modernized or are influenced by the Colonial times, while also analyzing the migration pattern and the condition of local artists. It also contains the study of history of Kumaon region, art forms (like; apen, choliya dance, hiljatra, etc), their festivals (such as; ramlillea, harela, ghee tyar, etc). The local community study, vernacular architectural elements, construction techniques and diversification of spaces, based on functionality. All these may give the understanding of Kumaon's identity, and help conserve existing local architecture and cultural traditions.

Keywords: architecture, community, conservation, culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand, a state of India popularly known as Devbhoomi is divided into two regions i.e. Kumaon with 6 districts and Gharwal with 7. The Gharwal region had always housed the administrative power, tourist spots like Chotha char dham, the valley of Flowers and Yoga capital- Rishikesh, etc. The Kumaoni community has always faced lack of identity, from the Gorkhas rule to the British times. The Art and Architecture which was preserved in small villages has also been disturbed due to migration. A total of 3, 83,726 people migrated temporarily from 6,338 village panchayats of Uttarakhand between 2008 and 2018. According to UNESCO, the language has had a threat, it is in the *not safe zone*. The tourist spots for the regions here been identified only as the temples which are not helping in conservation of the entire Kumaoni culture or the regional context.

The main problem of dying culture is from the out migration in the place, due to factors like; better job opportunities, education and health. The Kumaon region lacks the space or a platform where the local art, food, festival and culture can be displayed. This also impacts the younger generations, who do not have any knowledge about their culture, festivals and beliefs.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methods will be through primary survey of the Kumaoni community and secondary through literature study and statistics. There will be study of pattern of the indigenous market, vernacular architecture and understanding of local community spaces and housing typologies for a better understanding of the Kumaoni culture, which is at the verge of extinction.

