

# Mughal Road; Historical Perspective and Impact on Socioeconomic Fabric of Rajouri –Poonch Region of J&K State, India

## Abstract

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has been famous throughout the world for its natural beauty and cultural heritage. Nature lovers and trekkers from all over the world are attracted towards it. Geographically the valley of Kashmir is surrounded by mountains and hills with very few routes available for entry into the valley. Originally there were two routes to enter into land locked valley of Kashmir. The first was Tosh-e- maidan route via Poonch –Mandi Loran and the second route was via panjsarai – Pir Ki gali Shopian leading to Kashmir and this was known as Salt route as salt was transported from Punjab to Kashmir via this route. The mughal Emperor Akber used this route to enter into the valley followed by other mughal kings and this route was named after them as Mughal Saherah. The Rajouri Poonch districts are separated from valley by mighty Pir Panjal range and had only one connecting link with Kashmir via Jammu. But due to opening of mughal road distance between these two districts and the valley has reduced thus opening up opportunities for the people of this region. This road is expected to influence socioeconomic fabric of this region especially in promotion of tourism potential of this region.

**Keywords:** Salt Route, Mughal Road, Heerpura, Behramgala, Noori Cham, Mughal Sarai, Economy of Rajouri Poonch, Historical Perspective, Socioeconomic Fabric, Dogra Rulers, Religious Tourism, Trekking Routes.

## Introduction

Silk road is considered a remarkable achievement of the ancient civilization, as for the first time it connected different countries and nations from Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean. Through this road people interchanged handicrafts, goods, ideas and beliefs and this way people were brought closer to one another. This road also was known for the beautiful monuments along it. The Silk road is one of the most significant tourist sites as it brings mankind closer to the historical heritage of many nations.

The route through which Mughals entered Kashmir is known as Mughal road and now since it has been opened for traffic it is sure to bring people within Jammu and Kashmir closer to one another besides connecting it to rest of India. Akber used this route to conquer Kashmir in 1586 AD, they chose the most feasible and shortest route to the Kashmir Valley. The road extends between Bafliaz a town in Poonch district to Shopian in Kashmir Valley. This road brings Poonch and Rajouri districts closer to Kashmir Valley. This makes for an alternate road to Kashmir Valley from the rest of India, other than the highly crowded Jammu Srinagar highway through the Banihal tunnel.

India is a country rich in tourism potential and cultural heritage. The people from all over the world are fascinated towards the natural beauty, ancient monuments of the country. India abounds in different civilizations, cultures, beliefs and ethos. India has remained home of Aryans, Budhists, Mughals and Britishers. Jammu and Kashmir a northern state of India too contributes a lot to the tourism and cultural heritage of India. The valley of Kashmir is surrounded by mighty mountains and hills. The connecting link between the valley and Punjab was through Salt route which was not properly developed. Later when Mughals captured Kashmir in 1586 AD, Akber decided to visit Kashmir, he used this route to enter into



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the valley and later on other Mughal kings also used the same route and so was named Mughal route. The legacy of mughals continue to live on through Mughal road. The buildings along the road reflecting the majestic art and architecture of the Mughals still holds the potential to reminisce people with an awe and amazement. An impression would be laid on the minds of the present and future generations through mughal road about the saga of the great rulers that ruled India for centuries.

Rajouri Poonch are the twin districts of the state of Jammu and Kashmir are connected with the valley through mughal road, which is important not only for its historical significance, but also has the potential to boost the economy of these two districts. This road besides serving as an alternative highway between Jammu and Srinagar, would also create an environment favourable for interregional culture and economic exchanges. These two districts have huge tourism potential and cultural heritage. The place could not prosper due to geographical disadvantages of the area. These areas when developed would give swing in tourist activities.

The study is undertaken by considering the impact of mughal road on the promotion of tourism leading to transformation of socioeconomic fabric of Rajouri Poonch districts.

1. To highlight the historical perspective of mughal road.
2. To enlist heritage sites along mughal road and also those present in the region.
3. To classify the tourist sites and highlight the scope of their development.
4. To analyze tourism potential of Rajouri Poonch districts.
5. To highlight the measures for the preservation of heritage sites.
6. To discuss the policies of the government and role of local population in protecting the environment.

#### **Methodology**

The present study is undertaken to find out the expected impact of opening of Mughal road on the socio-economic life of people of twin border districts of Rajouri –Poonch in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, who all along have suffered socially and economically due to geographical isolation as they are separated from Valley of Kashmir by Pir Panchal mountain range. The study is based on collection of literature from different sources and the on the spot visits made by the author on various spots along the mughal road from Noushera (Rajouri district) to Shopian during the years 2014 to 2016 and also data collected during interactions with people and representatives of government and civil administration in the districts under study.

