THE PARADISE UNSEEN

An Appraisal of Potential for Ecotourism in Poonch-Rajouri Region

MUJAHID UL ISLAM

PROMOTED BY
ASSOCIATION FOR INNOVATION, INDIA

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Mujahid Ul Islam

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Dedicated To My Father

Late Mr. Farman Ali

(A man for whom Education was the Summum Bonum of life)

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Preface

Tourism is one the fastest growing industries of the world. Being one of the largest industries it has enormous potential for the generation of employment. It is an industry whose development is always accompanied with the development of many other allied industries. Hence development of tourism implies development of economy. But one must not ignore the tourist effect on ecology and environment. However Ecotourism is the solution to this problem. Ecotourism implies conservation, preservation and development. It is thus sustainable tourism.

Poonch and Rajouri are the two districts in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is often called as "Paradise on earth" in India. But there exists a world of difference in the levels of development of Tourism between the state and this region as in Economic development.

The region is endowed with natural, historical, religious and cultural sources for Ecotourism. Its natural scenery, lingual, cultural and religious multitude with unique historical heritage provides enormous prospects for Ecotourists.

The region is full of eye catching mountain peaks covered with snow during winters, meandering rivers, lakes and streams having crystal clear waters. Flora and Fauna further ads to its beauty. Its architectural sophistication and cultural mosaic speaks of its unique and rich history and Culture.

The present book has been contains four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the Introduction and conceptual frame work of Tourism and Ecotourism, different classifications of the tourism and factors controlling tourism in the region. Besides it also throws light on the relationship between socio economic development and Tourism. Second chapter deals with the exploration of Sources for ecotourism in Poonch District. Third chapter is devoted at

exploration of Sources of Ecotourism in Rajouri District. In Chapter four various problems that put a check on the development of Ecotourism in the region have been pointed out. And in the end certain suggestions have been made to overcome these problems.

The study has been carried out to present the Rajouri-Poonch region as one of the finest Ecotourism destinations of India, by using every possible research method.

This book intends to provide Research Scholars and Policy Planners with a well rounded understanding of wide range of issues concerning tourism, especially in the Poonch Rajouri Region.

Mujahid Ul Islam

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Date: 22-01-2014 Mujahid Ul Islam

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Chapter 1

Ecotourism, Infrastructure and Economy- A Theoretical Framework

❖ Tourism

The terms, 'Tourist' and 'Tourism' were first used in 1937 by the League of Nations. Tourism may be defined as the travelling for recreation, relaxation, enjoyment, or leisure to the places one does not belong to or work at.

World Tourism Organisation defines tourists as the people who, "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited".[1]

Hunziker and krapf,(1941) defined Tourism as, "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arriving for the travel and stay of non residents, insofar as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity".[1]

Tourism Society of England (1976) defines tourism as "the temporary short term movement of people to destinations, outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination".[1]

Tourism thus may also be defined as the temporary movement of people, to the far flung places, sometimes to the unseen places, to explore the natural landscape, to adventure, to see magnificent edifices and different social spaces, to see unique and different art and craft works, to learn about new languages, religions, beliefs and different life styles, to witness different cultures and traditions. A tourist may travel for many purposes like, Health and

medical, Sports, leisure and recreation, recreation and fun, education and learning etc. (self made)

- **Categorization of Tourism**

1. **Categorization according to United Nations**

United Nations classified tourism into three categories in its Recommendations on tourism statistics on the basis of place of residence of tourists. These are:

i. **Domestic Tourism**

Domestic tourism is the kind of tourism "which involves residents of a given country travelling only within this country".

ii. **Inbound Tourism**

Inbound Tourism is that kind of tourism that involves the "non residents travelling in the given country".

iii. **Outbound Tourism**

Outbound Tourism is the form of tourism that involves "residents travelling in another country".

United Nations hence further categorised tourism into by combining the above three categories:

i. **Internal Tourism** which comprises domestic and Inbound Tourism.

ii. **National Tourism** which comprises domestic and Outbound Tourism.

iii. **International Tourism** which comprises Inbound and Outbound Tourism.(tourism Geography, Mehtani and Sinha)

2. **McIntosh's Categorization**

McIntosh's categorization is based upon travel motivations. According to him the basic travel motivators can be broadly categorized under following four heads:

i. Physical Motivators

Physical motivators are essentially concerned with the physical and mental health conditions of the prospective travellers with a characteristic feature in the sense that these assist release of anxiety and nervous tension through bodily activities. Such motivators are associated with a person's bodily, mental, rest and relaxation and sporting activities. These include Leisure, recreation and entertainment; rest and relaxation; sports participation; use of health spas and curative baths.

ii. Cultural Motivators

Cultural Motivators include curiosity to learn about the different people, places and their products; their languages and life styles; their fairs and festivals; their arts and crafts; their beliefs and faiths and so on. Here cultures and traditions of different places act as chief attractions.

iii. Interpersonal Motivators

Interpersonal Motivators include potential traveller's socio cultural and ethnic ties with the people and places of tourist destinations. Or it might simply be a will of the potential visitor to flee the routine life.

iv. Status cum Prestige Motivators

These include an individual's personal interest for recognition, pleasure, prestige or some other motives. It might also be related to one's desire for knowledge, business etc.

3. Robinson's Categorization

In the opinion of Robinson people travel mainly for following purposes:

i. Relaxation and Refreshment of Body and Mind

A traveller travels for escaping the routine work and routine life. It is the consequence of modern day hectic life, which has been induced by the rapid growing industries, urban centres, work load, pollution etc. The basic aim of the travellers here is thus to relax the mind and body.

ii. Health

Health is another factor that motivates a traveller. People travel to Health Resorts, watering places etc for purely medical purposes.

iii. Pleasure

The motivation for fulfilling a person's need for pleasure, high-quality leisure time and fervour is "perhaps the most predominant of all individual travel motivations" according to Robinson.

iv. Curiosity and Culture

People are fascinated by the diversity of socio cultural life of other places. To know different people, their cultures, traditions and life styles is an important motivator for a potential traveller. That has rather given an impetus to the Cultural Tourism.

v. Interpersonal Reasons

The category of interpersonal motivators includes the desire of people to be with the people of other places who are ethnically or culturally related to them. People might also be motivated by the desire to have new friends and alliances etc.

vi. Spiritual Purposes

People, throughout the world, travel to different shrines, mosques, temples and other sacred places for spiritual purposes. It is thus motivated by one's spiritual conscience.

vii. Professional or Business Purposes

Similarly Business is another motivator according to Robinson. Professionals and businessmen travel to strengthen the contacts and interactions.(Basics of Tourism Kamra and Chand)

To simplify it further we may categorise Tourism on the basis of place of residence of the travellers into:

a. Local Tourism

Local Tourism may be defined as the temporary movement of people to the tourist destinations which are found in their own locality or district.

b. Regional Tourism

Regional Tourism may be defined as the temporary movement of people to the tourist spots found within a well defined and larger natural or administrative region or we may say a State. Inter District tourist fall in this category.

c. National Tourism

National Tourism may be defined as the the Inter State movement of travellers within a country.

d. International Tourism

Travelling to the destinations which are beyond the national borders of a country may be called as International Tourism.

i. Categorization on the basis of Tourist Activity/ Purpose

a. Pilgrimage tourism

Tourism that involves travelling to religious places for religious or spiritual purposes may be called as Pilgrimage Tourism. Muslims for example travel to Makka for Hajj.

b. Health and Medical Tourism

Health Tourism or Medical Tourism is the kind of tourism that involves travelling to other places primarily for Health reasons.