3. SITE CONTEXT

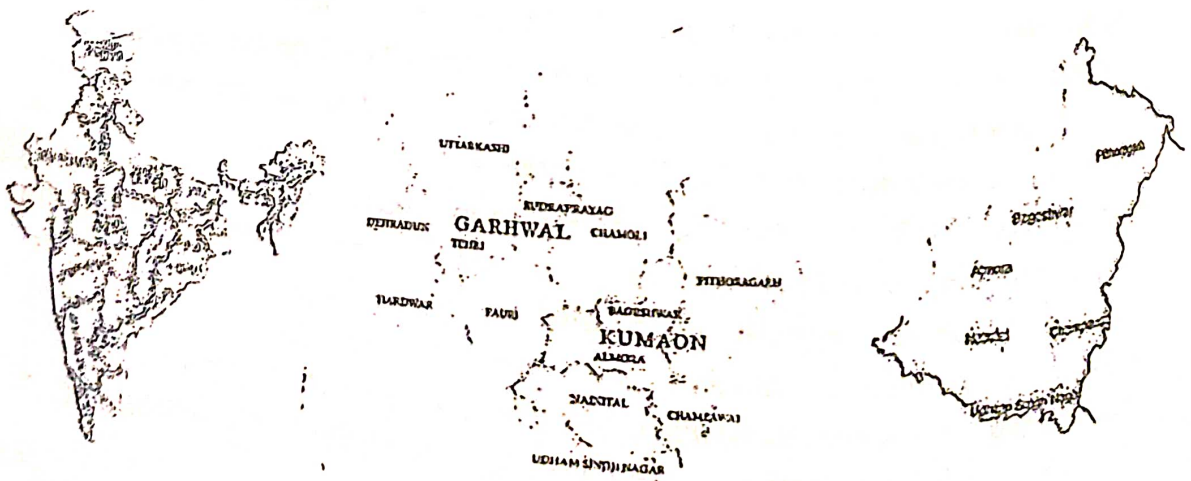


Figure 1 Map showing Kumaon region in Uttarakhand

4. UNIQUENESS OF KUMAON CULTURE

4.1 Culture/Traditions

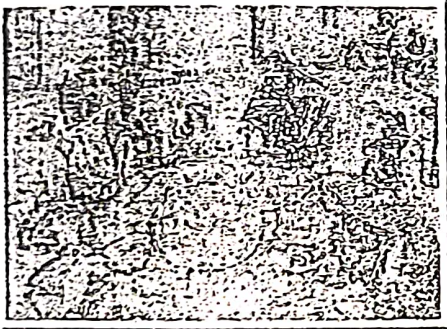


Figure 2 Apen art by women at entrance and verandah

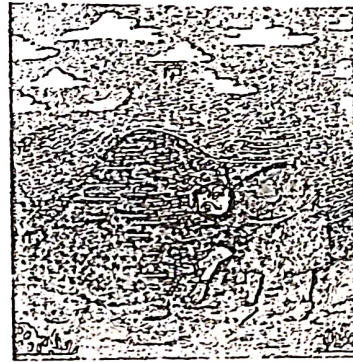


Figure 3 Harela festival, celebrated by farmers

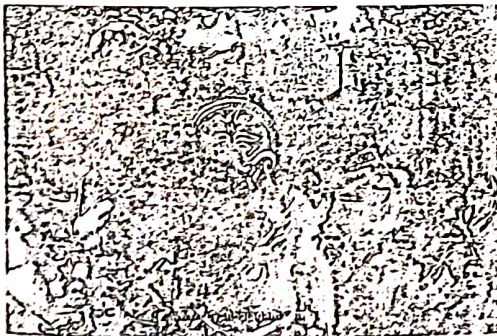


Figure 4 Hiljatra, a local festival with storytelling celebrated for season's first grown crop

