



Cultural Landscape characteristics of Nabi Village, Kuti Yangti River Valley Higher Central Himalaya

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Abstract:

Nabi village is inhabited by Rung tribe of Uttarakhand. People of this area are having their impact on economy, culture and the surrounding environment. One can assess the characteristics of the people by looking at the landscape developed by them specially the architecture of the house, dress, landuse and other activities. This study is focused on the landuse/landcover of the area. One villages i.e. Nabi is selected for detailed study for the identification of the cultural landscape. Cultural landscape mapping is carried out using Remote sensing data. Intensive field work in conducted for field verification of the information derived from Remote Sensing data. Final maps are prepared with the help of GIS application. The landuse/landcover of the area is identified as forest & grassland, built-up, agriculture, shrines, and water body.

Key words

Cultural landscape, landuse/landcover, Rung tribe, Nabi village

Introduction

The word landscape itself combines Land with a verb of Germanic origin, "scapjan/schaffen" to means, literally, 'shaped lands'. Land was then considered shaped by natural forces and the unique details of such shaped land became itself the subject of physical Landscape. In general landscapes are divided into two i.e. physical and cultural which are in symbiotic relationship. This study will be helpful in land use planning and development especially in regional development like connecting

roads, developing the centre places, and conservation of natural resources (endangered species, water and forest). In this study an attempt is made to the identification and mapping of cultural landscape of the area.

Cultural and physical landscape is called trans-disciplinary system of earth. This results the complex system of landscape with the help of different technologies and time. Naveh (1978) defined that nature and cultures both works as landscape artist, designer and architect. He presented mosaic picture of culture and nature i.e. techno ecology, agriculture ecology, urban landscape and industrial landscape. It is very important to notice that migration is the process of mixture of different Races, it advances human custom and life style (Park 1928). Sharma, studied about Tibbeto-Burman language of Uttar Prades, said that pithoragarh is the Tebbeto-Burman district of Uttrakhand region. He announced Jad, darmani, Byangsi and Ronkpas comes from Tibetan language family. Also declared that byangsi is the most dominant language of Dharchula subdivision. Garbyal (1997) describes the old climate, agriculture, vegetation, culture of the study area. Fartyal (2003) wrote a book on 'Harppa saswat sabhyata ewam rang sanskriti, which is considered a great treasure of the Rung culture. He tried to explained the Rung culture and its association with Harppan civilization. Garbyal et.al (2004) conducted wide study to report medicinal plant around eastern Dhauliganga and Kuti yangti valley about traditional used medicinal plants. According to him this area is known for various species of medicinal plant which is practices traditionally and highly valued in international market (Toliya 2000), in his research paper entitled "Great tribal diversity of Uttrakhand", describes different tribes of Uttrakhand who resides in different region of Uttrakhand i.e. Great Himalaya, Lesser Himalaya and foot hills of the Himalaya. A human geographer/anthropologist wrote a book on 'Sauka' which contains multidimensional knowledge about 'Rung' society (Raypa 2015). Garbyal (2017) is one the iconic lady of Uttrakhand, was the symbol of woman empowerment in past few decades. Edwin Bernbaum (2009) in his study said that mountains have become associated with the deepest and most central aspirations and beliefs of societies, cultures and religious traditions around the world, making them cultural landscapes imbued with intangible values of the highest order.

Study area

This valley is inhabited by the Bhotiya tribe of the Uttarkhand. Bhotiyas of this valley are known as Rung. The main villages of this valley are Gunji (3197m.), Napalchyu (3178m), Nabi (3294m), Rongkong (3327m) and Kuti (3829m). This area is situated in between 30°8'34"N – 30°28'17" latitudes and 80°31'44"E - 80°52'12"E longitudes consisting an area of about 561Km² (Fig. 1). The study area is made of sedimentary formations and low grade of metamorphism. The whole region behind the central High Range is thus made essentially above 6000 Mt have been squeezed and

pushed up out of an old sea (Heim, 1936). It is the famous Tethys of extended from the Alps to the Himalaya and J.B. Auden called it Northern Ranges, the Tethys Himalaya.