c. Sports and Adventure Tourism

Sports Tourism involves travelling to the tourist destinations for playing various games for example skiing, river rafting etc. Similarly adventures people are always interested in risky activities like mountaineering, hiking etc.

d. Winter Tourism

Winter Tourism as the term indicates is travelling in winter seasons to the places where winter sports like ice hockey, golf etc are being played.

e. Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism involves visiting to the ancient monuments for educational and recreational purposes.

f. Pleasure and recreation

People travel during holidays, excursions and picnics to take a break from routine life for recreation and pleasure. Such journeys and trips may be termed as Pleasure and Recreation Tourism.

g. Edu tourism

Edu Tourism may be defined as the tourism that planned for educational purposes only. Different Educational Institutions arrange trips to both nearby and far off places for the sole purpose of Education. These trips are in fact part of their syllabus.

h. Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism involves interaction with and learning about villagers and village life, rural art and craft, rural cultures and traditions, rural heritage and customs etc. It aims at both learning about and benefiting the rural people.

i. Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism involves travelling to different places and interacting with the different people, seeing their different products and cultures.

j. Nature Based Tourism

Nature Based Tourism is the tourism that involves visits to relatively undisturbed natural places to enjoy the flora and fauna.

❖ Ecotourism

The term ecotourism was coined by Hector Ceballos Lascurian in 1983. The term was initially used to describe the nature based travel with emphasis on education, management and development of sustainable tourism product and activity. World Tourism organisation defines Ecotourism as "the tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with specified objective of studying admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural aspects (both of past and present) found in these areas.[3]

Ecotourism is the sustainable development tourism which is developed on the ecotourism resources (such as ecological landscape, ecological environment, ecological culture, ecological technology, ecological industry, ecological products, etc.) for content, and based on ecological civilization.[4]

Ecotourism is one strategy for supporting conservation and providing income for communities in and around protected areas. It can contribute to economic development and conservation of protected areas by: a) generating revenues that can be used to sustainably manage protected areas, b) providing local employment and c) inculcating a sense of community ownership [5]

Thus Ecotourism may be defined as the ecological friendly tour and travelling to the unharmed natural environments, wherein understanding of environment and culture, their conservation and economic activity go hand in hand. It is thus a sustainable form of tourism.

❖ Potential Forms of Ecotourism in Poonch -Rajouri

1. Rural Tourism/Farm Tourism

Rural Tourism involves learning about rural landscape- both natural and social, interaction with villagers and village life, rural art and craft, rural cultures and traditions, rural heritage and customs etc. It aims at both learning about and benefiting the rural population.

2. Sight Seeing

Sightseeing is very common to the visitors. To view both Natural space and Social space from a view point is not new to the tourism.

3. Lake Tourism

Lake Tourism involves travelling to see the Water bodies especially lakes with the purpose of education, recreation and leisure etc.

4. Transhumance Activities

Transhumants are the people, mostly tribal people like Gujjars and Bakarwals who change their place of residence along with their animals with the change of seasons in search of food and fodder. This process is called Transhumance. Transhumance is perhaps one of the best examples of Symbiotic Relationship of Man and Nature. Travelling with the purpose of interaction with these people, observing their life styles, food habits etc is a fascinating and delightful activity for those who travel to learn and explore.

5. Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism involves travelling to different places and interacting with the different people, seeing their different products and cultures.

6. **Heritage Tourism**

Heritage Tourism involves visiting to the ancient monuments for educational and recreational purposes.

7. **Pilgrimage Tourism**

Tourism that involves travelling to religious places for religious or spiritual purposes may be called as Pilgrimage Tourism. Muslims for example travel to Makka for Hajj.

8. **Trekking Tourism**

Trekking involves travelling to the places so far unseen or undisturbed or which has not been traversed so far. These places generally include mountainous regions, deserts or other difficult trains which has been least touched by modern innovations.

9. **Health Tourism**

Health Tourism or Medical Tourism is the kind of tourism that involves travelling to other places primarily for Health reasons.

10. **Wild life Photography**

Wild life photography involves the photographing of wild plants and animals.

Ecotourism as an Alternative

Despite the fact that tourism is one of the fastest growing Industries of the world and is one of the greatest employment generator, but its speedy growth and spreading out is not free from certain ill effects. Growth in the tourism industry is accompanied by Pollution, depletion of natural resources, waste production, and damage to ecology and bionetwork. It thus triggers a plethora of environmental problems which may lead to climate change and global warming.

While on the one hand tourism and its growth cause environmental problems, it would also have an adverse impact on future tourism on the other hand. However Ecotourism is the only way out. It is a sustainable form of tourism. As defined by The World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA), ecotourism is the "environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features both- past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio economic involvement of local populations. Thus ecotourism aims at:

i. Preservation and Conservation of natural and cultural resources of both past and present.
ii. Providing employment and other economic opportunities to the local population.
iii. Leisure, relaxation and enjoyment without harming the nature and without meddling with the heritage.

The Ecotourism Society defines Ecotourism as the "purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment; taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem; producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to the local people"[1]. In other words ecotourism is that kind of tourism which upholds the ecological, socio cultural and economic integrity on the one hand and sustains the natural and built up environments on the other hand.

Heritage, Culture and Environment and Ecosystem preservation and conservation, livelihood opportunities and development, strengthening the local population and the poor and energy conservation, are all Ecotourism ask for. Ecotourism is thus more than just a mere travel and holiday making. It aims at sustaining socio cultural and ecological multiplicity. It seeks to amuse tourists with the methods which are least destructive to the ecosystem. It also seeks to

promote and sustain the indigenous local cultures, traditions and crafts where it functions. Therefore it asks for the accountability of both- the host and the visitor. Apart from this, Ecotourism also makes an effort to promote and maintain the range of native economies, for which the tourism linked revenue, is vital. By the inflow of capital, local population not only sustain themselves but can compete with bigger companies. The capital inflow may also be utilized in further development of tourism and allied activities like organisation of Awareness and skill development programmes required for running the industry sustainably and successfully.

Different forms of ecotourism like trekking, health tourism, sightseeing etc are nothing but an attempt at appreciating nature, culture etc and exploring the symbiotic ways to live on this planet with least destruction which perhaps no form of tourism is competent for.

❖ Tourism and Socio Economic Development: A Theoretical Framework

Tourism plays a vital role in the economy of a region. It is indeed one of the most important ingredients of socio economic development and infrastructural expansion. It is an important tool for regional development. It leads to the diversification of regional and local economy. It is thus an effective instrument for the development of undeveloped and underdeveloped regions. It gives an impetus to the growth of other industries as well. Necessity of tourism development as a tool of socio economic development and generation of employment in far-flung and less developed regions has now been acknowledged everywhere. Development of tourism is accompanied with development of other important activities and sectors of socio economic life like transport and communication, hotel, motel and lodging, bar and restaurants, education and skill development, handicrafts etc.

Tourism has become a significant part of India's economic development too. It constitutes around 9% of the total employment and around 6% of the GDP of the country. Jammu and Kashmir, also called as 'The Paradise on earth' has always been a tourist hub in India.

Poonch-Rajouri is a distinctive region in Jammu and Kashmir in respect of natural beauty, cultural heritage, religious and lingual multitude, agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts etc. Thus tourism has to play the most important role in the regional economic development.

- **Tourism infrastructure of the region**

1. **Connectivity and Mobility**

   Good transportation is a must for tourism development. It is the easy transportation which determines the mobility of tourists. Poonch Rajouri region has only road transportation. Private vehicles constitute the bulk of mobility.