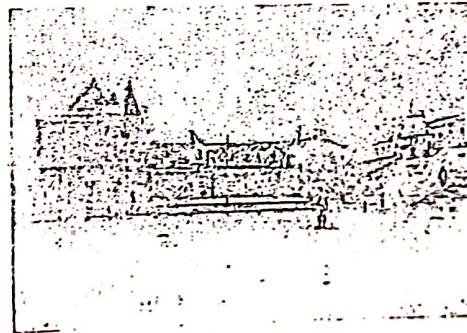


Figure 5 stage for local Ramayana natak during dusheera

4.2 Clothing



Figure 6 Kumaoni women wearing pichauda with a skirt



Figure 7 kumaoni men wearing topi and kurta

4.3 Arts and performance



Figure 8 Choliya dance, folk dance of Uttarakhand

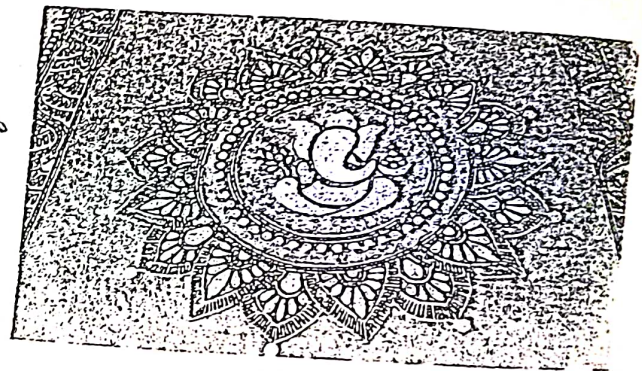


Figure 9 Apen art, done during deepawali near entrance

4.4 Food



Figure 10 Kumaoni thali with madwa (millet) roti , bal mithai

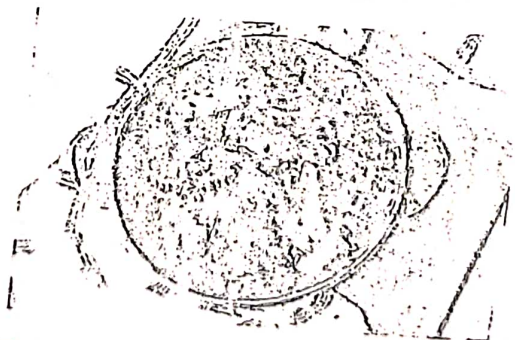


Figure 11 aloo ke guthkey, cooked during all festivals

4.5 Architecture



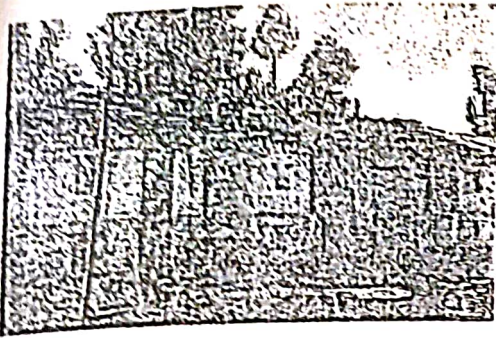


Figure 12 kumaoni house with slate roof locally called pattar

Figure 13 kashth kala, wooden carvings at door, window

5. POTENTIAL THREATS

Kumaon has a distinct language called Kumaoni which is a dialect, currently almost extinct. The rate of migration in Kumaon region is very high due to the fast changes in lifestyle influenced by the urbanization trends around the region. This change can be seen in the change of urban fabric, typology and utilization of historical spaces. The lack of awareness of language has led to decline in the Kumaoni music and cinema industry. The younger generation in Kumaon are not aware about different art forms from their culture.

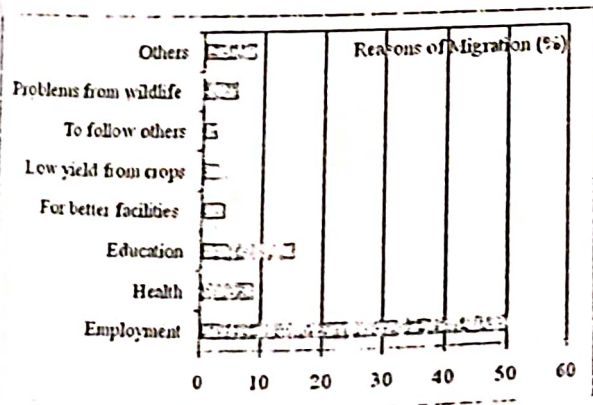


Figure 14 Employment being major reason for migration

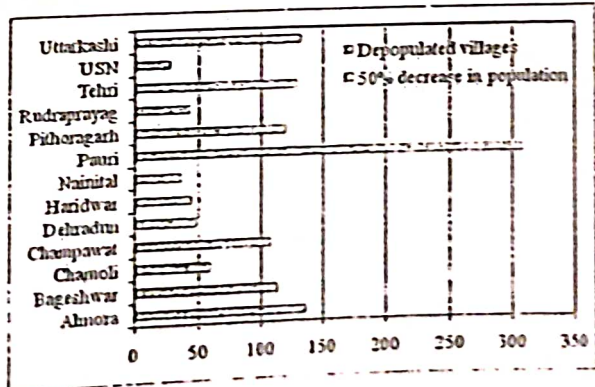
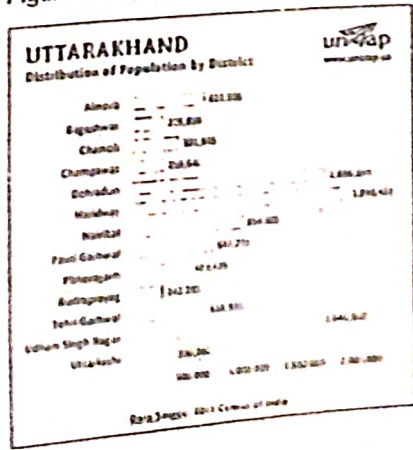


Figure 15 depopulated villages in Uttarakhand



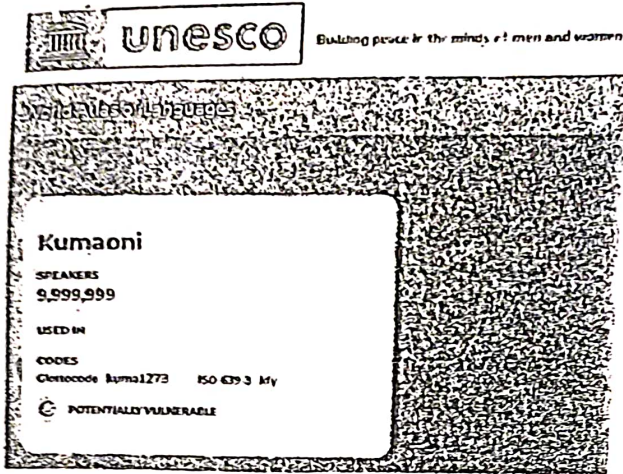


Figure 16 kumaoni language under "NOT SAFE" zone

Figure 17 Bageshwar, Champawat, Pithoragarh (Kumaon)

