



INTRODUCING PAHARIS: HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Man has been introduced to nature for ages. It is a different issue that many people lost touch with nature, moved into concrete forests and began to live a civilized life. However, there were other groups of people, who continued to exist in their primitive form. They are known as tribes. In India, each state has its own distinct tribes. One such tribe is the **"Pahari Tribe"**. They belong to the Indo-Aryan ethnic group. Sometime in the 3rd millennium BC, Peoples known as Aryan began migrating from Central Asia into India and eventually spread across all of North India. One group of Indo-Aryan called Paharis broad ethno-linguistic group settled in mountain region of Kashmir to Nepal. It includes Jammu and Kashmir, parts of Hazara, Pothohar, Southern slope of Pir Panjal range in Jammu Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

Over the past 3,000 years, various factors have influenced migration into the Himalayan regions, including population pressures, plagues, famines, droughts, political oppression and conflicts (Everdayculture.com). The Pahari-inhabited regions have been shaped by many different civilizations, including **Indus Valley settlers, Indo-Aryans, Mauryans, Kushans, Rajputs, Mughals, Sikhs** and the **British**. These influences are visible today in language, architecture, religion and cultural traditions. These civilizations have left their mark in the area inhabited by Pahari and Pothwari speakers. Although the vast majority of the population today is Muslim, Hindus and Buddhists have left historical landmarks and the names of places continue to be affected by them to the present day. From Alexander the Great's invasion in 326 BC to the fifth century AD, most of the Pahari Pothwari area was part of the **Taxila Empire**. Portions of the area were under control of kingdoms based in Kashmir, especially around the seventh century AD.

Their historical presence is referenced in ancient texts, below is a chronological exploration of the Pahari people's classification based on their mentions or inferred presence in religious and ancient texts, focusing on the Indian context, particularly in regions like **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir** and parts of the north-eastern Himalayas.

According to Grierson and his followers the Pahari belongs to **Khasha tribes**, today known as **"Khakhas"** who after migrating from their original land **Eastern Europe**, stayed hundreds of years in **Eastern Iran** and then again migrating from there, they entered Subcontinent and spread all over in **Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan (Dardistan)**, from where they continued their journey along Himalayan range and reached to Nepal. G. A. Grierson, in his classic Linguistic Survey of India, labelled their Indo-European language "Pahari" and identified its main sections: Western Pahari, found west of the **Yamuna River** (i.e, now Himachal Pradesh) and into Kashmir; **Central Pahari**, between the **Jumna** and the **Maha Kali rivers** (i.e., in Garhwal and Kumaon now comprising the Himalayan Districts of Uttar Pradesh State and Eastern Pahari (generally called Nepali), extending from Nepal's western border (the Maha Kali) into central Nepal. Less sharply drawn than the northern and southern linguistic boundaries are those to the east, where Pahari gives way to Tibeto-Burman and to the west, where it meets **Dardic** languages, mainly Kashmiri.

Genetic studies indicate that **Himalayan Paharis** have mixed origins, with contributions from **Indo-Aryans, Central Asians** and **ancient South Asians**. These results reinforce that Pahari groups have a long history of genetic admixture, shaped by pastoral movements, trade routes and historical conquests. Pahari lineage has deep roots in prehistoric South Asia, possibly linked to hunter-gatherer and early Neolithic populations. Some Himalayan Pahari populations, particularly in Himachal and Kashmir, hinting at Neolithic migrations. One of the most common haplogroups found among Pahari Rajputs, Dogras and other Indo-Aryan-speaking Pahari groups associated with Indo-European migrations (~2000–1500 BCE), linking the Pahari people to broader North Indian and Central Asian steppe ancestry. During the Neolithic Iranian & Agricultural Expansion Pahari tribe were found in many Pahari communities, particularly in Kashmir and

Himachal Pradesh, likely introduced by Neolithic farmers from Iran (~7000 BCE) who migrated to the Himalayan foothills, influencing early agricultural societies.

With reference to **Tibeto-Burman** and **Central Asian Influence**, they are found in Pahari ethnic groups of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, indicating historical Tibeto-Burman and Mongoloid migrations. These haplogroups are commonly found in **Ladakhis, Kinnauris** and **northeastern Himalayan tribes**.

The term Pahari is derived from Pahar (Sanskrit for "mountain") - encompasses a mosaic of communities inhabiting the Himalayan ranges stretching from Nepal and Uttarakhand through Himachal Pradesh to Jammu and Kashmir. These groups, bound by their mountainous terrain and shared cultural ethos, represent one of South Asia's oldest ethno linguistic lineages. Their history, a blend of myth, migration and resilience, mirrors the rugged yet nurturing landscapes they call home.