2. **Accommodation**

   Potential tourist weighs the accommodation facilities before planning any trip or tour. Thus hotels, motels and lodges occupy an important place in tourism. The region has a number of beautiful and cheap hotels which are. All the towns have lodging facilities.

3. **Communication**

   Post offices, telephone, mobile and internet are the modern means of communication. These facilities are available even in the remotest corners of the region.

4. **Eating places and Bars**

   Generally, a tourist goes on a tour/picnic/excursion etc with the aim of relaxation and leisure. Thus availability of eating places and bars/wine shops is a necessity. In Rajouri-Poonch region there are many restaurants and bars available in towns.

5. **Way Stations and Wayside services**

Way stations are the places where travellers stop or halt while travelling from one tourist destination to the other. Huts can serve this purpose. Wayside services would involve the availability of amenities which we make use of in daily life, like drinking water, medicine, eatables etc.

Tourism is a significant characteristic feature of the developing realms through which they seek to maximize profits and earn foreign exchange thereby giving impetus to the economic growth. It is thus the key to socio economic development.

The significance of tourism as a factor of economic growth can well be realized by the fact that every year there is an enormous increase in the capital investment in this industry.

However less developed regions still don't have the benefit as much as the developed nations do. Hence they receive a small turn over as compared to their counterparts. We may conclude by saying that, for overall socio economic development tourism is not a matter of choice. It is indeed the integral part of Economy of a region.

Money spent by the tourists, finds its way into the pockets of local population. It thus increases purchasing power of the people, provides them livelihood opportunities and subsequently gives impetus to the overall economy of the region.

Tourism increases the demand of goods and services, which subsequently leads to increase in production sector thereby enhancing the national consumption and income. This increasing demand would accentuate the process of building hotels and motels, bars and restaurants, huts and other accommodation edifices. It may also lead to the construction of roads, railways, air ports and bridges, harnessing water and power sources enhancement of other services. Similarly the demand may also have a great impact on the production of local handicrafts and skill development leading to the establishment of various business centres run

by professionals and skilled workers. Thus the demand would eventually result into regional development and increased revenue.

To sum up we may say that tourism has a multidimensional impact on the local, regional and national economy as it brings in capital inflow along with skill development and business. Besides it promotes education, tolerance, cultural intermingling and universal brotherhood. It also is an effective instrument for preservation and conservation of environment, heritage, culture and historical monuments. [2]

❖ **Factors Controlling Ecotourism in Rajouri- Poonch Region**

Major Factors affecting (both positively and negatively) Ecotourism in the Region are:

a. Weather and Climate

Weather and Climate influence tourism in many ways. Pleasant weather attracts more visitors then the extreme climates except in the cases of extreme adventures. Weather and Climate control Transportation, Communication, travelling behaviour and many other aspects of Tourism to a great extent.

a. Transportation and Communication

Connectivity is one of the most important factors affecting the number of tourist arrivals at a place. It is the smooth functioning of an all weather transport system that attracts more visitors. Connectivity is a very essential element in tour planning.

b. Miscellaneous Tourism Infrastructure

We may include way stations and other way side amenities, labour, skilled workers like tourist guides, markets for selling local products, cable cars, motels, folk gatherings and

events etc in the category of miscellaneous tourism infrastructure. These things play an important role in the expansion of tourism activity.

c. Socio Political Stability

A potential tourist before planning a tour examines the area of destination not only in terms of natural, architectural and cultural beauty of the area but also the social set up, hospitality behaviour, and political stability. Disturbed areas, affected by violence, conflict and war zones attract less number of tourists as compared to the peaceful and stable regions.

d. Awareness and Expertise

Awareness of tourism ethics and benefits among masses is of prime significance. Technicians and Professionals for the management of tourism too are very important. It is they only who lead the tourism towards development and sustainability.

e. Advertisement

Advertisement is another pull factor for tourism. Electronic and Print Media are the important tools to let the potential visitors know about the uniqueness of different people, places and their products.

f. Amenities and Facilities

Basic amenities required for travelling include information, connectivity, communication, hospitality, accommodation, way stations etc .

g. Capital

Tourism development requires capital investment at a large scale. Thus capital investment is one of the important factors as it is a basic for any industry to flourish to sustain and flourish.

h. Ecotourism Sources

i. Natural Sources

Natural sources include natural landscape. It includes mountains and plains, valleys and hillocks, deserts, streams and rivers, ponds, lakes and waterfalls, forests and trekking routes, weather and climatic conditions and other physiographical features of a region.

ii. Historical Sources

Historical Sources required for ecotourism include the remnants, buildings and edifices of the antiquity. These include forts, palaces, war grounds, gardens, weapons, utensils, and the other sites and products which belong to the early human history.

iii. Cultural Sources

Religions and Belief Systems, languages and dialects, arts and crafts, dressing patterns and food habits, fairs and festivals, folk songs, unique cultures and traditions etc comprise the cultural sources of Ecotourism.

iv. Religious Sources

Shrines, Sacred Trees, Sacred Rivers and waterfalls, Statues, Idols, Temples, Mosques, Gurudwaras and other places of worship and faith provide the cultural sources for ecotourism.

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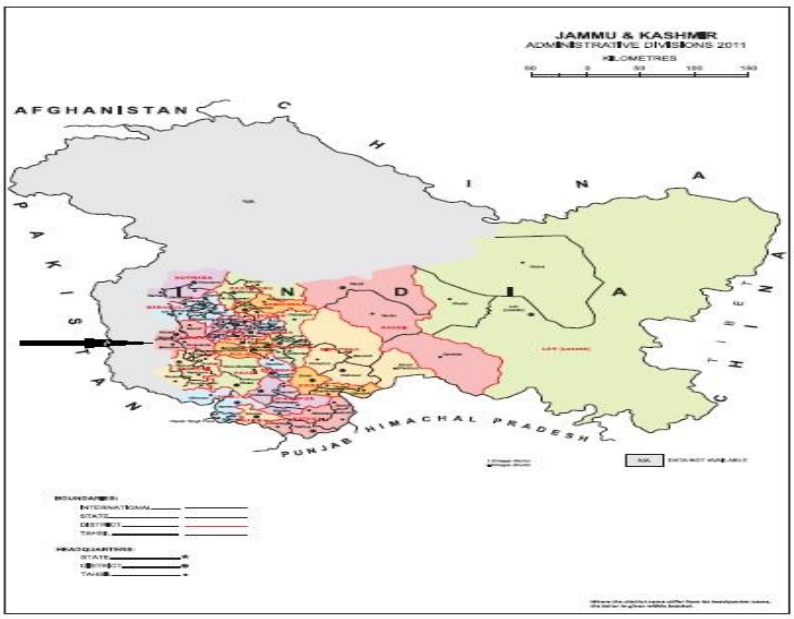
Chapter 2

