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**POTENTIAL OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR TOURISM: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUGHAL ROAD AREA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir has colossal potential from tourism point of view for regional, national and international tourists. There are number of locations which are untapped and can be developed as a major tourist destination, having all the natural as well as the cultural resources and historical importance for attracting tourists. During the ancient times, the Mughal Road was abuzz with traffic of the caravans of Mughal Emperors and their armies to keep control of Kashmir. It was used for travel to the Kashmir valley for administration and hence named – (Mughal Road). The Mughal road area has a rich cultural heritage and geographical diversity to attract tourists in the state, like other tourist destinations i.e. Phalgam, Gulmarg, Sunnamarg, Dal Lake etc. which attracts a large number of tourists both domestic and international. Keeping in view the chronic public demand the construction of the Mughal Road will boost commercial avenues in the backward districts of Shopian, Poonch and Rajouri, exploit the tourism potential of the study area and improve the economic conditions and life style of the people. This research paper is mainly based on the secondary data to draw attention towards this new explored potential tourist area. In this research paper an attempt has been made to highlight the tourism potential of Mughal Road followed with some suitable suggestions based on the research findings for the sustainable development of tourist potential area of Mughal Road.*

**KEYWORDS**

heritage, mughal road, potential, untapped.

**INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a speedily growing industry around the globe. In the new millennium, the human residents of the mother earth would have a ravenous urge for travelling and undertaking tours of various types. People want to visit unknown places, interact with new races and have experiences, which were hitherto out of their reach. Travelling and exploring the world is a natural tendency of all human beings. Negi, Singh, Joginder. (2007), brings together in some detail that promoting tourism in rural areas can pave the way of rural development. Since infrastructure development in these areas will boost their economic activities; because virgin land or less known explored areas have been attracting curious tourists these days. Choi & Sirakaya. (2005), the success of tourism depends on the active support of the local population, without which the sustainability of the industry is threatened. Residents should be the focal point of the tourism decision making process. As we know that tourism industry is a service based industry and many players/stakeholders play/contribute their roles/parts to complete the whole process of tourism development at a destination into a successful process. Tanja, Ranjit. (2006), that provides a comprehensive view of the issues involved in destination management. Ahmad, Iqbal, (2005), (2007), his studies have made an attempt to trace, Kashmir- the land of different cultures, identical monuments, roofed shrines, temples, historical monuments, archaeological sites, festivals, wazwaan and magnificent handicrafts has a very rich potential for boosting the states tourist industry.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To highlight the potential of Mughal Road from tourism point of view.
2. The route besides bringing the people of hilly regions, closer to the valley has offer to travelers in terms of built as well as natural heritage.
3. Mughal Road has the enormous potential for tourism development, has not been fully and judiciously exploited.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the present research paper both secondary and primary sources of data formed the crux of the study. However, secondary data has been used to a large extent. Secondary data will be collected from various magazines, journals, research papers, newspaper's (especially J & K's Daily English newspaper-Greater Kashmir and Excelsior) and tourism literature published by various governmental and non-governmental organizations. The primary data will be gathered through personal interviews/discussions with concerned authorities, experts, tourism entrepreneurs, service providers and especially field trips to various potential tourist places of Mughal Road.