#### **Review of Literature**

In view of historical importance, scenic beauty and mughal architecture along the Mughal road and other aspects such as sociological, economic, cultural and aesthetics have been studied by many historians, scholars and writers.

1587 AD Akber decided to visit Kashmir, Qasim Khan a Mughal official was deputed with three

thousand sculptors and two thousand workers to clear the road for safe journey of Mughal caravan( Fouq-481).

Jahangir visited Kashmir through Mughal route and covered the distance in 25days (Fouq-495).

Aurangzeb visited Kashmir on 25<sup>th</sup> Ramzan 1075 AH. The journey was highly inconvenient as many men and horses perished in the hostile climate and terrain. (p275).

The six Km long clear water lake Baghsar is located on the old Mughal road to Kashmir (Dewan 275). The Mughal route terminated at Srinagar is the only thing that is certain (Dewan 266). Today the route is identified with the hills of Kashmir and Jammu.

The Mughal road is perhaps Six hundred year old used primarily from the time of Akber until Shah Jahan's reign. The Mughal caravan used to travel from Agra to Srinagar via New Delhi- Lahore- Mirpur-Rajouri and Shopian cutting through the mighty Pir Panchal. They have built numerous forts and Sarais on the way, many of which exist even today. The silk road is much older, Caravans from China to Europe travelled up and down for centuries carrying numerous goods( D. Subachandran New Delhi).

The Mughal road when ready for travel would shrink the distance and thus help people to visit their relatives more frequently besides opening of the road would give flip to the economies of both Kashmir as well as Rajouri Poonch (Haroon Malik Deputy Commissioner Poonch 2105).

The Mughal road project is the restoration of ancient road that could revive native interest in history and provide a vista for tourists (Magray).

Mughal road that connects Kashmir Valley with Poonch and Rajouri is a prestigious project not only because it has a historical importance but also because it will enrich the surface connectivity of the state( Iqbal Kazmi Skt). Even though Mughal route connecting Kashmir Valley with the outside world through Pir Panchal pass existed much before the arrival of Mughals, however until the Mughal Caravan started using it, the route could not be developed Mughals ensured its maintenance.

It has taken more than sixty years to travel a distance of six hours between Poonch and Kashmir. The opening of historical Mughal road, which connects Pir Panchal and Kashmir region has made the dream a reality with road open to vehicular movement, people here are buoyed by the dividends Mughal road would bring to the region(Tantray Ishfaq). The twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch fall in the Pir Panchal belt of Jammu Province, Mughal is all set to bring socioeconomic transformation of Rajouri Poonch (K D Maini).

The Mughal road was used by Mughals in the sixteenth century. Reviving this road has brought people closer to each other within Jammu Kashmir besides connecting it to rest of India. The road from Surankote to Shopian is 84km and situated in Jammu and Kashmir. The road brings Rajouri Poonch districts closer to Srinagar in Kashmir Valley. This makes for alternate road route to Kashmir Valley from rest of India (Pia Malhotra)

**Historical Perspective of Mughal Road**

Kashmir has remained an attraction for the people all over the world since ancient times. The English writer Walk field in his book," Kashmir and Kashmiris "have mentioned that no place in the remaining quarter of the globe can be compared to such a paradise formed by nature. Kashmir is a combination of best fertile land, lovely lakes, glaciers,crystal clear streams of water, milky waterfalls, gardens, mighty mountains, enchanting saffron fields,snow caped peaks and beautiful meadows reflecting splendour. Due to its beauty and great wealth of heritage Kashmir always remained an attraction for the mighty rulers, invaders and aggressors. The ordinary people too kept Kashmir as destination to visit in their life time. Kashmir is land locked valley surrounded by mighty mountains from all sides. Originally there were two routes to enter into the valley. First Tosh e maidan route via Poonch Mandi Loran and the second was via Panjsarai Pir ki Gali- Shopian finally leading to Kashmir. This route was earlier known as salt route.

Akber's first visit to Kashmir:

In the year 1587AD (996 AH) mughal emperor Jalal- U- Din Mohd Akber decided to visit Kashmir. His decision was conveyed to the governor of Kashmir, who in consultation with his officials chalked out a plan to make the visit hassel free. Three thousand men under the command of Qasim Khan were deputed to clear the Pir Panchal route for the safe journey of mughal caravan. The same route was later named mughal seharah as the mughal emperors used this route to enter into the valley.