Ecotourism Sources in Poonch

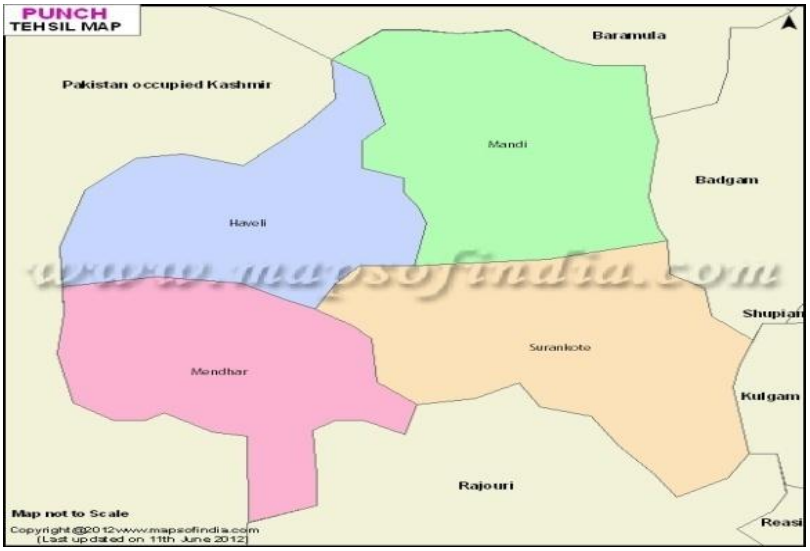
Introduction

Poonch is the south western district of Jammu and Kashmir. It shares its border with Pakistan Administered Poonch in the west, Kashmir valley in the north, and Rajouri in the south. It is stretches between 33°25' to 34º01' north latitudes and between 73°58' to 74º35' east longitudes[1.] Poonch has a population of 4, 76,820 and it is the 12th most populous district of Jammu and Kashmir. It constitutes 3.80 percent population of the total population of the State[2]. Number of rural households in the district are 55,602 and that of urban households are 4,246 from a total of 59,848. It covers an area of 2, 84,184 acres. And has 84,140 acres of land under forest.[3] It is a mountainous region with the exception of a very small number of low lying valleys. Its Sky touching mountain peaks covered with shining snow and luxuriant lush green forests, crystal clear streams and pleasing atmosphere in an enjoyable weather present an eye-catching landscape. District Poonch is popularly known as mini Kashmir.

Poonch is culturally quite diverse. People of almost all major religions reside in the district in peace and harmony. Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity are the major religions. They speak different languages like Urdu, Kashmiri, Gojri and Pahari. The only means of connectivity with other parts of the state is road. Poonch city is about 240 Km from Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir State. Generally it takes 7 to 8 hours to reach Poonch by public buses. The Private transport has also been developed and people prefer to use private vehicles like Tata Sumo, Tempos etc. It is connected with Srinagar (Kashmir) via Historical Mughal Road also via Jammu.



Source: Census of India, 2011



Source: mapsofindia.com

Route Map of Poonch

Source: www.poonch.nic.in

❖ **Natural Sources:**

Noori Chhamb

Noori Chhamb is a waterfall, near Behram Galla in Tehsil Surankote. It is at around a distance of 45kms from Poonch city on the right side of Mughal Road. Jahangir, the Mughal King, had developed so much love and fancy for this water fall that he named it Noori Chhamb after the name of his adored queen Noor Jahan. The queen used to stay here for leisure and to take a bath while on way to Kashmir. The remnants of the mirror, which was fixed for the queen beside the water fall, on a mountain wall are still there.

Nandishool

Nandishool is another beautiful water fall about 12 kms from the village Loran, in Tehsil Mandi. The water fall is about 150 feet high.

Dehra Ki Gali

Dehra Ki Gali, which is, located at a height of about 6300 feet above mean sea level is an important tourist attraction. It is 45 kms away from Poonch city. Its salubrious weather, lush green forests, and delightful view of mountain peaks along with beautiful nearby valleys are unparalleled.

Behramgala

Behramgala is a small tableland which is surrounded by mountains and forests and a small perennial stream is another tourist attraction. It is situated at a distance of 41kms from Poonch city on Mughal Road. It is located close to the confluence of Parnai & Tatta Pani streams and Noori Chhamb which further add to its picturesque and pristine beauty.

Mandi

Mandi is a small village in a narrow valley delimited by steep and grassy mountain peaks. It is located near the confluence of two rivulets namely Gagri and Pulsta at a distance of around 20kms from Poonch city. Owing to cool type of weather and nearness to the Poonch city, Mandi is an excellent destination for visitors, in the hot summers.

Loran

Loran, a tiny village, at the foothills of Pir Panjal, is one more place for the sightseer. It is situated at a distance of 35 kms from Poonch city. Loran Nalah (rivulet) which flows through the village makes it more captivating to the eyes. Loran was the capital of Erstwhile Poonch State under Hindu Kings up to 1542 and was known as Loran-Kote. Remnants of the Lohar Kote fort which used to be the Gateway of Kashmir are still present.

Valley of Surankote

Surankote is a small town situated on the banks of river Suran. It is an attractive valley enclosed by towering mountain peaks which remain covered with snow during winter. It is generally called Pahalgam of Poonch. According to Rajatarangini of Kalhan, Surankote was called Sawernik in the past.

Girjan Dhok

Girjan is a vale of seven stunning and stupendous lakes of geological importance namely Sukh Sar, Neel Sar, Bhag Sar, Kator Sar, Kaaldachni Sar and Nandan Sar. These lakes are situated at an altitude of 12000 feet. Girjan is at a distance of around 70 kms from Poonch city.

Nandan Sar

Nandan Sar is among the largest lakes of Poonch. It is around one mile long and half a mile wide. The famous Urdu writer, Krishan Chander after seeing the natural beauty of the Girjan region penned down a story entitled "Girjan ki Ek Sham (An Evening in Girjan)".

Tatakuti peaks

Tatakuti peak standing at an elevation of 15560 feet is the highest mountain peak of Pir Panjal Range. On a clear day it can be seen even from Lahore. It is still an unexplored peak challenging explorers with crystal clear water, the alpine lakes and the lofty heights.

Mughal Road

The opening, reconstruction and renewal of historic Mughal road have turned out to be a luxury for tourists. Remnants and monuments of Mughal period, Shrines and religious sites, unexplored forests, fine-looking meadows, springs, rivulets, waterfalls transhumant activity and diverse cultures on its way have made it a paradise for ecotourists and adventurers.

Pir Ki Gali

It is situated on the right side of Mughal Road near Pir Panjal pass. Here is the memorial of Sheikh Ahmed Kareem, the famous Saint. People of from all walks of life visit this shrine frequently.

Dehr

Dehr is a Dhok (meadow) in village Mahra, in the Tehsil of Surankote at an altitude of around 6000 feet. It is primarily grassland. It is surrounded by mountains from all the sides. Nature lovers has found cricket as a way to enjoy cool and pleasant weather in summer. Cricket tournaments are held in June-July every year. Cricket lovers from adjoining districts visit the region large numbers.

Flora and Fauna

The geographical and climatic conditions, prevailing over the district pave the way for diversity and plenty of wildlife. The district covers an area about 83.914 acres under forests. Chir forests are an important category of vegetation in the state. The rare animals include the markhor, musk deer, brown bear, leopard, ghoral etc. Important birds which are found in different parts of the district comprise the Pheasant, Black Partridge, Chakurs, Snow Cock, kohlas etc.

Trekking Sources

Poonch is an attractive region for trekkers. Due to lack of transportation facilities and modes of communication Poonch has always been a kind of trekking ground for locals and outsiders. The important trekking routes include:

Poonch to Gulmarg (Kashmir) via Jammia gali

Poonch – Gaggrian Sawjian - Barshi Nallah - Barnara marg - Jamia marg - Jamia gali (15000 feet.) -Gulmarg (Tangmarg).

Poonch to Nandishool via Loran (Sultan Pathri)

Poonch to Yusmarg(Kashmir) via Nurpur gali and Khaara gali

Poonch - Loran - Sultan Pathri - Nurpur gali - Toshamaidan - Kundlan - Dood Ganga Bridge -Yushmarg.

