

## CHAPTER III

### PEOPLE

#### GROWTH OF POPULATION

The first estimate of the population of the region covered by the district of Pithoragarh may be said to have been made when, in 1821, Traill, the first British commissioner, of Kumaon, assessed the population of the old district of Kumaon which included the present districts of Pithoragarh, Almora and Naini Tal. It was only a rough estimate and the figure for the population of the tract covered by the first two of these districts was given as 1,35,533. As the figures, at most of the subsequent enumerations, for tract representing the Pithoragarh district have been a little more than a quarter of those for the combined population of the districts of Pithoragarh and Almora, those for the former appear to have been in the neighborhood of 40,000 in the first census of Traill.

Estimates, equally rough, were also made in 1848, and between 1863 and 1868 for the population of this tract, while in 1852 a census was taken. At the census of 1872, which was more systematic, the population of the region comprising the Almora and Pithoragarh districts was found to be 3,54,579, at that of 1881 it was 3,60,967 and at that of 1891, when the Almora district (including the Pithoragarh region) was for the first time constituted as a separate unit, its population was returned as 4,16,868. Presuming that the ratio between the population of the entire tract and that of its part now constituted into the Pithoragarh district remained almost unchanged the population of the latter in 1891 would be about 1,20,000. Figures for the subsequent decennial censuses with respect to these two regions separately are available.

On February 24, 1960 the district of Pithoragarh as a separate administrative unit was constituted out of the Pithoragarh tahsil plus two pattis (containing 164 villages) of the Almora tahsil of the erstwhile district of Almora and it was only in 1961 that the first regular census of the Pithoragarh district proper was undertaken. Its area, according to the Central Statistical Organisation, was 7,243 sq. km. in 1966, and the total population in 1961 was returned as 2,63,579, the males numbering 1,28,292 and the females 1,35,287.

The decennial figures of the population of the district from 1901 to 1961 are given below:

Year			Persons	Male	Female	Females per 1,000 males
1901	..	..	1,30,486	66,035	64,451	976
1911	..	..	1,51,213	76,748	74,465	970
1921	..	..	1,52,567	76,307	76,260	999
1931	..	..	1,67,803	84,003	83,800	998
1941	..	..	1,97,718	98,380	99,338	1,010
1951	..	..	2,22,346	1,09,655	1,12,691	1,028
1961	..	..	2,63,579	1,28,292	1,35,287	1,055

The following statement shows the decennial growth, variation and percentage of variation in the population of the district from 1901 to 1961:

Year				Population	Variation	Percentage of variation
1901	..	..	..	1,30,486	..	..
1911	..	..	..	1,51,213	+20,727	+15.88
1921	..	..	..	1,52,567	+1,354	+0.90
1931	..	..	..	1,67,803	+15,236	+9.99
1941	..	..	..	1,97,718	+29,915	+17.83
1951	..	..	..	2,22,346	+24,628	+12.46
1961	..	..	..	2,63,579	+41,233	+18.54

There has thus been a steady growth in the population of the district during the last 60 years, the smallest increase of 0.9 per cent being in the decade 1911–1921 and the biggest, 18.54 per cent, in 1951–1961, which was higher than even the State average of 16.66 per cent. The percentage variation in the population of the district from 1901 to 1961 has been +102, which means it has almost doubled during this period. In 1961, the district stood 52<sup>nd</sup>, in point of total population, among the districts of Uttar Pradesh and the density of population here was 36 persons per sq. km., which was much below the State average of 250 persons per sq. km. Females outnumbered males by 6,995, the proportion between the sexes being 1,055 females per 1,000 males.