Qasim Khan cleared the route up to Heerpura, where a grand gate was laid and decorated to extend splendid welcome to majestic royal caravan. During this journey Akber was accompanied by Prince Saleem, Prince Murad, Mirza Khan E Khana and many more known mughal officials besides the royal family. The historical account reveal that after all the preparations were put in place, the mughal caravan reached Panjsarai in Poonch, ( Panjsarai now a days comprises of Chandimarh, Behramgala, and Poshana) where it was received by Yousef Khan the governor of Kashmir and other top mughal officials. It was winter season, snow had fallen which made the journey uncomfortable leading to many deaths. Though the journey was uncomfortable the sheer enthusiasm of seeing Kashmir valley inspired the onward journey. The royal caravan was given splendid welcome at Heerpura by the people who had gathered there to witness the royal spectacle after a night stay at Heerpura the royal caravan reached Srinagar where Akber stayed at the house of MirzaYousef.

Akber was so touched by the beauty of Kashmir that he decided to visit Kashmir the very next year and in 1000AH reached Kashmir via mughal route. But this time MirzaYousef had revolted against the mughals and had started his Owen currency. He made unsuccessful attempt to stop mughal army at Thanna Mandi through Mirza Darvesh Ali,who ran away after defeat. But at Heerpura MirzaYousef himself led the army to confront mughals, however the

mughal officials Shabaz Khan Niazi, Ibrahim Khan Kakroo, Hassan Khan Waslu collectively managed defection in the army of Mirza Yousef who was arrested and killed. The mughal caravan continued its journey and reached Srinagar. Akber during his stay visited many places and enjoyed the beauty of Kashmir.

Akber visited Kashmir for the third time in 1005 AH in the middle of summer. This time he was told about the brutalities committed on the people of Kashmir by mughal officials. He conducted investigation and guilty were punished. After three months stay he left for his capital.

**Jahangir's Visit to Kashmir**

Jahangir the son of Akber was the second mughal emperor to visit Kashmir 1619 AD). His writings contain thoughtful description of the beauty of resorts and meadows. He completed his journey in twenty five days. He writes in his memoir that crossing Pir Panchal with all the army together was not possible, so the people were asked to cross the mountains in small groups and finally the caravan reached Srinagar. During his stay fire broke out in Kashmir valley and around twelve thousand houses including Jamia Masjid were destroyed.

Jahangir visited Kashmir for the second time in1623AD and third time in 1625AD. In the year 1627 AD Jahangir was unwell and for a change decided to visit Kashmir and stayed in the valley for few months but on way back to Lahore his health worsened and due to heart attack died at Behramgala. Noor Jahan kept his death secret to avoid any uprising and removed his viscera and buried the same at Chingus and his body was taken to Lahore.

**Shah Jahan's Visit to Kashmir**

After the death of Jahangir, Shah Jahan became his successor. He was already aware of the beauty of Kashmir as he had visited the valley during prince hood However when he became emperor he visited Kashmir first time in 1634 AD and used mughal route for entry into valley. He was so touched by the beauty that he visited valley three more times in 1638 AD, 1642 AD and 1650 AD. Mardan Ali Khan was appointed Governor of Kashmir by Shah Jahan with instructions to construct sarais at different spots along the mughal route as staying in tents during inclement weather was highly inconvenient. Thus sarais at Thanna, Behramgala, Poshana, Heerpura still remind the visitors of the memory of Shah Jahan and Mardan Ali Khan.

**Aurangzeb's Visit**

In the year 1658AD Aurangzeb ordered house arrest of Shah Jahan and occupied mughal throne. After attaining complete control over the country he decided to visit Kashmir in the year 1076AH and used the same mughal route for his journey to the valley, but this journey proved very unpleasant for him as many men and horses perished due to inclement weather and hostile terrain, he stayed in the valley for three months and went back to Lahore and decided not to visit Kashmir again. He was the last mughal emperor to visit Kashmir valley using mughal route.

**Afghan Caravan and The Mughal Road**

After Mughals the mughal route continued to serve the Afghan caravans as well who repaired the route, they were followed by Sikhs who also used the same route for entry into the valley. The mughal route remained backbone of Kashmir economy as Kashmir carried out trade with Punjab through the same route. During winter Kashmiris used to earn livelihood in Punjab as this route provided them shortest journey. Sikhs ensured that, this road given its importance was kept well maintained through regular repair and renovation.