In Garhwal region of Uttarakhand Bhotia tribe is known as Marchha and Tolchha in Chamoli district and Jaad in Uttarkashi. In the Kumaun region of Pithoragarh district this tribe is known as Johari, Darmani, Chaudasi and Byansi. Present study includes the Bhotias of Byansi region which is also known as Rung Tribe.

The altitude of the valley ranges in between 3320 meters to 6760 meters which comes under Cool Temperate and Alpine Zone. Perpetually the higher peaks of this area covered by snow and some higher glacier valleys are filled with snow but during April to July the lower areas start growing greenery. From middle of the Jun and sometimes from July to September the whole valley is covered with the lush green vegetation specially grass and bushes. From November to march maximum area of the valley is covered by snow.



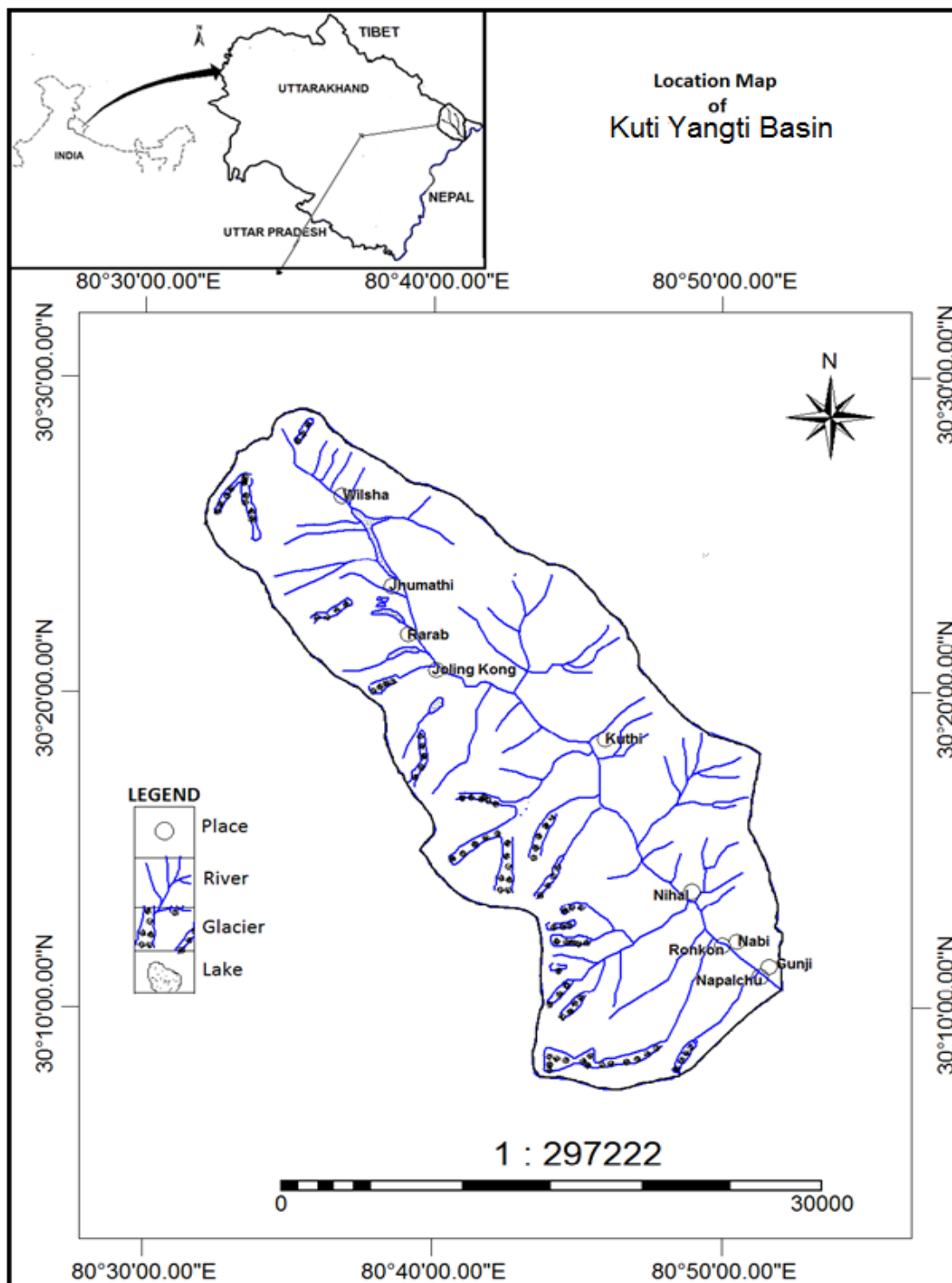


Fig. 1 Location of Kuti Yangti Valley

Methodology