### Population by Subdivisions/ Tahsils

The district is divided into four tahsils or subdivisions and has in it 1,668 inhabited and 164 uninhabited villages. The tahsilwise break-up of villages and population is given below:

Tahsil		Villages		Population		
		Uninhabited	Inhabited	Persons	Male	Female
Munsyari	..	18	209	30,377	15,385	14,992
Dharchula	..	3	73	32,566	16,813	15,753
Didihat	..	96	792	96,518	46,066	50,452
Pithoragarh	..	47	594	1,04,118	50,028	54,090
Total	..	164	1,668	2,63,579	1,28,292	1,35,287

### Immigration and Emigration

There has not been any very significant immigration into the district. According to the census of 1961, as many as 93.80 per cent of its population were born within its boundaries and of the remainder 3.14 per cent were born in other districts of the State, 0.35 per cent in other States of the Indian Union and 2.57 per cent in other countries outside India. Those migration from other parts of the State numbered 8,276 of whom 5,259 were females, and those from other parts of the country were 928 in number (including 269 females) of whom 238 hailed from Himachal Pradesh, 143 from Punjab, 110 from Maharashtra, 105 from Delhi and the rest from other parts of India. Of the 6,796 persons born in places outside India, 5,255 (including 2,774 females) had their places of

birth in Nepal, 209 (including 94 females) in Burma, 92 (including 15 females) in Pakistan, 3 males in Afghanistan and one female in China, 2 in the United Kingdom and one in U.S.A. The number of those hailing from Asiatic countries other than those mentioned above was 1,233 (including 582 females) and of those termed 'unclassifiable' was 125 (males 14 and females 111).

Of the 8,276 migrants from other districts of the State, 3,100 had been residing in the district for less than one year, 2,038 for more than one but less than five years and 1,585 for over 15 years. Of those from other States of the country 438 have been here for less than a year and 306 for more than one year but less than five years. Of the 5,255 Nepalese, 3,319 have been residing here for less than five years, while the number of such Pakistanis was 64 (out of 92 and that of other foreigners 1,289 (out of 1,449).

The number of non-Indian nationals residing in the district at the time of the census was returned as 2,897 (males 2,164 and females 733), the majority being represented by the Nepalese (1,475 males and 127 females) and as many as 1,272 persons being stated to be from places unspecified.

Some persons do go out of the district to the neighbouring districts of the Kumaon and Garhwal regions and even to those in the plains in search of better employment, or military or civil service, but exact figures not being available it is difficult to assess the loss in population of the district on this account. Besides this emigration, which does not appear to be very conspicuous, a well-defined general movement of a part of the population of the district takes place every year, although it is seasonal and temporary. As the winter advances the region lying beyond the snow line becomes deserted. By the middle of November, the villages situated higher up in the hills begin to be buried in snow and the inhabitants start moving southwards. Camps are established at convenient points lower down in the southern parts of the district and in the Almora and Naini Tal districts, where the womenfolk and children abide with their flocks and herds (other than pack animals) and the bulk of their merchandise. The men move on their journey to the submontane marts, doing considerable trade on the way and attending all the fairs held on the wayside. They return again and again to their camps till all their goods have been transported or disposed of. About the middle of May, these people go back to their original homes near the great passes in order to pass the summer months there.

### **Displaced Persons**

Due to the political change which took place in Tibet in 1958, a number of Tibetans fled their homeland and took refuge in this district, the first batch of these Tibetan refugees arriving here in November, 1959. In order to provide shelter and relief to them, a camp was established at Titaldhar, which was shifted first to Panagarh (near Askot) and then to Sandeo (in tahsil Didihat) on March 2, 1960. The majority of the refugees residing in the camp was employed as labourers in road building. The State government also opened an industrial training centre for their benefit, in which 78 women and girls received training in weaving and carpet making. The camp was abolished on January 1, 1966, when all its 749 inmates were transferred to other States of the Union.