**Dogras and Mughal Road**

After Sikhs Dogras emerged on the political screen of Kashmir and the mughal road started facing neglect and no attention was paid to repair it and instead the Dogra rulers adopted the Banihal pass and constructed a modern road through this route to connect Srinagar with Jammu. The change in the route by Dogras might have been because of security reasons as they felt more secure in Banihal area due to their own principalities at Udampur and Ramban so they preferred this route over mughal route.

Mughal road remained neglected till 1950 AD when a new road was proposed to be constructed along mughal route to boost the economy of Rajouri - Poonch region. However no practical efforts were made to implement the proposal. Sheikh Mohd Abdullah the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir took up this project in 1979 AD and named it mughal road. Later on the work on the road came to halt due to onset of militancy. However this prestigious project was resumed in 2005 AD by Mufti Sayeed government. The road passes through Heerpura wildlife sanctuary, so initially there was opposition to the construction of this road citing danger to the wildlife sanctuary. However supreme court gave conditional permission for the construction of the road. The double lane road became motorable in 2013AD. Driving through mughal road is a pleasure for the visitors.

**Discussion**

Rajouri is popularly known as land of Kings and has remained an important place even during ancient times. It was known as Panchal Desh during Mahabharat times after the name of Panchal Naresh whose daughter Daropdi was married to Pandvas. In 326BC Alexander invaded Poonch area and in 1020 BC it was invaded by Mehmood Ghaznavi. In 1596 Mughal emperor Jahangir appointed Siraj-Ud-Din as the ruler of Poonch and thereafter this area remained under the autocratic rulers Raja Razaq Khan, Shabaz Khan and Rustam Khan till 1720AD. In 1819 AD Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured this area and till 1850 it remained under Khalsa Darbar Lahore.

In 1850 AD Raja Moti Singh the son of Raja Dhayan Singh the prime minister of Khalsa Darbar established Poonch as a separate principality. The Principality of Poonch obtained the status of State from the British Raj during the reign of Raja Baldev Singh. There after it remained under the command of Raja Sukh Dev Singh, Raja Jagat Dev Singh and Shiv Ratan Dev Singh. In 1936AD it was reduced to the status of Jagir by Maharaja Hari Singh. The period

from 1850AD to 1947AD is considered as golden period. In the turmoil of 1947-48 Rajouri Poonch got divided through LOC between India and Pakistan with a good chunk of this region going to Pakistan Administered Kashmir including Bagh, Sadnuthi, Rawalakote, Thakhyala Parava, a portion of Noushera and Jhangar. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1967AD Rajouri and Poonch were made separate districts. The major towns of Rajouri are Thanna Mandi, Darhal, Budhal, Kalakote, Noushera and Sunder Bani whereas the important towns of Poonch are Mendhar, Surankote, Mandi and Poonch town. Historically this region passes through various regimes i.e from period of Mahabharata, Alexander, Afghans, Mughals and then Sikhs, so a mixed impression is depicted by this region in culture and heritage. This region is inhabited by Paharis and Gujjar Bakerwals. These two communities have their unique identity in terms of costume, music, songs, Art, life style, marriages, occupation and language.

**Impact of Mughal Road on Socio-Economic Fabric of Rajouri Poonch Districts**

Rajouri Poonch districts have diverse wealth of natural beauty, heritage sites and religious places. The mughal road that connects Kashmir valley with Rajouri Poonch districts is a prestigious project not only for its historical relevance but also for its potential to boost the economy of the twin border districts of the state, which earlier had only one option of reaching Srinagar via Jammu covering a distance of more than 500km. The road apart from serving as an alternative highway between Srinagar and Jammu, would create an environment favourable for inter-regional culture and economic exchanges. This would end the geographical isolation of these border districts as this road provides a better surface communication in this hilly region. Mughal road has established fresh travel prospects for both Kashmir and people of these twin districts. It has opened a choice of markets for the businessmen and also for the common masses. Many people in the twin districts have close relatives in Kashmir, who were facing trouble going to Kashmir via Jammu. which have obviously encouraged frequent visits. Mughal road has the potential to give a boost to the economy of these border districts as the people would be with a choice of markets Jammu as well as Kashmir. Moreover mughal road will open up opportunity for promotion of tourism.

Rajouri Poonch districts are surrounded by majestic snow capped mountains, dotted with lovely lakes and meandering streams, abounding in nature's choicest gifts of fruit, flower, forests and age old historical monuments. This region offers prospect of a vacation. Various areas which are expected to draw the attention of tourists with scope of development are as under:

**Tourist Places, Forts and Sarais along Mughal Road**

The legacy of the Mughals shall continue to live on with places and buildings of majestic art and architecture of the Mughals, still reminisce people with awe and amazement. Mughal road will further lay an impression on our minds with the saga of the great rulers that ruled India for so many years.

