

## The terraced houses in Satkohl

An observation in November 2000 by Axel Weller

Satkohl is a tiny village in the Kumoun Mountains not far from Almora. Up to the neighboring town Peora there is a gravel road. From there a footpath leads west to five Terraced houses. Their construction is characteristic of the entire Kumaon, only in details you can see regional differences.

Chandy-Mani Kabdual lies in the sun in the spacious yard in front of the houses. He is about 65 years old (no one knows exactly how old they are in these areas) and lives here with his wife, his two sons, 30 and 34 years old, his daughter-in-law and his 4 grandchildren.

The family survives on the yields of the surrounding fields and the milk from the three cows and the water buffalo cow that calved a few weeks ago. The five goats are for the on rare occasions when there eat meat, the two oxen are kept for field work.

The eldest son works in Peora. Everything that agriculture does not produce is supplied by his Daily wage, about 50 rupees (1.20 euros).

They are the only family still living here. The other four families have gave up their homes between 1950 and 1970 to move to Haldwani, 150 kilometers away. This is the nearest industrial town at the foot of the Kumaon Mountains. One of the Indian Cities of million people, that promise prosperity and happiness. Since then these houses have fallen into disrepair more and more.

The fourth house (seen from the east) is already a ruin and only the second and third house is inhabited by Chandy-Mani Kabdual's family. Only the vestibule off the third House is used because the roof of the rear part is already in danger of collapsing. In the stables of these two houses, which are located below the living area, the cattle are kept assumed at night. The first house will be used to store the hay and keep the Tools and the like were used, although the back part of the house had already collapsed. The fifth house is still very intact, but is not used by the family.

When asked how old the houses are, Chandy-Mani Kabdual answers with a serious expression: "Thousands. No, two thousand years" Probably a stupid question, because a little later he explains that his grandfather, Tulla Ram, built his house. So this must have been between 1900 and 1939. The facade walls of the houses are fascinating to the meticulous stonemasonry and Masonry work. A closer look reveals many thoughtful architectural details clear, for example, in the interior of the houses the recessed niches and built-in ones Wall cabinets. The existing sinks were taken into account when the wall was built. In the anteroom of every house there is a fireplace, which is semicircular in the wall is recessed and its outlet partly runs between the stones of the wall. Even with a stable Examples of this forward-looking construction method can be found, such as the cantilevered stones a hole for tying up livestock. Console stones are used to support the ceiling beams been installed. This prevents the wood on the wall from rotting.

When building the house, not only the needs of the residents were taken into account, but also the possibilities an extension was also planned. This can be found on the side walls of most houses Projecting stones in every other layer. This creates the compound with an extension created, which saves an entire wall. The gearing is between the fourth and fifth house to recognize. The facades of these houses are impressive not only because of the Stone work, rather the elaborate and partly very elegantly carved door and window frames are particularly attractive. The enormous variety of motifs gives the masterful carvings liveliness. They even decorate the small blind windows behind where there is often a beehive for honey production. The decorated woods are mostly off Tun (*Toon ciliata*) and, more rarely, carved from Salwood (*Shorea robusta*), which makes them resistant to the elements and continue to defy the humidity of the monsoon. In the stables it is used only Salwood not only because of the moisture that occurs, but also because of the ammonia that occurs.

The facades of the inhabited houses and usually those of the stables are covered with a lime slurry painted, while the interiors have a clay plaster. The Rammed clay floors are always covered with a clay slurry after a few weeks washed with added cow dung, which creates resistance to wear. The heavy split ones Stone slabs on the roof are simply laying in clay and if there are no goats or monkeys on the roof to move them, the roof will remain tight. The purlins and rafters underneath are made of round wood, which is probably the only way to use this extremely twisty pine tree (*Pinus roxburgii*). Only the rafters are on Roof overhang hewen and partly profiled. The purlins are support it in the middle by frame. The wood of the frame is sawn or split and on the underside with a groove provided. With the planks inserted, the entire rear space can be divided, which is also explain the two doors in this one Space. This large room is a kitchen, sleeping area and storage for all sorts of things. Two split planks running parallel to the purlins at chest height are shelf for Kitchen utensils and another way to divide the space. Chandy-Mani Kabdueals family divided this space into three parts in their second house. A larger space than the kitchen and bathroom with a newly installed oven with chimney (while the other houses have open fireplaces with an opening in the roof) and a newly poured concrete platform, like this that you can not only wash your dishes there, but also yourself.

In front of all the houses there is a courtyard, the real heart of these terraced houses, carefully paved, the joints spread with clay and always swept clean. Be here Grains and legumes dried and sorted, food prepared, tools repaired, Clothes were sewn or mended, children looked after, festivals were celebrated and marriages were concluded around a fire. There is also a mortar for peeling rice and chopping spices in the yard. These courtyards are surrounded by a wall at seating height. Between the house and the courtyard there is a corridor for the cattle. On the edge of the farms there is a large hayfield, which is probably will get the cattle through the winter. All around

there are flowers that have been nurtured and cared for because the flowers are necessary for all rituals and offerings to the gods. Before a  
A few weeks for the festival of light, the door sill and a base strip with an interior were decorated with a painted red clay paint and decorated with white stripes, as they do every year. Chandy-Mani Kabdueal sits in his yard, trying to get a battery-operated radio to work, enjoy the warmth of the winter sun and tell the families too the nearby single house and the row of houses west, has moved as well to Haldwani and now these houses are also becoming ruins.