Poonch to Yusmarg(Kashmir) via Choti gali

Poonch - Behramgala - Chandimarh - Kabar Pathran - Choti gali(14100 feet.) - Kundlan - Yusmarg.

Poonch town to Tatakuti via Hill Kaka and Dhara marg

Poonch to Shopian(Kashmir) via Peer ki gali

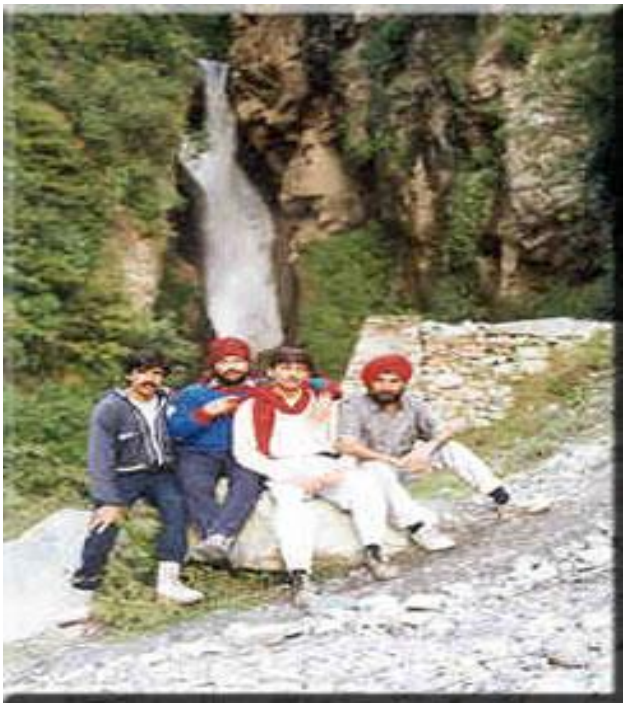
Poonch - Behramgala - Poshiana - Chita Pani - Peer gali (11500 feet.) - Aliabad Sarai - Hierpur -Shupian.

Poonch to Hierpur (Kashmir) via Nandansar lake

Poonch - Behramgala - Girgen gali - Girgen marg - Panjtari marg - Khuooah - Gumsar - Nandan gali- Glacier - Nandansar lake - six other lakes - Jaddi marg - Aliabad - Hierpur.

Poonch to Gulmarg via Chor Gali

Poonch - Sawjian - Gali Maidan - Mangiana - Sari -Chor Gali – Gulmarg [1].



Noori Chammb Water Fall

(Source: www.poonch.nic.in)

Nandishool Waterfall

Behram Galla

Valley of Surankote

Nandan Sar Lake

(Source: www.poonch.nic.in)

Girjan Dhok

A view of Tatakuti Peaks

A view of Historical Mughal Road

Dehr

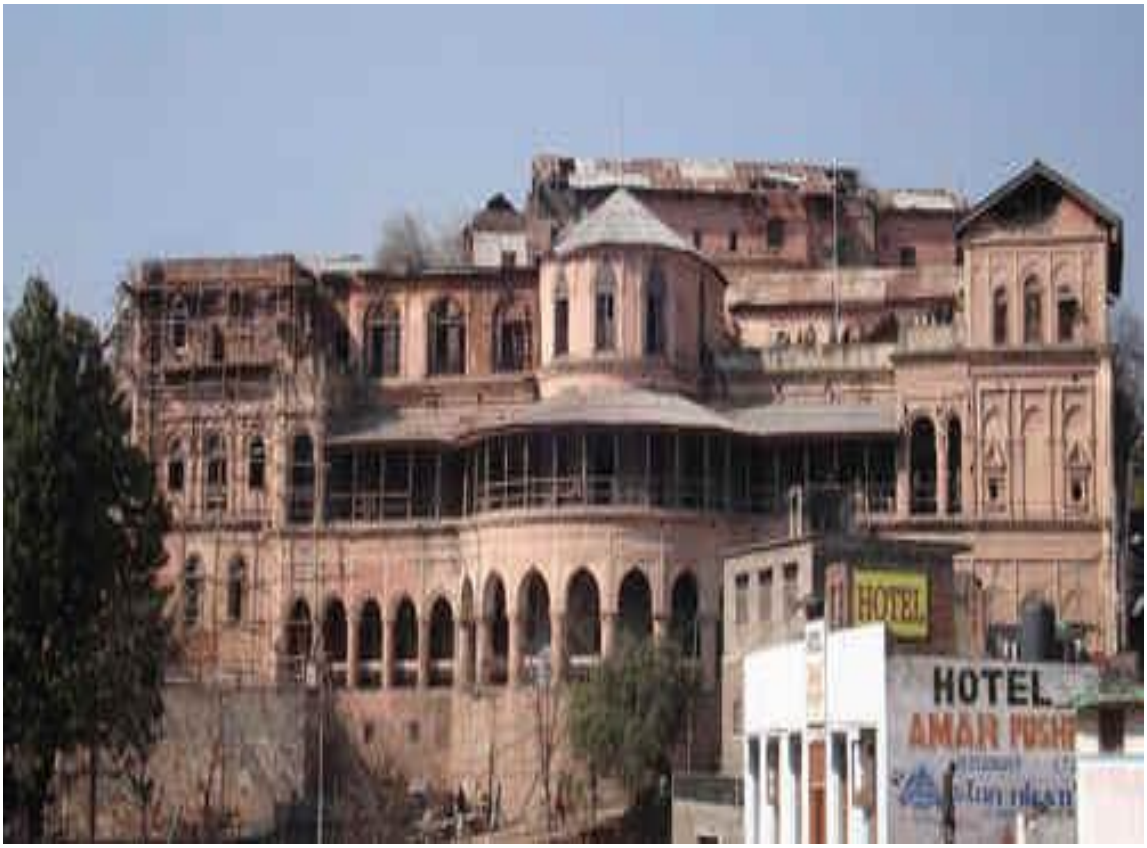
Chir Forests

❖ **Historical Sources**

Poonch Fort

The foundation of Poonch fort was laid down by Raja Abdul Razaq Khan in 1713. The real construction work was started by his distinguished prince Raja Rustam Khan who was a great admirer of architecture. During the Sikh rule (1819-1846) the central block of the building was added which bears the distinct influence of Sikh architectural style. The Fort in its present style and shape owes to the compassion of Raja Moti Singh (1850-1892) who employed an European architect to design the front block of the Fort. It was during Raja Baldev Singh's rule that the fort was transformed into a secretariat of the kingdom after shifting the Palace to Moti Mahal. The fort speaks of the aesthetic sense of the rulers and adds to the architectural beauty of Poonch [1].

Apart from Poonch fort Moti Mahal, Bagh Deodi, Sheesh Mahal and numerous other monuments are needed to be utilized for ecotourism.



Historical Poonch Fort

Moti Mahal

Bagh Deodi

❖ **Religious Sources**

Poonch is a land of Sufis and Saints. It is a hub of religious visitors belonging to different faiths, even from outside the state. The prominent religious places include:

Ziarat Sain Miran Sahib

This Ziarat is located in the village Guntrian near the LOC. The place is regularly visited by followers of different religious beliefs.

Ziarat Chhote Shah Sahib

The shrine of Chhote Shah is located at Sakhi Maidan about 5 kms from Mendhar. The remnants of ancient architecture prevalently supposed to be of the Pandvas lie at a distance of few minutes.

