



## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PAHARIS

***“In the Pahari spirit lies a universal lesson: strength is not merely physical but rooted in an unyielding bond between people and land”.***

Historians and cultural experts identified the inhabitants of the **southern slopes** of the **Pir Panjal**, extending from **Himachal Pradesh** and **Uttarakhand** to **Nepal** as **Paharis**, highlighting their minimal differences in physical appearance while noting strong similarities in culture, daily life, social structure and economy.

Pahari tribe is spread across both sides of the Line of Control (LoC). On the Indian side, they are primarily concentrated in **Kupwara, Uri, Baramulla, Bandipora, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Kishtwar, Doda, Poonch, Rajouri, Kulgam** and **Shopian**. On the other side, they inhabit **Muzaffarabad, Muree, Abbottabad, Mirpur** and adjacent areas in PoK. While there are slight variations in dialects, the Pahari-speaking people across these regions share a common linguistic and cultural heritage.

Beyond Jammu and Kashmir, The Pahari tribe is spread across multiple states of North India, with distinct cultural identities, traditions and languages these include, among many others **Churachi, Gaddi, Kinnaura, Sirmuri** (from west to east) all in Himachal Pradesh), **Jaunsari, Garhwali, Kumauni** (all in Uttar Pradesh); etc. They occupy the outer, lower ranges of the Himalayas generally between about 600 and 2,100 meters above sea level adjacent to the **Indo-Gangetic** Plain, in a 1,600-kilometer crescent not more than 80 kilometers wide, stretching from Kashmir in the northwest to central Nepal in the southeast. Himachali Paharis are mostly found in **Kangra, Chamba** and **Kullu**, speaking dialects of Western Pahari languages. In Uttarakhand Pahari people including **Garhwalis** and **Kumaonis**, belonging to the Indo-Aryan Pahari linguistic group but in north India it generally designates the Indo-European-speaking peoples of the Himalayas who, however, generally prefer regional ethnic designations.

Historical records from various surveys conducted between 1901 and 1941 describe the Paharis as a distinct social and linguistic group, predominantly residing in the western foothills of the Pir Panjal Range, extending down to the Pothohar Plateau. They are also found in the hills of the Shamshabari Mountain Range in northern Kashmir, near the Kishanganga River. The Pahari area ranges in altitude from about 1,000 feet above sea level to over 9,000 feet. This Pahari area is often referred to as the galliat, which is the plural of a Hindko word that means mountain pass.

According to the 2011 Census, the Pahari population of Jammu and Kashmir was 10,22,982 constituting 8.16% of the total population of the region. Due to shared settlements with Gujjars and Bakarwals, 71% of Paharis reside in Poonch and Rajouri districts, 19% live in Uri, Boniyar, Keran and Karnah tehsils, while the remaining 10% are dispersed in fragmented settlements without a defined territorial unit.

Below is a table outlining the spatial distribution of the Pahari tribe, an indigenous community primarily found in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions of South-Asia. The Pahari people are spread across India, Nepal and Pakistan with cultural and linguistic variations based on their geographic location.

| Country | Regions/State               | Districts  | Note   |
|---------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| India   | Himachal Pradesh            | Chamba, Kangra, Shimla, Sirmaur and Solan  | Largest Pahari population; recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in some districts.  |
|         | Jammu and Kashmir           | Jammu, Poonch, Rajouri, Doda, Kishtwar, Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Ananatnag, Ganderbal etc<br><br>In PoK Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad and Mirpur etc | Primarily in the Jammu Division; speak Pahari dialects.<br>Predominantly Muslim Paharis; some speak Pahari dialects like Pothwari. |
|         | Uttarakhand                 | Dehradun, Nainital, Almora and Pauri Garhwal   | Mixed with other hill communities; practice agro-pastoral livelihoods.   |
| Nepal   | Western and Central Regions | Karnali Province, Sudurpashchim Pradesh and Bagmati Pradesh  | Referred to as "Pahari" or "Parbate"; culturally linked to Khas communities.   |