**TOURISM RESOURCE POTENTIAL OF MUGHAL ROAD**

The road was historically used by Mughal emperors to travel and conquer Kashmir during the sixteenth century. It was the route used by Akbar the Great to conquer Kashmir in 1586, and his son Emperor Jahangir died while returning from Kashmir on this road near Rajouri. The road originated in Jhelum town of Punjab province (now in Pakistan) and then touched Kotli (in Pakistan Occupied-Kashmir), Thanamandi (Rajouri District) and finally Chandimarh located in Pir Panjal mountains and one branch crossed over to Shopian via Hurpora. Mughal Road is the road between Bafliaz, a town in the Poonch district, to Shopian district in the Kashmir valley. The road is 84 km long, and situated in Jammu and Kashmir. It passes over Pir Panjal Mountain range; at altitude of 11,500 ft (3505m) that is higher than Banihal pass 9,291 ft (2832m). The road brings the Poonch and Rajouri district closer to Srinagar. The distance between Srinagar and Poonch will be reduced from 588 km to 126 km. It makes for alternate route to Kashmir valley from the rest of India, other than over-crowded Jammu-Srinagar Highway through Jawahar Tunnel (Banihal Tunnel-National Highway 1A). It passes through a wild life sanctuary characterized with young folded mountains, deep gorges, waterfalls, scenic beauty and alpine pastures; the Mughal road area provides great opportunities for the domestic and international tourists. The road passes through Buffliaz, Behramgalla, Chandimarh, Poshana, Chattapani, Peer Ki Gali, Aliabad, Zaznar, Dubjan, Heerpora and Shopian. The Mughal Road area is 56.8 Km from Srinagar International Airport via Pulwama and 186.3 Km from Jammu Airport via Rajouri. The various enroute tourist places of Mughal Road area:

**SHOPIAN**

A town of some magnitude on the south-west side of the valley of Kashmir. It is situated on the right bank of the Rembiara, a wide but shallow stream, and lies 46.67 km (29 miles) south of Srinagar, on the high road which crosses the Pir Panjal pass. Shopian (now district) gives its name to one of the three zillahs in the Miraj division of Kashmir, and is the tehsil station of the Batu pargana, within which it is situated; it was called Shahrah, or the king's highway, in the time of the Moghuls. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. Horticulture, especially in Shopian, has developed into a very profitable industry. The Shopian is famous for best quality of apple in Jammu and Kashmir. The apple orchards present a glamorous look and healthy climate to tourists. The area is also surrounded by Lanthour, Sedow, and Hirpore etc. become great tourist pillar.

**JAMIA MASJID SHOPIAN**

The mosque is said to have been built during the Mughal period. Shopian was an important stop over on the Mughal road across the Pir Panjal used by the Mughal to visit Kashmir. The Jamia Masjid in Shopian is one of the famous historical monuments built during the Mughal reign resembling that of Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. This historical and religious place, visited by thousands of peace lovers are one of the star attractions of the Mughal Road.



**RAMBIARA**

The Rambiarā is the widest and a turbulent left bank tributary of river Jhelum, named as Ramanyatavi by Kalhana, the stream emerges from the Rupri ridge of the Pir Panjal with its main feeders originating from Rupri Peak and Bhagsar Lake on the one hand and the Pri-Panjal and Naba Pir Passes on the other (Stein 1899). The Rambiarā passes through many villages of which Hirpore and Shopian is very famous. It collects water from many mountain streams, glaciers, small lakes and springs. Both the bank sides of the tributary are full of forests and apple orchards. There are various places on the bank sides of the Rambiarā tributary i.e. Maharani-tcham, Helipad and Deopora etc. which have lot of tourism potential if the promotion is done on the strategic manner. Maharani-tcham can be exploited for the purpose of mountaineering. Helipad owes a quality of cold breeze while as Deopora is a nice spot for trekking experiences.

**HURPORA**

About 12 km from Shopian Hurpura commands a beautiful scenic view. Hurpur is a beautiful small town. It is about 65 km away from Srinagar. Although these days this village is famous for its tasty potato production, there was a time when Hurpur's fame and glory had spread throughout the Mughal Empire. Mughal emperors Akbar, Shah Jehan, Jahangir, Aurangzeb, Farukhsiyar and Dara Shikoh used to stay in this village during their visits to the valley. Mughals also built a glorious inn at Hurpura, which remained in a good condition for a long period after them. Travelers used to take rest in this inn. The standing ruins of the inn are still seen in the upper part of the village. History records that Sura Varman one of the most famous ministers of Avantivarman who credited with many glorious foundations, also built a small town at the then known Salt route on the foothills of Panchal and named it as Surapura. The town happened to be the last station on the route from valley side, so the minister is recorded to have also raised a heavy watch tower at this town Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin is learnt to have brought many labourers from Banbergali Rajouri in his period and established their colony at Surapura. He is said to have named the town as "diamond city" why Hurpura was also known as diamond city is not known yet. There are also no records of any diamond to have been found at the site. Besides changing the name of the town, the king is also known to have built a gateway at Hurpura and dedicated it in the name of Allah by naming it as "Illahi-Darwaza." During the Mughal period Hurpura emerged as a major town which welcomed the royal caravans to this glorious valley. It also served as the base camp for the travelers on the Pir Panchal route. Its significance continued up to the Dogra period or till the construction of Jhelum valley route. Hirpore is unique in scenic and climatic beauty and also get a taste of intellectual nature, i.e. more interested in its heritage beauty. The Hirpore is fully decorated with forests, apple orchards and glorious heritage properties attracted tourists of different tastes.

**HIRPORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

(33°30'-33°42'N Latitude and 74°33'-74°43'E Longitude) falls in the Shopian District of the Kashmir Valley and is one of the only two protected areas in Jammu and Kashmir, where you can get to see the largest wild goat of the world-the Markhor (Capra falconeri). Besides, the sanctuary is home to around 20 other species of mammals and 125 species of birds, which have been found in and around Hirpore Wildlife Sanctuary based on the information available as a result of periodic surveys and bird watching trips over last 10 years. Hirpore wildlife sanctuary has a unique geographical identity, climate, vegetation etc. and may delights to offer to the wildlife enthusiasts and bird watchers.

**DABJIN**

An encamping ground on the Pir Panjal route, between Aliabad Sarai and Hirpur; it lies on the left bank of the Rembiara, about 3 miles west of Hirpur. There is no village or any shelter near it, and neither coolies nor supplies are procurable. The Dabjin is another famous health resort on road side of Mughal Road. The potential spot gives pleasant charming with vast hilly area include with lush green forest. In the centre of the spot there is a small spring where local people coming for bathing who have many diseases such as itching, scabies etc. Dabjin is a famous health resort and rich in medical tourism attracts large number of local tourists from time immemorial.

**SUKHA SARIA**

Above the village Hurpura the Mughal Route would cross the Sukha Nallah and takes left bank of this stream, crossing over the Panchal valley the route would take you to Dubijan. Where from it would pass from the zigzag paths of Panchal Mountain. The inn is situated at the bank of this Nallah called Sukha Saria. The history regarding this inn reminds us of Afghan period, it was super imposed over a Mughal construction by an Afghan administrator, when the later ruled Kashmir. This Saria is an open meadow and gives a glorious look to the travelers. This Sarai has also followed the same plan and style which the other Sarais of the route exhibit. The remains of an old inn, known as Sukha-Sarai (inn) offers tourists a serene picturesque to explorers, researchers etc to a large extent.

**ALIABAD SARAI**

A halting place to the north of the pir panjal pass. The Sarai, which offers accommodation to the travelers, stands alone in wild and dreary solitude, and during the wintry portion of the year is buried in snow and unvisited. It is situated about half-way up the side of a lofty range of mountains, which forms one side of a long, deep, and narrow valley, traversed by a torrent which flows from the Nandan Sar. Aliabad Sarai is situated on the left bank of Nallah Panchal below the feet's of Ratinpeer Mountain. The records suggest that earlier the Sarai was built by Mughal emperor Jalal-ud-Din Mohammad Akbar. He had built it for the conveyance of the travelers who used to arrive to Kashmir via Pir Panchal route. However, records further suggest that the Sarai was later on restored by another king Shahjahan who named it after his faithful governor Ali Mardan Khan; as such the Sarai came to be known as Aliabad Sarai. This inn stood at a place where the day's journey usually ended and a traveler spend his night at this Sarai during the Mughal period. The monumental heritage site presents glamorous look of Mughal architectural style may attract large number of tourists.