Ziarat Sain Illahi Bakhsh Sahib

The renowned shrine of Sain Illahi Bakhsh is located in the village Battalkote in Mandi. It is at a distance of 37kms from Poonch city. This shrine place is surrounded by lofty mountain peaks, lush green forests, attractive maize fields and beautiful sinuous streams. Saint, Illahi

Bakhsh, had chosen this place keeping in the view its natural beauty. An Urs is organised in his memory every year in the month of May. People from all faiths come to this place in great numbers, even from outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Ziarat Pir Fazal Shah Sahib

This Shrine is located at Gundi village in Surankote. It is also a frequently visited shrine.

Ziarat Pir Rattan Shah

It is situated on the boundary of Poonch and Rajouri Districts at an altitude of about 6ooo feet. It is frequently visited by visitors all the year around.

Budha Amarnath Temple

Budha Amarnath temple is situated in Mandi at a distance of 25 kms from Poonch city near the the confluence of Gagri and Pulsta streams. The temple is situated in the midst of snow covered mountain peaks, lush green forests and pastures and crystal clear streams. The original temple was constructed with one stone. There are four doors on each side indicating that the shrine is open to all the four Varnas. There is a natural Shivlinga of white stone (chakmak) inside the temple. There were four holy springs near the temple in the past. At present three springs has been diverted to the southern side of the temple. The pilgrims first take a bath in the spring before entering the temple. On the eve of Raksha Bandhan *MELA SWAMI BUDHA AMARNATH JI FESTIVAL* is celebrated. Three days before the eve, a religious gathering is held at Dashnami Akhara Poonch for performing Havan and Pooja of Chhari Mubarak. The procession of Chhari starts from Akhara. A guard is offered to Chhari Mubarak at the gate of the Akhara. The Mahant Ji is being carried in a palki by the disciples. Thousands of devotees accompany the procession which leads towards Budha Amarnath temple on foot. The chhari is taken to the main shrine in between the traditional rituals followed by the Aarti of Lord Shiva. Thousands of visitors accompany the procession from all over India.

Ramkund Temple

Ramkund temple is situated in Tehsil Mendhar. It has three springs namely Ram Kund, Sita Kund and Lakshman Kund. Pilgrims take a bath there on first bright half of chaitra (March).

Shri Dashnami Akhara Temple

It is located in southern part of the Poonch city. Saint Jawahar Giri came to this place in the year 1760 and started his meditation. The Saint took his Samadhi in 1787.His Samadhi is still there on the left side of the Samadhi complex. After Swami Jawahar Giri, Swami Shamaya Nand, who was a Sanskrit scholar, sat on this religious seat. After Swami Shamaya Nand, Swami Shankarya Nand Giri followed by Swami Parma Nand Ji and Swami Satya Nand Saraswati had this position. Swami Satya Nand Saraswati decorated this place and sent the message of religious significance of this place throughout India. Presently, Swami Vishavatma Nand Saraswati is on the seat of the temple. Every year Chhari is taken from this place to Budha Amarnath temple.

Gurudwara Nangali Sahib

Gurudwara Nangali Sahib is situated in the midst of picturesque hills on the banks of Drungali Nallah at a distance of about 6kms from Poonch city. It is one of the oldest Shrines of the Sikhs in Northern India. Large number of devotees visits this shrine from all over the Country every year. The gurudwara was established by Thakur Bhai Mela Singh Ji (Fourth successor of Sant Bhai Feru Singh Ji) in the 1803. Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Gurudwara Nangali Sahib in 1814. He attached an estate with the Gurudwara sahib. He again attached four villages to the Gurudwara in 1823. This Gurudwara has remained a focus of the Sikhism in the state. Round the clock Langar (community kitchen) and rest house facility is provided to the pilgrims without considering their religion, caste and creed etc. On every Sundays a large congregation is held. A huge function is held in the Gurudwara Sahib on the eve of Baisakhi every year[1].

Shrine of Sain Miran Sahab

Shrine of Chote Shah

Shrine of Sain Fazal Sahab

Budha Amarnath Temple

Gurudwara Nangali Sahib

❖ **Cultural Sources**

People

Poonch is a mosaic of different beliefs, religions, castes and tribes etc. People of different religions, castes, tribes speaking different languages with diverse dialects live in harmony and peace. Gujjars, Bakarwals, Paharis, Punjabis and Kashmiris are all living in different spaces in the district. They speak Gojri, Pahari, Kashmiri, Punjabi and Urdu, with a great diversity of local and sub regional dialects. There are inhabitants who are still transhumant. Temporary migrations are common among many families especially, Paharis, Gujjars and Bakarwals with the changing seasons for food and fodder. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others are integrated by common cultures, traditions, language and life style in different parts of the district.

Festivals and celebrations

Owing to its diverse socio cultural back ground, people in Poonch district celebrate a wide range of festivals. Important fairs and festivals, which are celebrated in an only one of its kind style with a specific and matchless regional touch in the district, since long are

DUSSEHRA

On the Dusshera day a procession is taken out in the city. The effigies of Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Meghnath are burnt publically in the play ground near Sher e Kashmir Bridge. People from different walks of life gather here in large numbers.

BAISAKHI FARE

A grand congregation is organised near Nangali Saab and other parts of the district, which is attended by large numbers of devotees, from all over the state.

Holi

Holi has its own attraction, when it is celebrated in Poonch District. On first day, the tableau of Hanuman is taken out from the Sanatan Dharam Sabha. From next day, the tableau of Bhairav, the Lord of Devil is taken out from the Sabha, which also takes a round of the town. Thousands of people from all walks of life join in the congregations. They throw colours (Gulal) on each other and dance on the drum beats. This presents a unique scenario of social life in Poonch District.

Folk Songs and Dances

Poonch is only one of its kinds when we have a discussion of its affluent and dissimilar heritage, colourful cultural life and fabulous folk songs and folk dances. Folk songs and dances of any region portray the life style of its people, their tastes, traditions, costumes, rituals and culture. Poonch District has unique cultural forms and styles of singing and dances.

Gujjars and Bakarwals are one of the most important segments of the population of the district. The main ballads of the region are "Noora" ” Sopahiya” & “Chann”. Folk songs like ,

"Baisakhi", "Cuckoo", "Chann", , "Sahiban", "Mehndi", "Saif-ul-Malook" are very famous amongst the people. Kashmiri songs like “Wanawun”, “Chakri”, and Punjabi "Mahiya" also echo in the mountains. People have their distinctive legends behind all songs. Apart from these “Kenchi” is a love song of a Pahari belle. In other words it is a true love story of a Pahari girl with "Munshi" of a forest contractor. Kenchi expresses the broken heart of the female lead and brings tears in the eyes of the villagers. It is indeed a melancholy. Similarly Chann & Dholan are Pahari romantic songs.

Folk Dances

Folk Dances in the district are generally connected with some function, celebration or with the devotion of some god or goddess. Important folk dances of Rajouri are Punjabi Bhangra, Gojri Dance, Letri, Keekli and Rouf etc.

In performance, set pattern of clothes and songs, Dogri Bhangra is entirely poles apart from Punjabi Bhangra. These dances are performed on the fairs and festivals and at different occasions like Letri is performed on the event of Mass Grass Cutting or Harvesting.

Gojri Naach

Gojri dance is very illustrious of the Gujjar culture. It is generally performed on marriage ceremonies. It is effortless and delightful. Male dancers dance in their customary costumes forming a line having sticks in their hands. Female dancers dance on the other side adjust pattern on the rhythm of Drum. The dance is always going together with a folk song.

Letri

This dance is performed on grass harvesting in the autumn months.