The Mughal road originated from Bhimber an area situated in south west of Jammu and Kashmir in POK Pakistan. In ancient days this Mughal road was one of the most crowded and safest route to enter into the valley from Punjab and parts of Indian subcontinent. The original track of Mughals was from Lahore to Gujrat Pakistan –then Bhimber (POK)- Saibabad-Nowshera- Chingus-Rajouri-Thanna Mandi (Rajouri district) Rattan peer- Behramgala- Poshana-Pir ki Gali-Aliabad-Jajinad-Anganari-dubji and then through Heerpura to valley of Kashmir.

As per blue print the road from bafliaz to Shopian is 89kms and it criss crosses 11,500 to 13000 ft high mountain ranges, which is higher than Banihal on Jammu Srinagar National Highway. Today it is the smoothest and artistically built highway. Besides historical significance, this road is blessed with historical spots, beautiful grasslands, mountains water falls, different species of flowers, lush green meadows and tracks.

On way from Kashmir Valley-while travelling along this road one could still find the ruins of Mughal structures at various destinations. One could see the ruins of sarai at Kakapura, from here the Mughal road takes one via pulwama and Shopian to the historical village of Heerpura.

#### **Shopian**

It is located at a distance of 51 kms from Srinagar and 20 kms from Pulwama. It has decade old connectivity with Anantnag as well as with Kulgam. In the era gone by Shopian was located on the famous Mughal road connecting Lahore and Srinagar. The famous Aherbal water fall is 11 km from Shopian town.

#### **Heerpura**

It is 12 kms from Shopian town. It commands a beautiful scenic view and is present along Mughal road. It was at this place, that a grand reception was organized for Mughal emperor Akber during his first visit to the valley. The Heerpura carries in its lap the next Mughal sarai. Though it is poorly maintained today but still reflects the Mughal style of construction.

#### **Sukhsarai**

Proceeding forward one comes across another sarai at Dubigen meadow. This Sarai is locally known as sukhsarai. The history of this sarai reminds one of Afghan period when they ruled Kashmir, who superimposed their own structure over it. The sarai is in an open meadow and presents glorious look reminiscent of its erstwhile grandeur.

#### **Aliabad Sarai**

After crossing Dubigen few kilometers behind Pir Ki Gali, one could see the last Mughal construction in Kashmir valley side, this is a large sarai called, "Aliabad Sarai" located at an important place. This Sarai has huge capacity to accommodate large caravan. During Mughal rule the Mughal caravan which were starting from Kashmir early in the morning would reach Aliabad Sarai at sunset. The walls of Aliabad sarai are still preserved and it is being used till date by the troops stationed in the area.

#### **Peer Ki Gali**

Walking beyond Aliabad sarai the Mughal road winds up on to the top ridge of Pir panchal called

Pir ki gali, named after a Hindu saint who converted to islam whose shrine is located at this spot who was given the name as Sheikh Ahmed Karim. It is said that he was born a Hindu but embraced islam at the hands of a Sayed. Bernier Francis a most famous visitor who happened to pass through this place along with caravan of Mughal empor Aurangzeb while going from Lahore to Kashmir in 1665AD writes that this saint was living here since the time of King Jahangir. This saint could perform miracles by producing horrible voices. He could also bring storms along with snow. He was an old white bearded man. He always asked the people not to create noise in this calm place of God and also used to demand offerings from them. Bernier further writes that he happened to meet him inside his cave and told by him that Mughal King Aurangzeb and Shah Jehan were wise enough as they passed this calm place of God very calmly, unlike Jehangir as a result he faced dangerous results during his rule. The annual Urs at this shrine is celebrated every year during the harvest season and people in large numbers from Rajouri Poonch and Shopian participate in the Urs. Now Tomb at the mazar and a beautiful mosque has been constructed along with langar khana where satu and kawa are served to the visitors. The vehicles stop here people pay obeisance at the shrine and also leave offerings in the box there. A large open area adds to the beauty of the place from where one can enjoy the glimpses of natural beauty on both sides of Pir Panchal.

#### **Poshana**

It is a historically important village and is present along the Mughal road few kilometers away from Pir Ki Gali towards NooriCham. It is situated at 33.38Latitude and 74.32longitude. This village finds mention in Raj tarangni (history of Jammu and Kashmir by Kalhan). Kalhan named Poshana as Poshan, a sanakrit word which means a narrow track of air. According to written records the real track of Mughals for reaching valley was from Poshana, but the newly constructed Mughal road left the village aside and passed from its periphery, different types of utensils which show their link with Mughals have been found by inhabitants of this village during the construction of their houses, proved the historical relevance of this village.