### **Distribution of population**

According to the census of 1961, there is no town, hence no urban area, in the district. The following statement shows the number of inhabited villages falling under different ranges of population and the population and percentages of population for each category:

Range of population		No. of villages	Population	Male	Female	Percentage of population
1 – 199	..	1,243	1,03,624	49,110	54,514	39.3
200 – 499	..	359	1,05,982	51,538	54,444	40.2
500 – 999	..	54	34,307	17,369	16,938	13.0
1,000 – 1,999	..	8	10,028	4,974	5,054	3.8
2,000 – 4,999	..	4	9,638	5,301	4,337	3.7

Thus there is no habitation in the district with a population of 5,000 or above, and the bulk of the population (79.5 per cent) is concentrated in small villages with a population under 500 each.

### LANGUAGE

A list of the principal languages and dialects spoken in the district and the number of persons speaking each, as recorded in the census of 1961, is given below:

Language or dialect	Number of persons
Kumauni	2,44,554
Hindi	9,841
Unspecified (of northern tahsils)	4,938
Nepali	2,227
Tibetan	1,237
Gorkhali	250
Urdu	179
Garhwali	147
Rawati	91
Himachali	51
Punjabi	25
17 others	39
Total	2,63,579

Thus as many as 28 different languages or dialects have been returned as mother-tongues by the people of the district, but only 5 of them are such as are spoken by more than 100 persons each, whereas 9 are spoken by only one person each and the remaining 11 by 2 to 91 persons each. The largest percentage, 92.78, is of those whose mother-tongue is Kumauni, which is followed by Hindi with 3.73 per cent, that of the inhabitants of the northern parts with 1.87 per cent, Nepali with .84 per cent and Tibetan with .47 per cent, the remaining 23 dialects being distributed among only 0.31 per cent of the population. A number of persons with any one of these major five languages as their mother-tongue are also bilingual or multilingual.

## Kumauni

The principal language prevalent among the hill-folk of Pithoragarh district is Kumauni which belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of languages and is a form of Central Pahari which itself is a form of Western Hindi. The language is not, however, uniform throughout the district and presents several shades which differ from region to region, the difficulty of intercommunication owing to the existence of valleys and mountains contributing, to a great extent, to this multiplicity of local dialects. Again, as the district is bordered by Tibet on the north, Nepal on the east and Garhwal on the west, some extraneous influences have also worked to make the language of the district one of a composite nature, the dialects of the tracts contiguous to those lands bearing influences of their respective languages. The variations in the local dialects relate mostly to differences in accent, mode of delivery or address, the use of prefixes and suffixes and sometimes to the conjugation of verbs. In most cases these differences are so pronounced that a keen listener can declare with correctness the particular locality to which the speaker belongs. On this basis the district is broadly divided into four linguistic divisions—(i) the Gangoli region, consisting of the patti of Bel, Bherang, Baraun Malla and Baraun Talla (all in tahsil Didihat); (ii) patti Pungraun (tahsil Didihat) and the patti of Malla Johar and Talla Johar (tahsil Munsyari); (iii) the tracts known as Shor and Sira and the western half of patti Askot Talla (all in tahsil Pithoragarh), the dialects of these three regions being further distinguished as the Shoryali, Sirali, and Askoti, respectively ; and (iv) the Kali valley belt, and comprising the patti of Askot Malla (tahsil Dharchula), the eastern half of the patti of Askot Talla and the patti of Saun, Nayades and Waldia Talla (all in tahsil Pithoragarh). The dialect of the first of these linguistic divisions is known as the Gangola and is influenced by the Garhwali of the adjoining region on the west, and that of the second is called the Johari. The three sub-dialects of the third bear the influence of the Khaskura or Nepali. The residents of the Kali valley belt, the fourth of these divisions, are said to be the descendants of persons who originally lived in Nepal across the Kali but were induced by the Rajwars of Askot and other grantees of land on this side of the river to come over and settle down in this belt and to break and cultivate the land for them. As a result of the impact of the local Kumauni on their Nepali an intermixed dialect was evolved, which is sometimes designated Khaskura and is manifest in this region.