Keekli

No musical instrument is used in it. The girls perform this dance. They catch hold of each other's opposite hands and take turns in a balanced fashion.

Roff and Chhakri

This is the distinguished dance which is performed by women on the occasion of marriage.

Costumes and Jewellery

- Self designed beads necklaces woven in coloured silken threads
- Coins of Indian currency - Key shape Lockets - usually having silver plating
- Chargul or "loung" - either of gold or plating of gold as a nose ring
- Jhumka or Kanta - of silver, for ears
- Kangan or Mareedehis and Kada for arms
- Haseeri for neck
- Do - Ladi hear of silver for neck
- Angoothies or rings of silver
- Silver - hairpins - joints by a chain at both ends
- Chippri - a scarf of chheet cloth - They always keep their heads covered with topi and Chippri

Arts and Handicrafts

Poonch District is quite rich and diverse in arts and handicrafts as well. Embroidery, Chikhri-wood carving, basket and blanket weaving etc are the chief handicrafts of the recent past. However with the fast industrial development around the world, some of these handicrafts could not survive. However Embroidery, Blanket (Patti and Loee) making and Chikhri wood crafts somehow still survive managed to live to tell the tale of a glorious art. The key crafts are:

Embroidery

The main items under embroidery craft consist of Shah Embroidery (both Sojni and Aari).

Blanket, Patti and Loee Making

Blanket (locally Patti and Loee) making is one of the oldest crafts. It is still carried on. Pattis and Loees of Rajouri are unparalleled.

Chikhri Wood Carving

The artisans involved in this craft are mainly located at Shahdara Sharief, Thannamandi and Budhal. These artisans of these areas are famous for manufacturing a number of articles for domestic use as well as for decorative purpose.

Basket Weaving

Basket weaving in the district is quite common in the district especially in the villages. Baskets are made both for commercial purposes and family use.

Rural tourism/ Village Tourism

Any form of tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, there by benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourist and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience is termed rural tourism[4].

The villages of Poonch have a huge potential for rural tourism. This potential if make use of can be a boon for local people. Villages can be used for halts. Interaction with local people is not new to the ecotourism. To know different places, people and their products is not new to those who travel to explore and learn. The religious, cultural and lingual multitude of villages in Poonch is of immense importance for the ecotourists. As ecotourism is the travelling to observe and admire not only the nature, but to be acquainted with the diversity of flora and fauna, with the identification of the different traditions and cultures, that are unique to different people, and places.

Transhumance

Paharis, Gujjars and Bakarwals are the prominent ethnic groups of the state. They are essentially animal (cattle, goat, and sheep) keeper. Pahari farmers migrate to Dhoks (meadows) where they find green pastures and fodder for animals in the summers. They make Taras or Kothas (mud houses with thatched roofs) and Bandis (Taras for animals).

These Dhoks are located at higher reaches. In winter they return back to their permanent settlements. These people essentially speak Pahari.

Like Paharis Gujjars and Bakarwals have become sedentary to a large extent. But a large population among them is still transhumant. They migrate seasonally along with their cattle, sheeps and goats in search of fodder. In summer they also migrate to Dhoks. They live in tent and settle temporarily wherever, they find fodder. Some of them have also constructed Taras and Bandis in these Dhoks. These ethnic groups are the best example of symbiotic relationship of man and environment. Such Dhoks are found in all the four tehsils of Poonch. They may serve as an important tourist destination.

Thatched Houses/ Taras and Bandis

Conclusion

Owing to its pristine natural beauty, multitude and uniqueness of its diverse cultures and rich heritage Poonch has a huge potential for ecotourism. However, this potential cannot be cultivated because of the lack of necessary infrastructure and advertisement. The study displays the enormous ecotourism potential of Poonch district which exists but is unknown and has still not gained the attention of policy makers. The matchless magnificence, natural beauty, unique and rich cultural and religious heritage of Poonch must be conserved for

ecotourism. In order to develop ecotourism industry in Poonch, the very first step is its advertisement and serious concern of State Govt towards necessary and vital infrastructural facilities. District authorities must consult and ask for cooperation from State and other national ecotourism organisations regarding the issue. Awareness among the masses is of prime importance. Thus local authorities should generate awareness among local people, by educating them about the economic and environmental merits of ecotourism, especially villagers. Local people should be given technical assistance for selling their own products to the tourists. In this way ecotourism apart from providing the permanence of the natural and cultural assets, may also provide a side income for the local people.

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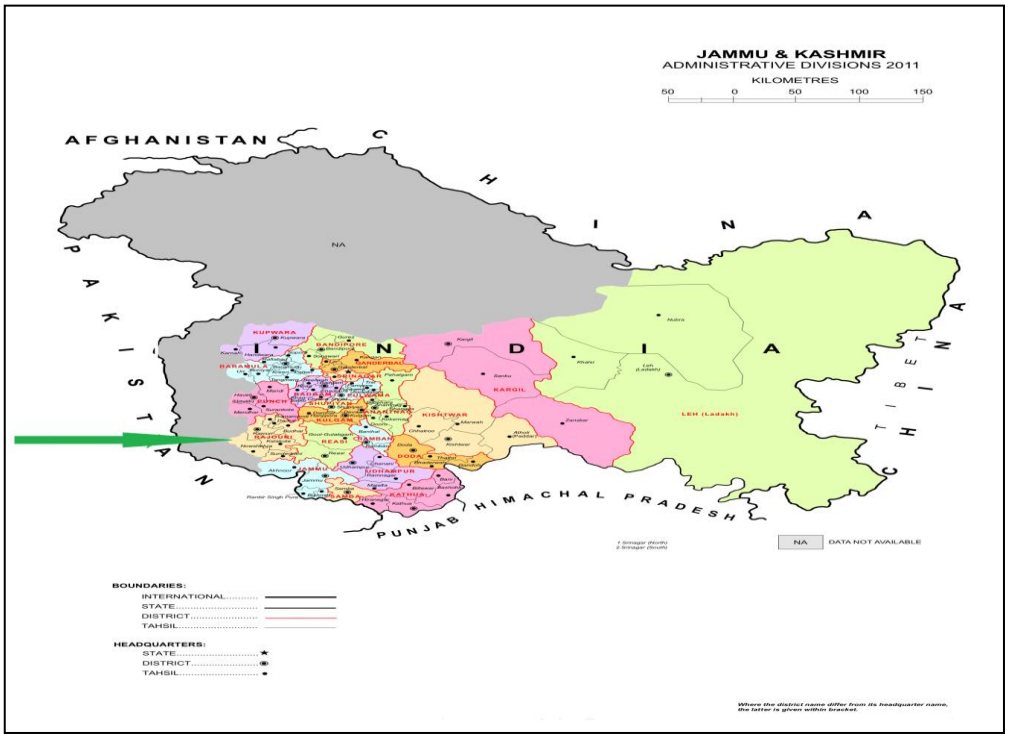
Chapter 3