#### **Lal Ghulam Pedra**

It is a spot located few kilometers ahead of Pir ki gali towards Poonch side. The bottom of the mountain is visible from this spot. It used to be a most difficult point along Mughal route causing casualties of horses and men. It is strange place up in the mountain and it is said that many efforts were made to construct this spot but astonishingly whenever the construction reached the final stage, it could not sustain and always fell down. Finally on the advice of an astrologer a pearl ( Lal) was kept at the bottom and on it the construction was completed. In the second year of its construction during his visit the Mughal empor enquired about the place where the pearl was kept beneath the construction, a slave indicated the places where it was buried. The empor for fear of pearl being extracted killed the slave and buried him there. The place thus came to be known as Lal

Ghulam.( History of Kashmir, Mohd Din Fouq; p 519-20).

#### **Behramgala**

Situated at the foot hill of 8600 ft high Rattan peak on the Mughal road about 15 kms from surankote town. Behramgala is a small picturesque spot in the deep gorge. It is a small plateau surrounded by mountains and forests. Just near the confluence of ThathaPani and Parnai streams which further add to the scenic beauty of the place.

#### **Noori Cham**

Christened after the name of Noor Jehan loving wife of Empror Jahangir, is a place with mesmerizing effect on the minds of the visitors. It is a famous waterfall one mile away from Bafliaz in the north east of Behramgala. It is a scenic spot with tremendous tourist potential. The fall of stream gives rise to dense clouds of water vapours which engulf the area and spread all over. The Empror Jahangir was highly fascinated towards it and he named this fall Noori Cham after the name of his loving wife. Jahangir had constructed a foot step for him from where he used to enjoy the beauty and freshness of this water fall for hours together. Richard Temple a famous tourist who happened to travel over this track in 1859 AD writes that at a distance of one mile from Behramgala there is a small but attractive spot where on an ancient rock some verses in an unknown language have been carved by King Jhangir, when he was impressed by the beauty of this place. On the very left side of the fall there is place made for a big mirror where Noor Jehan used to dress herself. Noori Cham is also linked with a painful story of Behram Khan and Hassan Bano. Behram was one of the ministers of the King and Hassan Bano was one of the beautiful servants of Queen Noor Jehan. Meanwhile intimacy developed between them and reached upto true love. Once Behram expressed his will to marry Hassan Bano, But Noor Jehan opposed it bitterly. She further conspired his killing and threw his body inside the fall of Noori Cham. On hearing this Hassan Bano also embraced death by jumping into the stream and the dead bodies of both these lovers disappeared in the deep waters of Noori Cham.

#### **Thanna Mandi fort**

Thanna Mandi too is blessed with a Mughal monument in the form of a big fort. It is said that this fort was built during 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century at the time of Jhangir after Chingus sarai. The fort has suffered extensive damage due to natural and human vandalism, but even today Mughal royalty is reflected in tall, strong, beautifully constructed walls with bricks and lime stone. It is spacious with rooms and the troops are stationed in this fort even today.

#### **Mughal Sarai Chingus**

The only structure that has been preserved in its original form even today is Chingus sarai. It has a square shape and consists of many indoor rooms with large gateway. The material used in its construction comprises of bricks and red lime. It is situated at a distance of 20kms from Rajouri town. History reveals that after crossing Nowshera, Mughal caravan used to take rest at this place. A very unique kind of story is related to Chingus sarai. Chingus is a

word of Turkish language meaning intestine. It is said that during 1627AD Jahangir along with his wife Noor Jahan was returning from Kashmir and at Chandimarh Behramgala he fell ill. During stay at this place he ordered one of his servants to bring a deer for him. Following the order of the king the servant brought a deer, but while bringing the deer down to the base camp, he slipped to death, all this being watched by Jhangir. The incident caused a severe heart attack to him and on 29<sup>th</sup> October this painful incident became cause of his death at Thanna Mandi area. Noor Jahan handled the situation very carefully and kept the incident secret in order to avoid agitation in kingdom. She reacted very boldly. The body of the king was operated upon and intestine was removed to avoid any foul smell that could be caused by decomposition of the body. The intestine of Jahangir was buried in the sarai and hence the entire area around the sarai was latter named Chingus.