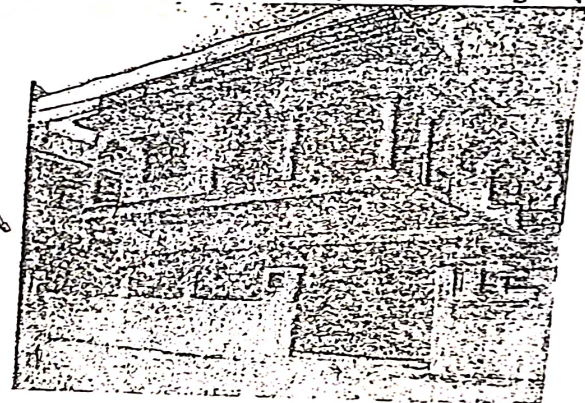
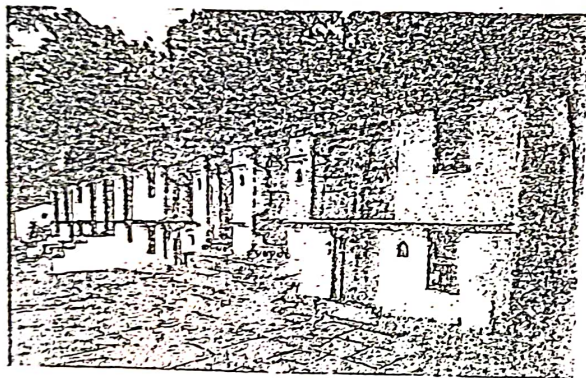


Figure 18 A vernacular house from Champawat

Figure 19 Modern construction in Haldwani



Figure 20 These pictures shows a market done with local architectural elements, colonial period and modernization

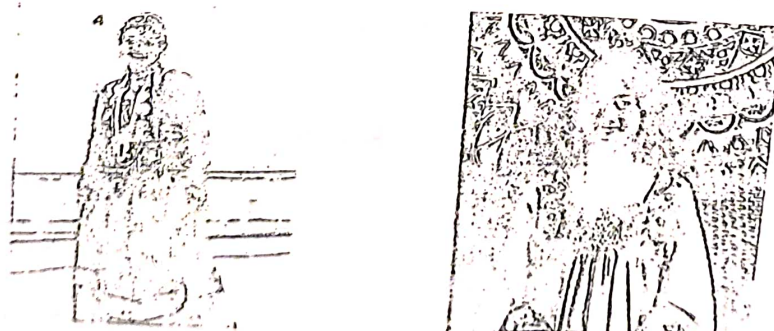


Figure 31 The effect of modernization can be seen in the clothing or attire also

6. TRADITIONAL HOUSING TYPOLOGY AND COMMUNITY SPACES

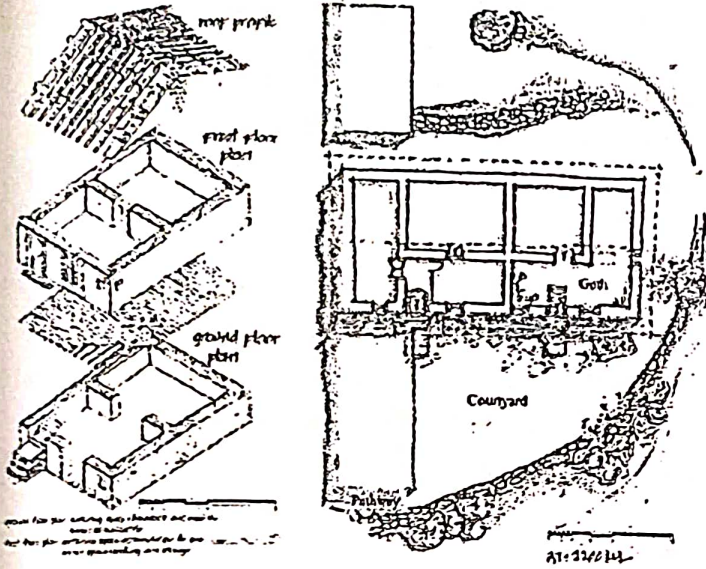


Figure 41 Vernacular typology; showing goth used as cattle space, Chajji being the connecting space between room and outside