**Special Features**—In the formation of sentences, declension, etc., the Kumauni of this region broadly follows the rules of Hindi, The most important of its peculiarities, however, is the frequent occurrence of epenthesis, or the change of vowel owing to the influence of another vowel in the succeeding syllable, such as, chelo (son) becomes chyala (sons) in the plural, the che becoming changed into chya on account of the a following in the syllable la. Sometimes the short and long sounds of the vowel a also create difference in the meaning of a word, for example kao, with short a, means black colour, but the same word with long means death. As regards orthography, special n and e sounds are met with in words like kan (thorn) and bhan (pot), which are inclined towards palatal sounds. Sibilant sh is often used for kh and the palatal sh is reduced to the dental s. No distinction is made between the medial b and the labial u, the latter being often used for the former. Another marked peculiarity is the tendency of disaspiration as in the word par for parh (read). The Gangola dialect often drops the final long vowels in pronouncing a word and also tends sometimes to nasalise the last syllable. In the Shoryali the n sound is usually replaced by the m sound and in the Sirali there is a tendency to interchange a with ai.

There are certain adverbs which are not common in Hindi but are current in these dialects, such as byal (evening), rattai (morning), muns (below), bhol (tomorrow) and aber (late).

Some foreign words, particularly Persian and English, have also crept into the local vocabulary though in a slightly changed form depending upon local pronunciation, such as vagsi (bakhshi), mapi (maafi), vajir (vizir), saja (saza), gunah and mukam of the former and gilaz (glass), dabal (double), aim (time), holdar (havildar), laftain (lieutenant) and karnel (colonel) of the latter. The infiltration of Persian words had already begun in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as is evident from certain copperplate grants of the Chand rajas of those times. There is a general tendency to words assimilation and elision while adopting foreign words in the local speech.

Then there are the dialects spoken by the people living in the pattis of Malla Johar and Talla Johar (of tahsil Munsyari) and those of Darma Talla, Chaudans and Byans (of tahsil Dharchula). The dialect of Johar region is known as the Johari and is very close to the Kumauni, no doubt, with conspicuous variations in accent and mode of expression. The people of the Byans, Chaudans and Darma tracts have distinct dialects of their own which have little in common with the Kumauni. Those of Byans and Chaudans, excepting the Kutiyals of village Kutti (in patti Byans), speak the Ranglo (or Rang-boli). The Kutiyals, along with the inhabitants of village Tankor (in Nepal), speak an entirely different dialect. Those of the Darma region speak the Darmale (Darma-boli). In general the speech of these northern peoples frequently pronounce 'r' differently; the past tense ends with a short i sound, such as in suni (heard) and rakhchi (had kept); and some of the words are unknown to Kumauni or Hindi, such as sin (tree), lynch (cup), phungli (pitcher), nya (fish), narhi (dog), chi (grass) and pavla (shoe). It is said that of these dialects the Ranglo and the Darmale prominently bear the Tibeto-Burman influence while the Johari is a sort of mixed jargon, partly Kumauni and partly Tibeto-Burman.

### **Kirati**

Another dialect spoken in a part of the district is the Kirati which is confined to the Rajis or Ban Rawats, a fast-dwindling forest tribe of Askot and inhabiting the forests of the rivers Gori and Kali in that region. This dialect appears to possess a Munda origin and is highly influenced by the Tibeto-Burman.

### **Script**

The script used throughout the district is the Devanagari with practically no local variations, except that some letters are written in a slightly different form than in the standard Devanagari.