#### **Promotion of Pilgrimage Tourism ShahdaraSharief Shrine**

Few kilometers from Thanna Mandi is the shrine of Baba Ghulam Shah Badsah in Rajouri district, which has both religious as well as historical importance for all the people belonging to diverse faiths. People from all over the state belonging to different faiths visit this shrine to seek the blessings of the saint, whose prediction on Gulab Singh who at that time was a soldier to become King, came true.

#### **Ziarat Sain Miran Baksh**

This Ziarat is located near the line of control in Village Gountrian. This Srine of saint Miran Baksh is famous all over the state and visitors from all faiths come to this place in large numbers. It is said that whatever is wished before the holy seat never goes unfulfilled. Now it has been connected with a road. There is an elaborate arrangement of langar and facility for night stay.

#### **Ziarat Chhote Shah**

It is located in village Sakhi Maidan 3 km away from Mendhar Town. The ziarat of peer Chhote Shah is held in high esteem by Hindus and Muslims alike. Three day Urs is celebrated every year and people in large numbers attend.

#### **Ziarat Sainllahi Baksh**

The ziarat of Sain llahi Baksh is located in village Batakote in Mandi Block of Poonch district 37 km from poonch town. Batakote is most beautiful and attractive village and is located in between the southern hills of PirPanchal Range and at the confluence of Nandishool and Nainsukh. The sacred place surrounded by snow caped peaks, thisk belt of forests, beautiful alnd and grass ridge.A great sufi saint Sain llahi Baksh selected this place as his last abode, who came to this place around 1948 AD. He was a preacher of brotherhood and worked for humanity. He inspired not only Muslims, but Hindus and Sikhs as well. The Urs of Sainllahi Baksh is celebrated every year in the month of May.

#### **Ziarat of Peer Habibullah Shah Pamrote**

This Shrine is located 3km towards east of Surankote town. He was a renowned sufi saint of his time. He worked for upliftmint of all sections of society and because of many miracles associated with him he

attained the status of a famous saint of his era. He was well read in Islamic studies and had written three books which unfortunately were burnt during the turmoil of 1947. A religious conference was organized at Poonch where the Raja of Poonch also participated and he was so impressed by the knowledge and wisdom of Peer Habibullah Shah Sahib that he gave him Jagir at Gundi, which he declined and chose Pamrote as his abode.

#### **Mangla Devi Shrine**

This is a Hindu shrine located in Noushera area of Rajouri. This place is famous in Hindu pilgrims, people used to visit there all round the year, but during navratras rush of pilgrims increases. Facilities have been created by the management committee and tourism department. More work regarding creation of parks and development of sites around the shrine needs to be developed.

#### **Budha Amarnath**

It is located in Rajpura area of Mandi Tehsil of Poonch district 25 km from Poonchtown. It is located at the confluence of Gagri Nallah and Pulast Nadi. This place is surrounded by snow bound of lofty peaks and thick forests. The climate of this place is charming and cool. The original temple is constructed out of one stone. There is a natural Shiva Lingam and ancient Idols collected from the nearby villages are also installed. The main function is held on the occasion of Raksha Bandan which is known as mela Swami Budha Amarnath Ji. Three days before the mela, a religious congregation is held at Dashnami Akhara Poonch for performing Havan and Pooja of Chhari Mubarak. People from all walks of life participate in the programme. A guard is offered to Chhari Mubarak at the gate of Akhara. Thousands of devotees and sadhus accompany the procession which leads towards Budha Amarnath. While on way to Mandi from Poonch a number of stalls are being erected for welcoming the Chhari Mubarak, free langar and eatables are provided to yatries. After reaching Budha Amarnath Ji, the Chhari Mubarak is taken to the main shrine in between the traditional rituals followed by the Aarti of Lord Shiva.

#### **Ancient Ramkund Temple**

Located 4 km towards north west of Mendhar town there is an ancient temple famous with name Ram Kund temple. It is beautiful temple with three springs namely Ramkund, Sitakund and Lakshman kund. People take bath there on first bright half of chaitra.

#### **Shri Dashnami Akhara Mandir**

It is located in Poonch town. Swami Jawahar Giri Ji came to this place in the year 1760 AD and started his meditation. When the Raja of Poonch Rustam Khan came to know about him, he visited this place, he was impressed by the spiritual level of Swami Ji and attached land to this place. Swami Ji took Samadhi in the year 1787 AD. Thereafter many Swami Jis sat on this place.