The traditional houses will be seen with small openings, small verandah in front of the houses which are sometimes mostly used as connecting spaces between dwellings. The materials used are wood, stone for framing, clay for plastering and flooring, slate stone or patthar for roofing.

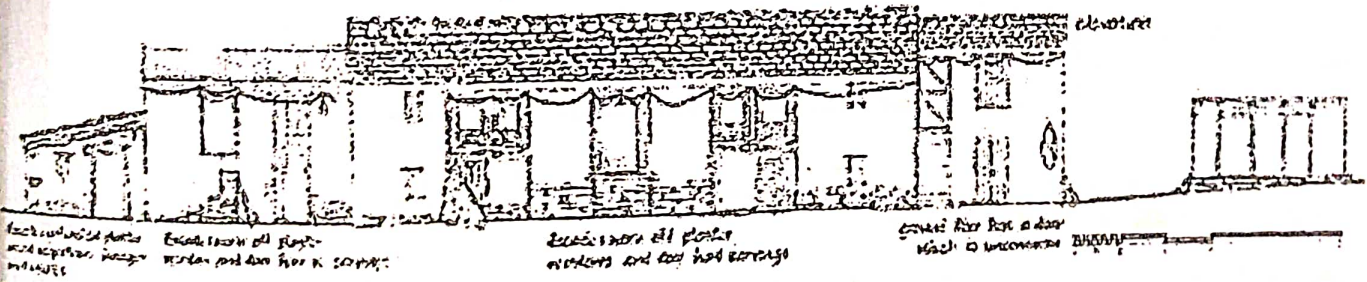
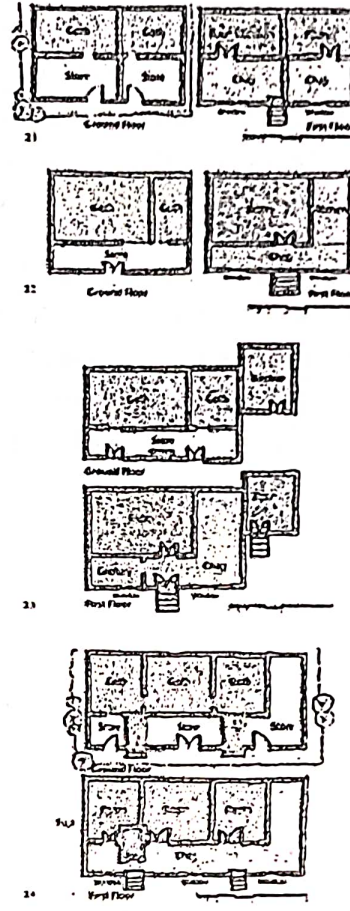


Figure 32 An elevation of kumaoni vernacular house showcasing wood work in doors and windows called Kash kala



Figure 33 Ramleela maidan, Pithoragarh acts as a festival space other than just Ramleela event



Figure 34 Hijatra festival, celebrated in a primary school ground

7. CONCLUSIONS

This research shows certain factors which influence the lack of identity of Kumaoni culture. The in and out migration to the cities in the region, promotion of urbanization resulting in the lack of communal unity. The urbanization trends have changed the urban fabric of the Kumaoni cities and the original building typologies.

These factors can be addressed or rectified by the conservation of vernacular architecture, the new fabric can be product of the existing styles considering local housing typology elements and function of community spaces. The preservation of festival spaces and heritage buildings will help the community protect its identity and retain its landmark on the existing Kumaoni terrain, maintaining the sanctity of this historical cultural landscape.

8

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