### **Religion And Caste**

The population of the district, as classified according to religions at the census of 1961, is as follows:

<b>Religion</b>			<b>Followers</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Hinduism	..	..	2,60,899	1,26,885	1,34,014
Buddhism	..	..	1,304	689	615
Islam	..	..	716	408	308
Christianity	..	..	640	297	343
Sikhism	..	..	12	10	2
Jainism	..	..	8	3	5
Total	..	..	2,63,579	1,28,292	1,35,287

## Principal Communities

**Hindu**—The Hindu Community in this district also is patterned on the traditional fourfold caste system, but on account of a predominating Khasa element in the population there appears to be a three-tier structure of society in this area, the hierarchal orders of which may be described as—the high class Brahmanas and Rajputs, that is, those who or whose ancestors came from the plains and settled down here; Khasa Brahmanas and Khasa Rajputs; and the Shudras or Doms who are now generally designated Shilpdars and classed among the Scheduled Castes. There are also a few Vaish immigrants from the plains, a considerable number of persons inhabiting several patts of the two northern tahsils, and a small number of Kuthalia Boras and of Rajis or Ban Rawats of the jungles of Askot. The Brahmanas and Rajputs, both of Khasa and plains extraction, are together termed Biths in order to distinguish them from the Doms or persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes.

The Khasas are an ancient people and, perhaps, are amongst the oldest inhabitants of these parts. They find mention in several Puranas like the Vayu, Vishnu, Markandeya, Harivamsha and Bhagawata as also in the Mahabharata and the Varaha Samhita where they are described as one of the tribes dwelling on the borders of the Bharata-Khanda (India). It is said that the present-day Khasas are the descendants of those early immigrants of the northern part of India who were possibly Aryans but not of the Vedic branch which they probably preceded. They were scornfully described as having no Brahmanas amongst them. It appears that they were not completely Hinduised until the advent of Shankaracharya in the Uttarakhand about the beginning of the ninth century A.D. The growing contacts with the plains and the succeeding waves of Brahmana and Rajput immigrants from those quarters seem to have helped the process. The Khasas not only adopted many of their customs, ways and beliefs, but also many of the newly-settled Brahmanas as their priests. It has also been suggested that their original tribal priests may also have begun performing the functions of the Brahmanas and in course of time arrogated the latter's title (caste designation) as well. Perhaps there was an intermingling of blood, too, between these two groups of Brahmanas associated with the Khasas and the result was that a regular caste of Khasa Brahmanas came into being as distinct from the high class Brahmanas from the plains. Similarly, an intermixture of non-Brahmana Khasas and Rajputs from the plains gave rise to the caste of Khasa Rajputs.

The subdivisions of the high class Brahmanas are the Pant, Pandey, Joshi, Tiwari, Upreti, Upadhyaya, Pathak, Duggal and Bhatt. They generally profess to have come here in the company of some adventurers or pilgrims or they have been invited by local rulers. The Pantis claim that Jaideo, their ancestor, came here and obtained from the raja of Kumaon a grant of land in Gangoli. Some of the ancestors of the Pandeyas are said to have hailed from Kot Kangra (Himachal Pradesh) while some others to have immigrated from the plains. The members of the Joshi (said to be a corruption of jyotishi meaning astrologer) caste say that their ancestors came from Jhusi (near Allahabad) which was their original home. The Tiwaris have been cultivators, priests and teachers, some of them being also employed in government service. The Khasa Brahmanas, who are also known as Halbanewale (cultivators) or Pitaliya Brahmanas because they wear a brass bracelet instead of the sacred thread, are also divided into a number of subdivisions usually named after some village or locality.

The Rajputs, who claim to be the descendants of ancient Kshatriyas and to have been associated originally with the plains, belong mostly to the Raotela, Rajwar and Munral (or Manural) septs. The first of these are the descendants of the Chand rajas of Kumaon who claimed to belong to the Chandravamsha or Lunar race and to have hailed from Jhusi. Both the Rajwars

and the Munrals profess to gambling in public an offence. The police remain on the alert and gambling, which, perhaps, never had assumed the form of a grave public nuisance, has been on the decline. During the five years ending with 1965, only five cases of prosecution, resulting in conviction, have been reported from the entire district, two in 1963 from tahsil Didihat and two in 1964 and one in 1965 from tahsil Pithoragarh.