#### **Gurudwara Nangali Sahib**

This famous Gurudwara is situated in the lap of a Picturesque hill and on the banks of Drungli Nallah about 7km from Poonch town. The Gurudwara was established by Thakur Bhai Mela Singh Ji in 1803

AD. Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Gurudwara Nangali Sahib in 1814 AD and was impressed very much. A gigantic function is held in the Gurudwara Sahib on the eve of Baisakhi every year in which people from all over participate.

#### **Other Areas of Interest**

1. Heritage Tourism: The region Rajouri Poonch have diverse kind of heritage wealth and if attention is paid to these heritage sites they can become potential source for tourist attraction. The important heritage buildings in this region are, Chingus Fort, Dhandidhar Fort, Poonch Fort, Moti Mahal Poonch, Baldev Mahal Poonch, Sheesh Mahal and Mangla Devi Fort in Rajouri.
2. Trekking Routes: Poonch is fascinating place for trekkers and nature lovers. From time immemorial pilgrims and the Europeans trekked over its hills to Kashmir due to lack of means of communication. Poonch is separated from Kashmir Valley by the gigantic Pirpanjal range whose highest peak, Tata Kuti is 15560 ft. and falls in Poonch. The alpine lakes viz. Sukhsar, Neelsar, Bhagsar, Katorasar, Kaldachnisar, and Nandansar are surrounded by glaciers and snow capped peaks look magnificent and enchanting for the trekkers. Some of the common dhoks of scenic beauty in Poonch are Girjan, Panjtari, Isanwali, Nainsukh, Dharamarg, Pirmarg, and Srimastan. The famous trekking routes are:
  - i. Poonch to Gulmarg Via Jamia Gali: Poonch-Gagrian-Sawjian-Barshinallah-Barnaramarg-Jamiamarg-Jamiagali (15000ft) – Gulmarg/Tangmarg.
  - ii. Poonch to Nandi Shool Via Loran – Sultanpathri.
  - iii. Poonch to Yusmarg (Kashmir) Via Nurpurgali and Kharagali: Poonch- Loran-Sultanpathri-Nurpurgali-Toshmaidan-Kundlan-Dood Ganga Bridge-Yus marg.
  - iv. Poonch to Tatakuti via Hill kaka and Dharmarg.
  - v. Poonch to Shpian via Pir ki Gali: Poonch-Behramgala-Chandimarh-Poshiana-Chatta Pani-Peer gali (11500ft) –Aliabad Sarai-Heerpur-Shopian.
  - vi. Poonch to Gumarg via Chorgali: Poonch-Sawjian-GaliMaidan-Mangiana-Sari-Chorgali-Gulmarg.

#### **Recommendations**

After studying and analyzing the historical perspective of mughal road and its importance in the promotion of economy of Rajouri Poonch region especially in promotion of tourism following recommendations can be made:

1. The heritage buildings in the twin districts of Rajouri Poonch and also along the mughal road need to be developed and preserved jointly by Archeological Survey of India and Tourism department.
2. There is a need to maintain and preserve mughal Architecture along mughal road.
3. There is a need to promote local tourism by involvement of Tourism department and tourism professionals.

4. Awareness programmes like road shows, Fairs and literary programmes may support promotion of tourism in the area.
5. Construction of Tunnel from Chhata Pani to Jajnar will make mughal road all weather.
6. The famous poonch fort is still in pitiable condition despite spending few crore there is no visible renovation, so fort development body needs to be constituted to monitor the progress of work and proper utilization of funds.
7. In Rajouri Poonch there is no single museum, so the poonch fort and chingus sarai can be used for developing museums which would add to the promotion of tourism.

#### **Conclusion**

The opening of Historic Mughal road is all set to revolutionize the socioeconomic fabric of twin border districts of Rajouri –Poonch in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, as this road has opened fresh travel prospects, throwing open choice of markets between Jammu or Srinagar for the people of this region, who otherwise had Jammu as the only option for business due to lack of connectivity with Kashmir. The districts of Rajouri Poonch are blessed with immense tourism potential which has not been properly explored. The Mughal road has created appropriate conditions to identify, improve and promote pilgrimage, pilgrimage and heritage tourism. This region has the potential to become tourism hub of northern India. The heritage places and monuments in the region are associated with historical events and are present in such areas where other types of tourism like adventure and leisure tourism can be developed. The professionals may be involved along with the help of local people to provide the inputs for policy making in this regard and proper implementation. The tourists who visit Ladakh and Kashmir need to be diverted to Poonch and Rajouri on their way back. Proper arrangement for business

relations with Jammu as well as Kashmir need to be established. So all this will lead to generation of revenue and create employment opportunities.

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