**PIR PANJAL**

A pass lying over the Panjal range, which is crossed by the old Mughal road between Poshiana and Aliabad Sarai. Europeans, however, frequently use the name to denote the whole chain of mountains enclosing the valley of Kashmir on the south-west side. The highest peaks in this part of the range exceed 15,000 feet, and their summits are generally covered with snow. The summit of the Pir Panjal pass, which has an elevation of 11,400 feet, is distant about 6 miles east of Poshiana and 5 miles south-west of Aliabad Sarai. The ascent of the pass on the west side, although steep, is tolerably smooth and wide; on the east side it lies over a sloping grassy plain, about half a mile wide; on the west side of the pass there are two stone huts, called Chedikana and Rasikund, built in the time of the Mughals as refuges for travelers during storms, and an octagonal stone tower, loop-holed on all sides, crowns the summit. Near this tower are some huts, one of which is occupied by a fakir during the summer months, and hard by is the grave of a Mohamedan fakir, named Pir Panjal, from whom the pass takes its name. The Pir Panjal pass is closed for about three and a half months, and opens for foot passengers about the middle of April, and if the weather be fine for horses, about a month later. The highest peak of the Mughal Road area covered with snow during most of the months of the year, making it exhilarative to the tourists.

**PEER GALI**

Mughal route drives through a vast sloping meadow called daldal lower and upper daldal and takes on the top of Pir Panjal, called peergali. From here we can enjoy and see Poonch area. Peergali serves as an entrance gate. It carries the holy shrine of Sheikh Karam Sahib (RA). The shrine houses the grave of sofi saint, who is said, was a born Hindu and embraced Islam at the hands of a Sayyid. The Urs at this Zairat is celebrated every year in harvest season and participants include the people of far-flung areas of Poonch District. At peergali, Mughal route takes a sloping turn. The vast spread meadows and pastures and the holy shrine attracts visitors of both peace lovers and nature lovers.

**CHITTA PANI**

A stream which rises on the western slopes of the Pansal range, at the foot of the pass of that name, north-west of Aliabad Sarai; after its junction with the Nuricham stream near the village of Bifliage, the united waters form the Suran river, which flows in a north-westerly direction towards Punch. The bed of this stream is very stony; after heavy rain it becomes an impetuous torrent. Between Baramgalla and Poshiana the road into Kashmir by the Pir Panjal route runs along the bed of the stream, which here lies between lofty and precipitous mountains. The panorama of the Chitta Pani stream is very famous in the Mughal Road area is a unique tourist magnet.

**POSHIANA**

A village situated about 48.28 km (30 miles) north-east of Rajouri, on the west side of the Pir Panjal pass; it lies on the side of a narrow glen high above the right bank of the Chitta Pani stream. The village lies considerably beneath the limit of forest, but there are very few trees near it. The green slope on the side of which it is built, and whose summit is 700 or 800 feet above it, affords a pasturage for sheep and goats; but the extend of cultivation is nearly confined to turnips; and

poshiana owes its existence entirely to its situation on the highway to Kashmir, on which, or on the plains, it is dependent for supplies of grain. There is an old and ruined Sarai a little above the left of the road, and within a few hundred yards of the village. Poshiana is deserted by its inhabitants during the winter months, when it is enveloped in snow. This village does not afford much accommodation for the traveler, there are some usual pitch tents on the flat roofs of the houses and some cottages built of wood and plaster and negligible percentage of packa houses. Some space might perhaps be found above the west side of the village. In summer, supplies are procurable and rich grass is plentiful, but water is scarce. From Poshiana two paths lead over the Pansal range into Kashmir, viz., the high road which crosses the Pir Panjal pass, and a foot-path by the Chitta Pani pass; this later route is impracticable for laden animals. Poshiana has a huge potential for rural tourism i.e. culture, traditional, lifestyle, cuisine etc. will attract the large number of tourists who wants to taste the rural life.

#### **GIRGAN DHOK**

It is bewitching valley of seven lakes- Sukhsar, Neelsar, Bhagsar, Katorasar, Kaldachnisar and Nandansar is a worth visiting site for its exceptional natural beauty. This valley is located about 70 kms from Poonch town. This area is also important from trekking point of view. Neel Sar, Nandan Sar, Katora Sar are among the fascinating high altitude lakes. Several trekking expeditions used to come in this valley and trek to these lakes. Its scenic beauty and serene lakes lured tourists from all parts of the globe.