The watershed boundary of the Kuti Yangti river valley is delineated using the topographic map. Further, watershed boundary is verified using satellite data. Cultural landscape mapping of Nabi village is carried out using Google Earth data and field work. Village elderly persons are interviewed for the understanding of agricultural practices, forest resources, rituals, taboo, belief system and

cultural places. Selected elderly persons of the village were interviewed to collect information about land use and local belief system associated with land use practice.

Nabi Village

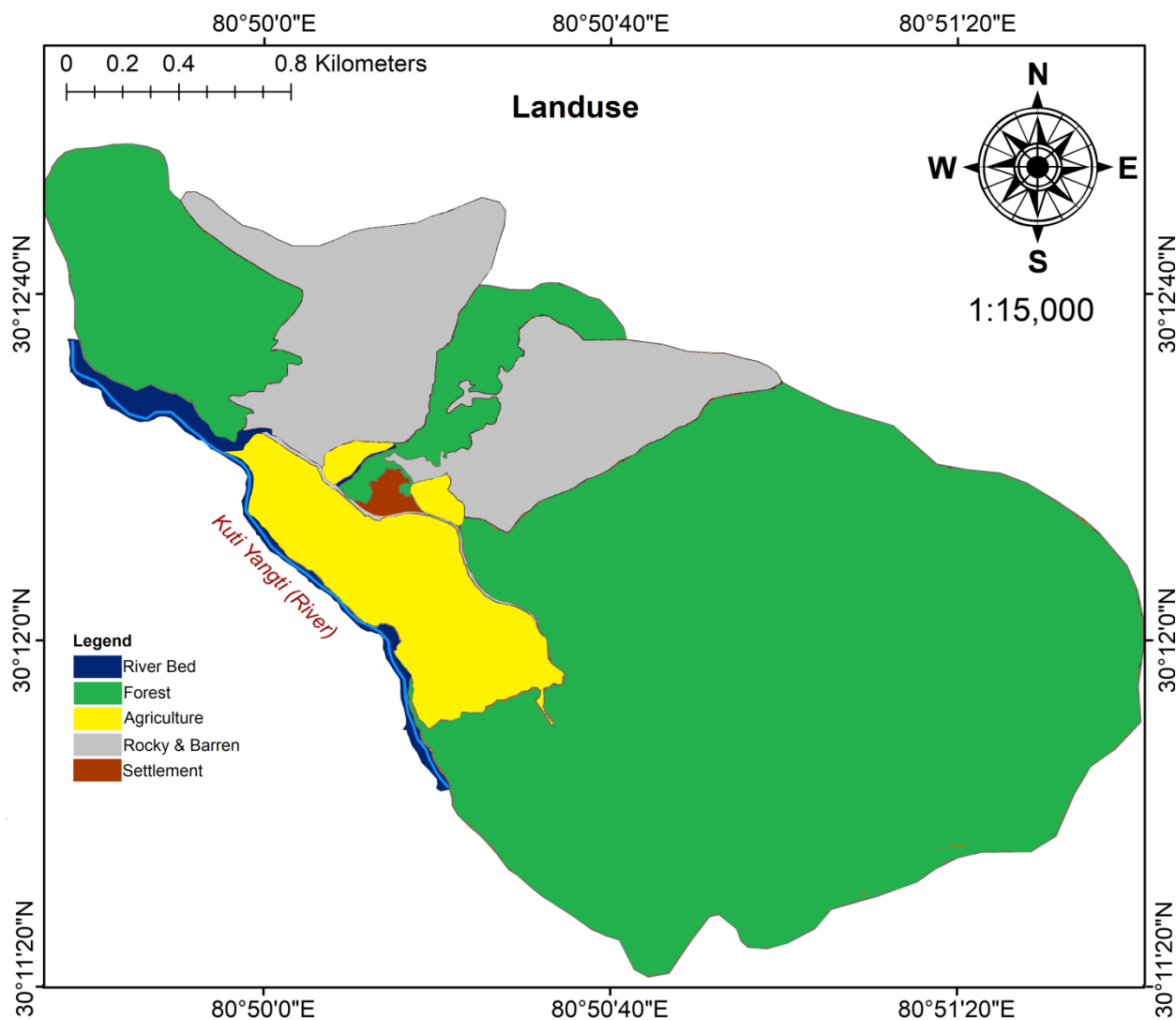
It is situated at the height of 3294 meter above mean sea level in the base of the white layered (Deposition of Tethys Himalayan Sequence) mountains. This village is settled at the base of mountain having group of five peaks. The name Nabi is a corrupt form of *Naa-Bay*. Naa means five and Bay means mountain. People residing in this village are known as Nabiyals. Due to the extreme cold during winter people use to migrate towards lower valleys of the surrounding areas and in summer again come back. This process of seasonal migration is locally known as Kuncha. A detail description is as below:

Kuncha (Transhumance)

Kuncha is a practice to migrate from higher places (Nabi village) to lower places (Dharchula) to cope up with the extreme climatic conditions. During Kuncha people prepare new clothes for each and every family, different kind of food items and movement in groups with animals. On the way prayer takes place with chanting the names of deities for safe journey. The grains of Rice (*Akshat*) are offered in the air on some secret places and pieces of white cloth are tied in the branches of trees or bushes (*Jholi*) or big rocks near the sacred places known as *Daza*.

Settlement and built-up

Summer settlement of the Nabiyals is situated in the base of the white layered (Deposition of Tethys Himalayan Sequence) mountains known as Nabi Village. In the past people of Nabi were settled at *Naya* locality which is about 4 km away.



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Temple/Shrine

In Nabi village *Hya Thak-Pang* is supreme ancestor/Deity worshiped by Nabiyals. *Dangdla* and *Hya Jambo Tasi* Deities protect the village from evil eyes of the people of surrounding villages. *Darchyo* (sacred flag) is placed in the village for the protection of the land and people. People of the village believe that divine power resides in the mountain peaks, glaciers, rivers and forests.

Agricultural Area

Traditionally people of Nabi village practice agricultural and herding. In the village areas made of colluvial fan material mixed with glacio-fluvial material along Yagti River is found under for agriculture. Wheat (Nahpal), Buckwheat (Be and Palti), potatos, peas, and beans are main crops.

During the winter stay at Dharchula locality people cultivate wheat, mustard, lentil (*Masoor*) where they have to stay about four to five months.

Forest Area

According to Nimachow et.al (2011) forest and forest products have great impact on the culture and economy of the people and all the activities of the people revolve round the forests. In Nabi village forests are being used for fuel, fodder and timber. *There are some* forests which are protected and people are not allowed to collect fodder and fuel wood and timber. Grasslands are used for the grazing of the sheep's, horses and Yaks. Nowadays due to easy availability of the other occupation the number of herders is reduced.

Water body

Water bodies are considered as the sacred place for villagers hence, collection of fuel and fodder from this area is prohibited. *KungKongr, DangJyung* and *Shyildow* stream flows near the village and provides water supply.

Conclusion

Rung tribe is having its own unique characteristics which are reflected in their cultural landscape. Landuse study shows that cultural practices are helpful for the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of resources, and creation of awareness about their environment protection. To preserve the environment age old practices should be protected.

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