## **Home-life**

According to the census of 1961, the 'institutional population' of the district was only 29, all males, and living in tahsil Dharchula. The 'houseless population' was only 46, of whom one male belonged to tahsil Munsyari and 24 males and 21 females to tahsil Dharchula. The rest of the population of the district consisted of households\* living in houses. The number of occupied residential houses was 49,873, the tahsilwise break-up being 5,497 in Munsyari, 5,880 in Dharchula, 18,409 in Didihat and 20,087 in Pithoragarh. The number of persons per occupied house comes to about 5.3, as against the State figure of 6. The percentage of households to the number of houses is 105.7, which gives about 5 persons per household. In tahsil Didihat this percentage is 100.8 which is the lowest not only in this district but in the entire State. The density of households in the district is 7.4 per sq. km.

**Houses** – According to the census of 1961, there is no town or urban area in the district and the bulk of the population lives in small villages, 39.3 per cent living in those with a population under 200 each, which are as many as 1,243 out of 1,668 (total number of inhabited villages) and 40.2 per cent in those with populations between 200 and 499. The biggest habitation is Pithoragarh itself which is the headquarters of the district and may, therefore, be called a township. The ideal site for a village is considered to be a somewhat level ground half way up an airy spur with ample cultivable land on the slopes higher up as well as lower down and, if possible, at least a two-fold water-supply, because the Doms living in a separate part of the village are not allowed to use the water (springs, etc.) reserved for the use of others. The houses are generally arranged in neat rows and there is no overcrowding. Some people built their houses in the middle of their holding and thus live away and apart from the village proper. The houses of the Doms are generally one storeyed but those of the rest are as a rule two-storeyed and many a time three-storeyed. They are solidly built, usually of stone with clay used as cement and roofed with slate, sometimes with tinned iron sheets also, and in wilder parts with shingles of pine wood. Poorer people often have thatched roofs over their huts. The roofs are almost invariably sloping. In a multistoreyed house, the ground floor is called the goth and is usually used for keeping the cattle. Those who can afford it, build separate cattle sheds near the house. The well-to-do surround their dwellings with a paved courtyard or compound, bordered with fruit trees and protected on the khud side by a low parapet wall. Wood is used in doors and windows and the houses are generally white-washed on the outside. At important places, here and there, some modern concrete cement structures are also now to be seen, especially in the Pithoragarh township where new buildings have to be constructed in accordance with the master plan enforced there. Some dwellings also have kitchen gardens attached to them. The wood used in doors, windows, balconies, ceilings, etc., is often carved with beautiful designs. Generally the people are not sanitation conscious and big heaps of manure and sweepings may be seen lying in front of houses for months together, it being removed to the fields only twice or thrice a year. As regards the Rajis, they live in extremely small villages, each containing on an average five to six families. Formerly they used to shift the sites of their villages from time to time, but now there is a tendency towards settling down permanently. They live in small, simple and temporary huts, with thatched roofs and walls made of wattle and timber. The frame consists of wooden poles which are lashed together with hemp. Sometimes they seek refuge in rock shelters or caves called udyar. Often two or three huts are joined together and sometimes there are as many as seven or

eight huts in a row. In some cases a separate hut is used as a cattle shed, but usually the cattle, goats and human beings share the same hut.

**Furniture and Decoration**—The people of the district are, as a rule, simple rural folk and comparatively poor. Only a few educated and well-off families have chairs, tables, almirahs, curtains and some other modern furnishings in their dwellings. The rest of the people use simple cots, mats, wooden stools and benches or chowkis. On the wooden lintel above the main entrance to the house, one may often find a swastika, or the figure of Ganesa or of some other divinity carved in the wood. Sometimes carved stones are also used in building the front face of the house. The interior is decorated by cheap pictures of gods and goddesses hanging on the walls. The dwellings inside are generally neat and clean but not spacious enough to accommodate much furniture. Flower and fruit trees are often found adorning the compound outside.