#### **NOORI CHAMB**

The delightful site near Behram Galla is famous for its beautiful waterfall and splendid beauty. A famous water fall in the Poonch District (Mughal road) also connected with the Mughal Emperors is located in the north east of Behram Galla. This water fall is another scenic spot which has tremendous tourist potential. The fall of the stream gives rise to dense clouds of water vapours which engulfs the area and spread all over. It is claimed that in the past there used to be a 90 metre fall from the elevated mound. With the passage of time the stream cut into the rock and the mound and the height of the fall became much shorter. It is said that Noor Jehan, the queen of Jahangir used to stay here and take bath in the waters of the fall, while on the way to Kashmir. She had a mirror besides the fall to have her make-up after the bath. So, besides several tourist spots the mention of Noori-Chamb is very important. It is basically a brilliant water-fall where Noor Jehan, the wife of Emperor Jahangir learnt to have built a Sheesh-Mahal for herself; however, no remains of any such mahal (palace) are visible at the site, except for the impressions of a mirror on a standing rock. It has been the most loving place of this queen as such it is named after her name and called the Noori Chamb. Historians believe that Jahangir stayed there for at least 13 times. The delightful and beautiful water fall warrants exploitation from a tourist's point of view.

#### **BUFFLIAZ**

From chandi marh the route leads to Buffliaz, another beautiful hilly spot situated on the foothill of Peer Rattan range, 39 kms east of Poonch town. It is picturesque situated on the side of the hill, about 400 feet above the right bank of the Suran River. A legend states that it was here that the Alexander the great lost his white colour horse called Bafill. The place adopted the name and got pronounced as Buffliaz and crosses over to Dera Gali Pass and then slopes down to Thanamandi. The beautiful hill spot as a powerful magnet for tourists.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The present study has found some issues responsible for the tardy growth of tourist attraction in the area. These are listed as under:

#### **CONSERVATIONISTS APPROACH**

The road is being constructed through an eco-sensitive zone. Conservationists believe that Mughal road will fragment the habitat of the highly-endangered Markhor goat. Road construction activity in itself would result in cutting of many trees, which in turn would have a cascading effect on the associated biota. Besides, traffic on the road may cause death of many animals that utilize verge habitats or try to cross the road.

#### **HERITAGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION CONCERN**

Most of the monuments located on this route are still unpreserved and unprotected, while few of which been declared as protected ones, are yet get any basic conservation infrastructure. The construction of the route is very important but preserving its historical identity is more important. There are certain people who fear that the construction of this route may disturb the history of this route and damage its monumental glory.

#### **LACK OF VISITORS AMENITIES AND SERVICES**

Visitor amenities and services exist both on-site as well as offsite. On site amenities and services include: Drinking water, Toilets, Public telephones, Postal services, Emergency medical services, and Garbage removal and disposal. Off-site amenities include: Accommodation of various kinds, Restaurants, Retail activities, Services such as car repair, email, Recreational facilities, Entertainment possibilities, Health-care, etc.

#### **NO SEPARATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

The half of the area comes under the Poonch district and the another half under the Shopian district, the division of the area may have hindered the growth of providing the co-operation and co-ordination for the promotion of Mughal road tourism.

#### **POOR PUBLICITY**

Lack of publicity is another factor which may be responsible for the growth of tourism in Mughal Road area. Mughal road introduces a new tourist destination to complete the product line, but the publicity of this destination shall not get coverage in any travel and hospitality related newsletters, magazines or journals.

#### **LACK OF MARKET COMPETITION**

Exploration of Mughal road tourist area is becoming a new entrant in tourism, so it has a cut throat competition with other tourist destinations within the state and outside the state to attract large number of tourists both domestic and international.

#### **ABSENCE OF MUGHAL ROAD ON THE TOURIST MAP**

Although the rich treasures scattered throughout the Mughal road area has not been brought on the tourist map of the state. The location on the tourist map itself becomes an attraction to both domestic and foreign tourists.

