

Tribes of Himachal Pradesh, List, Culture, Major Tribes

August 6, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



The **tribes of Himachal Pradesh** are an important part of the state's rich cultural heritage. Living mainly in the **high-altitude Himalayan regions**, these tribal communities have preserved their **unique languages, traditions, customs, festivals, and traditional occupations** for centuries. The tribal population is concentrated mainly in **Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, Pangi, and Bharmour**. These regions have been notified as **Scheduled Areas** under the Constitution because of their significant tribal population.

Major Tribes of Himachal Pradesh

The **major tribes of Himachal Pradesh** have preserved their unique traditions, languages, festivals, and livelihoods for generations, contributing significantly to the state's cultural diversity and Himalayan heritage.

1. Gaddi Tribe

The **Gaddi Tribe** is one of the largest and most prominent tribal communities of Himachal Pradesh, known for its pastoral lifestyle, rich traditions, and strong connection with the Himalayan region.

- Primarily found in **Chamba, Kangra, and Bharmour** regions.

- Traditionally practice **pastoralism**, rearing **sheep and goats**.
- Follow **seasonal migration (transhumance)** to access grazing lands.
- Also engage in **agriculture and horticulture** for livelihood.
- Mostly follow **Hinduism**, with **Lord Shiva** as their chief deity.
- Wear traditional **woollen cholas, colourful caps, and shawls**.
- Speak the **Gaddi dialect**, along with Hindi and Pahari.
- Known for preserving **folk music, dances, and cultural traditions**.

2. Gujjar Tribe

The **Gujjar Tribe** is a pastoral community known for its expertise in **buffalo rearing, dairy farming, and seasonal migration** across the Himalayan foothills.

- Mainly inhabits **Chamba, Kangra, Una, and Sirmaur** districts.
- Traditionally engaged in **buffalo and cattle rearing**.
- Produce **milk, ghee, curd, and other dairy products**.
- Practice **nomadic or semi-nomadic** migration for grazing.
- Majority follow **Islam**, while some practice **Hinduism**.
- Speak **Gojri**, Hindi, and local Pahari dialects.
- Live in temporary shelters during migration.
- Livestock forms the backbone of their economy.

3. Kinnaura (Kanaura) Tribe

The **Kinnaura Tribe** is famous for its unique blend of **Hindu and Buddhist traditions**, colourful culture, and thriving horticulture in the Kinnaur region.

- Primarily resides in **Kinnaur district**.
- Follows both **Hinduism and Buddhism**.
- Known for **apple orchards, terrace farming, and horticulture**.
- Skilled in **handloom weaving and woollen handicrafts**.
- Recognized for the famous **green Kinnauri cap**.
- Celebrate festivals like **Losar** and **Phulaich**.
- Speak the **Kinnauri language** along with Hindi.
- Preserve rich traditions through **folk songs and dances**.

4. Lahaula Tribe

The **Lahaula Tribe** inhabits the cold desert region of Lahaul and is known for its resilience, agricultural practices, and Tibetan cultural influence.

- Mainly found in **Lahaul Valley**.
- Live in **high-altitude cold desert conditions**.
- Cultivate **potatoes, peas, barley, and other hardy crops**.

- Rear **yaks, sheep, and other livestock**.
- Follow both **Buddhism and Hinduism**.
- Practice traditional **wool weaving and handicrafts**.
- Houses are built using **stone and mud** to withstand harsh winters.
- Tibetan culture significantly influences their lifestyle and customs.

5. Pangwala Tribe

The **Pangwala Tribe** is a tribal community of the remote Pangi Valley, known for its simple lifestyle, traditional farming, and vibrant folk culture.

- Mainly inhabits the **Pangi Valley of Chamba district**.
- Depends on **agriculture and animal husbandry**.
- Rears **sheep and goats** for income.
- Skilled in **traditional weaving and handicrafts**.
- Wear distinctive **woollen dresses suited to cold climates**.
- Celebrate local fairs and community festivals.
- Preserve unique **folk music, dances, and oral traditions**.
- Maintain close-knit family and community relationships.

6. Swangla Tribe

The **Swangla Tribe** is an agricultural community of Lahaul Valley that has preserved its traditional customs, religious practices, and mountain lifestyle.

- Found mainly in **Lahaul Valley**.
- Engaged in **farming, trade, and livestock rearing**.
- Cultivate crops suitable for **high-altitude regions**.
- Follow **Hinduism** and worship local deities.
- Live in traditional **wooden and stone houses**.
- Skilled in **weaving woollen garments and handicrafts**.
- Preserve traditional **folk songs, dances, and festivals**.
- Community life is based on strong social and cultural values.

7. Bhot (Bodh) Tribe

The **Bhot (Bodh) Tribe** is a Buddhist community of the trans-Himalayan region, recognized for its monasteries, wool production, and Tibetan cultural heritage.

- Primarily found in **Lahaul-Spiti district**.
- Follow **Tibetan Buddhism** and monastic traditions.
- Rear **yaks, sheep, and goats** for livelihood.
- Produce high-quality **wool, carpets, and handicrafts**.
- Practice agriculture despite harsh climatic conditions.

- Celebrate Buddhist festivals such as **Losar**.
- Speak **Bhoti (Tibetan dialects)** and Hindi.
- Preserve centuries-old **Buddhist art, architecture, and customs**.

8. Jad, Lamba, and Khampa Tribe

The **Jad, Lamba, and Khampa Tribes** are small Himalayan tribal communities known for their Tibetan heritage, pastoral economy, and distinct cultural identity.

- Inhabit the **border regions adjoining Tibet**.
- Strongly influenced by **Tibetan culture and Buddhism**.
- Traditionally engaged in **cross-border trade** before border restrictions.
- Depend on **animal husbandry and livestock rearing**.
- Rear **yaks, sheep, and goats** in high-altitude pastures.
- Wear thick **woollen clothing** to withstand extreme cold.
- Preserve unique **languages, customs, and religious traditions**.
- Continue to maintain their traditional way of life while adapting to modern development.

Government Schemes Related to Tribal Welfare

The **Government of India and the Himachal Pradesh Government** implement various welfare schemes to improve the **education, healthcare, livelihood, infrastructure, and socio-economic development** of tribal communities while preserving their cultural heritage.

- **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)**: Improves housing, roads, healthcare, education, and basic services for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA)**: Focuses on the holistic development of tribal villages through better infrastructure, education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities.
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)**: Provides quality residential education to Scheduled Tribe students in tribal-dominated areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY)**: Develops tribal villages by improving roads, drinking water, sanitation, schools, and healthcare facilities.
- **Post-Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe Students**: Offers financial assistance to ST students pursuing higher education.
- **National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students**: Supports Scheduled Tribe students in postgraduate and doctoral studies.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)**: Recognizes the land and forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce Scheme**: Ensures fair prices for tribal communities selling minor forest produce.
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**: Promotes value addition, processing, and marketing of tribal forest products to increase tribal incomes.
- **Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) / Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)**: Allocates dedicated funds for the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribe communities.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/tribes-of-himachal-pradesh/>

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