**Food**—Except for a few orthodox Brahmanas and the Vaishns, the people of the district are in general non-vegetarians, yet meat is not their staple food. The common food of the people consists of chupaties, boiled rice, dal and vegetables or meat. They generally subsist on coarse grain like mandua, jhangora, millets, barley and maize, pulses, potatoes and local vegetables. Dried meat and sattoo (flour of parched grain) is the common food of the residents of the northern tracts who always keep in reserve these two commodities whether at home or on journey. Their favourite drinks are country liquor, jya (a sort of tea mixed with ghee and rice) and jan (beer) which is also considered to be a holy drink and is manufactured in every household. The Rajis depend on game, fish and wild roots besides mandua and rice which they themselves grow by primitive methods. Tobacco smoking is very common among the people of the district and so is tea drinking.

**Dress**—In the southern tahsils of Didihat and Pithoragarh people generally use cotton fabrics except during the cold winter months. A man usually wears pyjamas or trousers, shirt, coat and a small Kumauni cap. Some Brahmanas are still seen wearing dhoti and pagri. The women generally wear a tight-fitting bodice or jacket (angai), preferably of velvet, over a blouse (choli) or shirt and a loose chintz skirt (lahanga or ghagra) one end of which is often tucked into the waist-band. Sometimes they also wear a big scarf which covers the breasts in front where it is kept in position by bringing the other end over the right shoulder and attaching it in such a manner as to leave both the shoulders and arms bare. The sari is coming into fashion among the sophisticated. The women move about mostly with their heads uncovered. Coloured dresses are the fashion, red, blue and green being the more popular colours. Further north, in the Johar, Darma and Askot regions, people are generally dressed in single pieces of blanket-cloth, secured by brass pins on either shoulder. The hair is worn long, curling picturesquely over the ears and the neck. Women allow their hair to hang down the back in pig-tails. They do not cover their heads, but when working in the snow, carrying loads, etc., they wear a piece of cloth folded round the head like a pagri. Still further north, men wear trousers and frock coats of hemp. Their womenfolk wear an angri (jacket) over a full shirt, a lahanga (skirt) around which a black cloth (kamala) is wrapped, a long and broad piece of cloth tied around the waist and an embroidered white scarf (khopi) over their head. Both men and women wear shoes and often socks as well. About the Rajis, it is said that formerly they used to go about naked, but now they have taken to scanty clothing which consists of a few torn rags usually obtained from their neighbours in exchange for wooden bowls or for some other service done.

**Jewellery**—In this district, men rarely wear ornaments except, in some cases, a finger ring. Womenfolk are, however, fond of jewellery and wear guluband (collar), har (necklace), filet, armllets, bangles (Churian), finger rings, nose-rings (nathia) or nose-studs (phulls), ear-rings or ear-pendants (Karnaphool or jhumka), etc. Rajput women usually wear a silver suta around the neck, silver ghagulas on the wrists and a bulaki in the nose, particularly those living in the Shor

and Askot regions of tahsil Pithoragarh. The ornaments are generally made of gold, silver or rolled gold and studded with semi-precious stones or glass.

### **Communal Life**

**Recreations**—The inhabitants of the district have been leading a hard and simple life, almost cut off from and uninfluenced by the outside world and have, therefore, been able to preserve their local culture and traditions, folk-songs and folk-dances, their festivals and fairs, and games and recreations, which relieve the monotony of life and provide relaxation and amusement.

