



## **PIR PANJAL: THE MEMORYSCAPE THAT SHAPES THE IDENTITY OF PAHARI TRIBE**

The Pir Panjal range runs roughly from south to north Kashmir and separates Poonch and Rajouri in the Jammu region from the Kashmir region. All the six blocks are in the Pir Panjal range. Poonch and Bhaderwah-Kishtwar lie on the southern slopes of this range in the Poonch and Doda districts respectively, while the other areas are in the Kashmir region on the northern slopes of the Pir Panjal. Kaj-i-nag and Shamsabari are on the northern banks of the Jhelum.

The Pir Panjal region is more than a geographical entity it is a sacred landscape etched with centuries of spiritual, cultural and ecological significance. Named after revered Sufi mystics (pirs) and drawing from ancient Indian associations like Panchala, this mountain belt has served as a spiritual corridor for saints, sages and seekers from diverse traditions. Its high-altitude meadows, shrines, caves and pilgrim trails reflect a profound intertwining of nature and faith, where the sacred is embedded in the everyday. The range includes historically significant mountain passes which have served as spiritual retreats, trade corridors and military routes. The confluence of mountain passes (Peer Ki Gali, Hajipir, Tatakuti, Banihal and Shamsabari) and rivers like Poonch, Rambhara, Veshaw, Rajouri Tawi and Kishanganga in the Pir Panjal reflects a sacred symbiosis: the mountain as the cosmic spine and the river as the circulating life-force.

For the Pahari tribe, the Pir Panjal is not merely a homeland but a living memory cape that shapes their identity, worldview and oral traditions. In an age of cultural homogenization, the Pir Panjal stands as a powerful symbol of pluralism, resilience and the sacred continuity of the Pahari way of life and holds a very prominent place in the culture and religious significance for both the Pahari Muslims, Sikh pahari and Hindus Pahari residing in this region. Mountains are portrayed as sacred in local myths and legends and stories mostly associate their formation with gods, saints, or divine personalities.

### **Major peaks in the Pir Panjal Range include:**

- Mount Kolahoi (5,425 meters)
- Mount Harmukh (5,100 meters)
- Mount Shamsabari (5,156 meters)