



## Garhwal Forts

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 drishtiias.com/printpdf/garhwal-forts

### Why in News

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Recently, a study has identified **193 sites having either intact or ruins of Garhwal forts and fortalices** spread along the north, east and southern regions of the Garhwal Himalayas.

This is the first of its kind database. A total of **36 major forts** and **12 prominent fort clusters** have been identified.

### Key Points

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- **Garhwal Forts:**
  - **About :**
    - A majority of **medieval forts in the Garhwal Himalayas** of Uttarakhand were strategically built to form clusters.
    - The forts, dating back to the **8<sup>th</sup> century** Common Era (CE), were built at diverse altitude zones like valleys, along the ridges and prominent hilltops, some **standing more than 3,000 metres above Mean Sea Level (MSL)** in the Garhwal Himalayas.
    - These well networked forts were built either during or after the downfall of the **Katyuri dynasty**.
  - **Importance:**
    - Geographically, the forts were built away from one another. But the ruler's back then ensured that they were **surrounded with smaller fortalices**, which **primarily functioned as watchtowers**.
    - These fortalices were erected and positioned around 15 km periphery of a major fort.
    - Numerous such fortalices then formed a strategic network, **enabling them to relay information, particularly when invaded by enemies**.  
**Fire, smoke or similar light signals** could have been the common means to convey messages.

- **History of Garhwal:**
  - **Katyuri Dynasty:**
    - History suggests that between 700 CE and 800 CE, the rulers of the **Katyuri dynasty** divided this region into many small mandals or units for administrative purposes.
    - However, as the dynasty began to politically weaken around the turn of the millennium, these units came under the rule of Garhpatis or chiefdoms, each of whom built individual forts.
  - **Foreign Attacks:**
    - Since the Garhwal Himalayas are located en route to many religious places, it often came under foreign attacks and faced enemy invasions, mainly led by the **Nepalese and the Tibetans**.
    - The invasion by Askochalla and Krachalla, two Nepalese kings during 1100–1200 CE, is considered among the first foreign attacks here.
  - **Consolidation:**

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, King Ajaypal, the **37<sup>th</sup> king of the Parmar dynasty**, **consolidated all these multiple chiefdoms** in the region into a single state. This is the present day Garhwal.

### **Katyuri Dynasty**

- The Katyuri kings were a **medieval ruling clan** of present-day Uttarakhand, India. They ruled over the region now known as Kumaon from 700 to 1200 CE.
- The Katyuri dynasty was **founded by Vashudev Katyuri** (sometimes spelled Vasu Dev or Basu Dev).
- At its peak, the **Katyuri dynasty of Kumaon extended from Sikkim in the east to Kabul, Afghanistan in the west**, before fragmenting into numerous principalities by the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**Source:IE**