The popular types of folk-dances of the district are known as the chholia, dhusku, Champhuli, chhapaili, dhurang and thulkhal. The magnetic pull of the ever changing beauty of natural surroundings makes the dwellers of this region sing and dance very frequently. Girls in groups, wearing their traditional gay-coloured clothes and silver ornaments and working in their fields with sickles in hand, are often found singing and dancing, forgetting the day-long fatigue and sense of loneliness. They dance back to their homes with sickles tied to the waist and sheaves of corn or grass balanced on their heads, singing all the way and cutting jokes or exchanging repartees with young men who happen to cross their path. Festivals and fairs are special occasions for singing and dancing. Sometimes men are seen dancing in pairs, one of the pair being made up as a woman with a coloured handkerchief in one hand and a small mirror in the other. While dancing they sing romantic songs, often composed on the spot by their ready wit, which are replied to by another pair, the whole affair being known as jor-band-hana. The duets are sung first by the pair and the refrain is repeated by the whole party. Groups of Youngman and young women with hands joined, may also be seen dancing in a circle with a drummer or Hurkiya in the centre. Young lasses in multi-coloured dresses and heavily ornamented with silver jewelry with their rosy cheeks, innocent looks and rhythmic movements, present an enchanting picture and give a romantic touch to a fair.

Folk-songs of the district are also of a considerable variety and are often in the form of panwaras (long ballads) narrating some romantic story. The more popular ones are the malusahi, ramola, jhorha, baira or bhagnola, ghuraili, phag, chanchari, nyoti and hurikiya-bol. The new year commences in the month of Chaitra with the advent of the spring season which is celebrated for the next two months with merrymaking, singing, dancing and folk-music. The Hurkiya (local musical or drummer) comes to every house and sings, to the accompaniment of musical instruments like the hurka, sarangi and binai, the song of the season which is known as chaiti or ritu-raen. It is considered auspicious to bear the name of the month of Chaitra at the beginning of the year through the lips of the Hurkiya. The Information Department of the government also arranges annually a number of cultural programmes to encourage the traditional folk-songs and folk-dances.

The indigenous sports and games are ankh-michauni (hide and seek), bagh-bakri (tiger and goat), dhama (stone throwing), gyal-tyo-chham (one-legged race), kabaddi or dudu, gavaldyo, gulli-danda, giti, addu, bharat and dibti-balla-duma-lo. Hunting and fishing also provide sport for some. Among indoor games may be mentioned chaupar, playing cards, chess and carrom. A sports committee has also been established in the district which provides training in the various indigenous sports and modern games like football, volley ball, badminton, cricket, and basket ball to the young people of the district.

There are two cinemas in the district; the Nataraj in Pithoragarh town has a seating capacity of 556 and the touring cinema of the Dharchula development block has at its headquarters a seating accommodation for 476 persons. There were 1,165 radio sets in the district

by the end of 1965, to which 291 were added in 1966. Besides the traditional religious fairs, kisan-melas (peasant fairs) and development exhibitions are arranged every year at the head quarters of different development blocks, A defense fair has also begun to be held at Pithoragarh in the month of October.

In these fairs documentary of the Prantiya Rakshak Dal, there are 134 Yuvak Mangal Dals (youth clubs) with a membership of 3,868, which arrange programmes for the instruction and recreation of the local population. A district Bal Kalyan Parishad (child welfare society) has also been established and several Mahila Mangal Dals (women's welfare clubs) are also functioning.

### **Impact of Zamindari Abolition**

The Kumaun and Uttarakhand Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1961 has been enforced in the district only since July 1, 1966. It is too early to assess the impact of this Act on the social and economic condition of the people. There were no big zamindars in the district except, perhaps, one or two, but there were many small landholders. In place of a number of different types of landholders or landed proprietors, generally known as hissedars, and of tenants (khaikars, etc.) a number of bhumidhars and sirdars have come into being. The old sirtans (tenants at will) have become assamis. Their self-respect and status has improved as now they are the masters of their land and have direct dealings with the government. Many Brahmanas and even some Rajputs, who considered it below dignity to touch the plough and do the ordinary cultivator's chores, are finding it difficult to adjust themselves to the times and many of them are taking to different professions of going away from their homes in search of employment in the military, civil or private services or in business or industry. Differences of high and low between people of one caste and another have also begun to disappear.