#### **IGNORANCE OF THE PEOPLE**

The Mughal Road as an alternative highway linking Kashmir to Jammu saving people from disgusting halts and unending waits when slight drizzles result in erosions and landslides on various places enroute the present National highway. The road will benefit the specific areas i.e. Rajouri, Poonch and Shopian which remained cut of direct contact with valley for last 57 years. Mughal route is merely a surface communication.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

In the present research paper some of the scholarly suggestions which may go a long way in making tourism in Mughal Road area economically viable, socially acceptable and ecologically sustainable are as follows:

#### **Preservation of Environment**

Only after the thorough study of environmental impact of tourism projects will be permitted in ecologically sensitive zones of Mughal Road. Additional responsibility will be fixed on investors to ensure that norms in regards to disposal of solid waste, Sewerage and silage, plantation of trees, drawing of ground water and observing architectural guidelines are adhered to. While clearing projects it will be ensured that more greenery is provided in the selected areas without hampering traditional assets of the local population.

#### **Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Sites**

The various tourist spots scattered all along this historic highway awaits the attention of the concerned authorities. Several of the constructions have preserved their courtyards and other ornamentation's and few while losing their structural form have carried only their ruins. The steps are needed to be taken up for the immediate restoration of the heritage sites of this historic route.

#### **Arrange for Adequate Accommodation**

The tourists visiting the state of J&K is not asking five star hotels. What they are asking a place which is homely. The concerned tourism authority in the area should identify service providers, get the house holders registered in Mughal road area i.e. in enroute villages who would be owners of one, two or even three bed rooms

and convert them into living 'modules'. Construction of Huts, Rest-houses, setting of Tourist Village and Camping Sites etc. is a welcome step to provide adequate accommodation in the area and is eco-friendly, just as Department of Forest done in Sukh Sarai area and Top peer Ki Gali.

#### **Publicity and Information**

The State Government should make separate Tourism Development Authority for the Promotion of Mughal Road Tourism. That will be provided sufficient funds by the Government to bring out informative Brochures, films, slides, maps, etc. The authority will also open information counters at important places i.e. Railway station Jammu, Srinagar, Srinagar International Airport and places of tourist interest in phases.

#### **Mughal Road on the Tourist Map**

For commoners it is merely a base route and unfortunately till it is not in the checklist of tourist itinerary, so it hindered the growth and development of tourism in the area. Therefore, special attention shall deal towards the concerned destination on the basis of priority being on the checklist of tourism document.

#### **Public participation**

A mass awareness programme about the benefits of tourism will be launched by the State Government. In addition, local groups will be encouraged to act as information disseminating agencies in hilly areas of Mughal road and to help in spreading localized tourism. Similarly, Gram Panchayats and the local people will be asked to provide suitable hoardings, literature, information and guide services at the site.

#### **Development of a New Tourist Centre**

Tourism at present in Jammu and Kashmir is concentrated only in a few traditional centers visibly Phalgam, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Dal Lake etc. These centres have had their due share of development and therefore, the entire tourist traffic has been flocking to these few centres. To develop untapped tourist potential of Mughal road area as a new tourist centre with a careful consideration of special features of the area and its available infrastructure in order to maintain a sustained growth of traffic.

#### **Adventure Tourism**

The Mughal road has huge adventure tourism potential. There is a need for creating facilities for adventure tourism in the Mughal road area, which are economical and well within the reach of all classes of tourists. There is a need for establishing trekking routes and to identify places for water sports. The areas of mountaineering, wild-life and winter sports need to be clearly identified.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mughal Road area has enormous resource potential for tourism. Its colourful history, rich heritage, variegated landscape, diverse ethnic stock, lush green forests, variable wildlife, snow-covered peaks, giant glaciers, high altitudes, adventure treks, perennial streams, gushing springs, invigorating climate, pollution free rural surroundings and strategic location provide everything that a tourist may look for to pass his holidays. The enormous evergreen, deciduous vegetation and alpine pastures enhance the beauty of the the area and they provide the basic raw materials for a healthy tourist industry. Instead of all these attractions, the lack of infrastructure slows down the pace of Mughal Road tourism development. The growth and development of any industry be it service or manufacturing, to a large extent is linked with government policies, cooperation and monitoring. The state government of Jammu and Kashmir is trying its best to explore the tourism resource potential of Mughal road. But without the support of major actors like locals, service providers, training centres, educational centres, NGO's of the region it will be difficult to bring this aim to the grounds of reality.

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