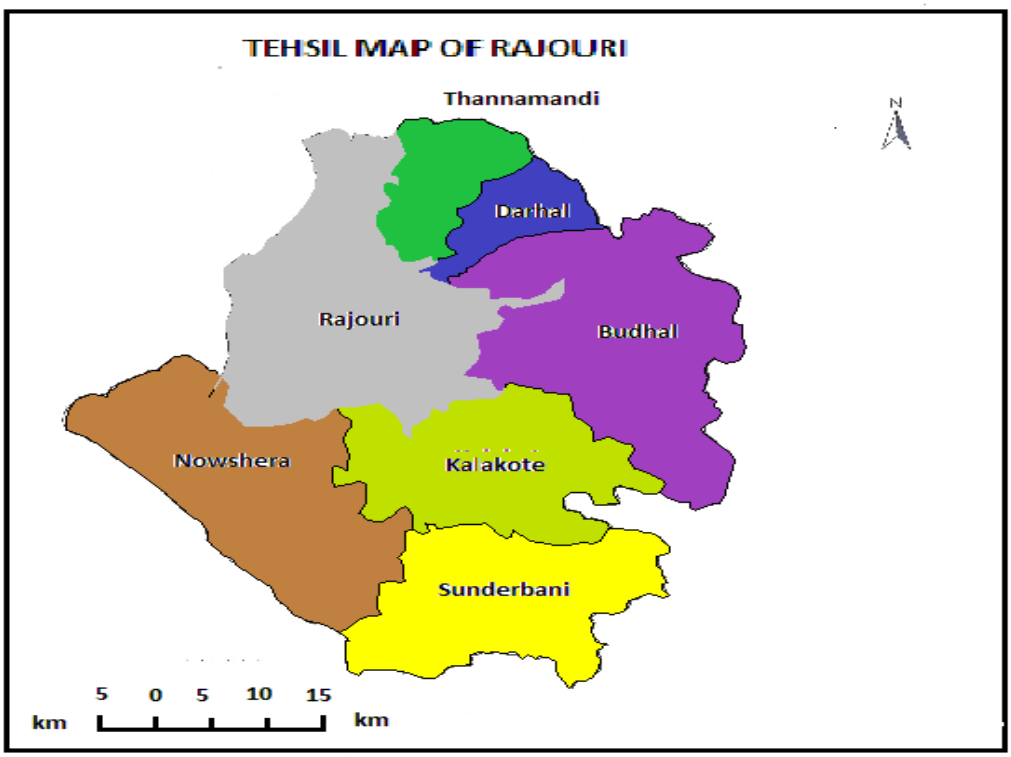
Sources of Ecotourism in Rajouri District

Introduction

Rajouri is a district in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is 154 km away from Winter Capital Jammu, of the state. It is located in the foothills of Pir Panjal Range. Dhauladhar range lies on the north eastern frontier of the district. It is surrounded by Districts of Udhampur and Jammu in the East, Poonch on the West and Pulwama on the North and Line of actual control passes on its Southern side. It extends between 32° 58′ to 33° 35′ north latitudes and 70° 00′ to 74° 40′ east longitudes.[1]



Source: Census of India 2011



The climate varies from semi tropical in the Southern part comprising Nowshera, Sunderbani and Kalakote to temperate in the mountainous Northern part comprising the area of Rajouri, Thannamandi and Koteranka Tehsils of the District. The average rainfall is 500 mm and temperature varies from 7.42 degree Celsius to 37.4 degree Celsius.[2N]Rajouri has a population of Population of 6, 19,266 with Sex ratio 863 females per thousand males and density of 235 persons per km^2. [3]

The only means of connectivity with other parts of the state is road. Rajouri town is about 154 kms away from Jammu, the winter capital of the State. Generally it takes 3 to 4 hours to reach Rajouri by public buses. The Private transport has also been also developed and people prefer to use private vehicles like Tata Sumo, Tempos etc. It is connected with Srinagar (Kashmir) via Historical Mughal Road and also via Jammu.

The District has an area of 2630 Sq.Kms. with peculiar physical features. The District is situated in the west of Jammu Division and is surrounded by the Poonch, Udhampur and

Jammu Districts. The District comprise of 6 Tehsils namely Rajouri, Nowshera, Sunderbani, Kalakote, Koteranka and Thannamandi and 7 Blocks of Rajouri, Manjakote, Darhal, Budhal, Kalakote, Sunderbani and Nowshera.[2]

The District drives its name from Rajouri town which itself had been historically known as Rajapuri. Rajouri District had been part of Poonch district prior to 1967. On 22nd September 1967, Government divided district Poonch into two districts namely 'Rajouri' and 'Poonch', to facilitate the process of development and better supervision of economic activities in this area. By this way, Rajouri emerged as a District from 1st January 1968.

District Rajouri is quite diverse in terms of Religion, language, cultures and traditions. People of almost all major religions reside in the district in peace and harmony. Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity are the major religions. They speak different languages like Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri, Gojri and Pahari. Sources of ecotourism in Rajouri District are summarized under the following headings:

- **Natural Sources/Destinations**

Budhal

Budhal is a beautiful Valley located amid the central Pir Panjal series of mountains. The Geography of the area is comprised of snow laden beautiful mountain peaks, dense forests, garrulous meandering streams, crystal clear lakes, eye catching meadows and sea green pastures. Proper Budhal is a small town, is situated on the hillock near Gabbar Nallah. The town falls on the Southern range of Pir Panjal. This fine-looking region is situated on the way to Budhal pass or Sedhu pass which leads towards the Kashmir Valley. Sedhu pass is at a distance of about 24 kms from Shopian and 25 kms from Budhal Township. Budhal is also used as a base camp for trekkers to Kashmir Valley.

Budhal records its name on the history in 10th century in Rajatarangini of Kalhan as "Budhiwasa" (place of intellectuals). Later on, this name changed from Budhiwasa to

"Budhal". As per the legend, the Paul Shahi Raja "Budh Paul" established Budhal town in the 10th Century AD. He named this town as Budhiwasa, which subsequently was changed to Budhal.[2]Budhal is an ideal site for nature lovers and ecotourists. The pristine scenic beauty and rich history of the area is unique.

Nowshera

Nowshera town is situated at an elevation of 758 metres from the sea level. It is placed on the northern side of a fertile valley of Nowshera, beyond the right bank of Tawi River. The town is 124 kms away from Jammu and 45 kms from Rajouri. It is a Tehsil headquarter and a growth centre of the district.[2]

It is located on the Line of Actual Control. Numbers of roads have been started in the Tehsil to link up the remote and border villages. Rajal Canal is the main project existing in the Tehsil.

Thannamandi

Thannamandi town is situated at 33.33 degree latitude and 74.25 longitudes, on the foot hill of Rattan Peer (8600') along the right bank of Thanna Nallah. This attractive hill spot is about 24 kms on the North side of Rajouri Town. At present this town is a Tehsil Headquarter. Kashmiri Muslim population is dominating the town. This place is mostly known for Chikhri wood handicrafts.

Dehra ki Gali

Dehra ki Gali is situated at an altitude of around 6600 feet above mean sea level, in the vicinity of Pir Panjal Range and is one of the passes connecting Rajouri and Poonch districts. It experiences heavy snowfall during winter months. Thick vegetation cover attracts and charms the visitor. On the peak of this mount Project Beacon has constructed a one-room cottage, which is one of the finest sightseeing spots of the region. The pass has also been

used by Indian TV industry in the recent past according to the local people. A two-room inspection hut has also been constructed recently to facilitate the tourists.

Kalakote

Kalakote is a mountainous track located sandwiched amid Koteranka and Sunderbani. The region is also famous for its coal mines. However it is primarily an agricultural region. The region is endowed with thick vegetation cover and is fairly tranquil and pristine.

Tatta Pani (Hot Spring) is an important destination in the region, which is visited by numerous visitors throughout the year for a medicated bath. However the number of visitors increases sharply during winters. The bathing in the water of the hot spring water is supposed to restore to health. It is believed to be very effective treatment for joint, bone and skin diseases.

Sunderbani

Sunderbani also the tehsil of Rajouri, is another beautiful destination to be visited. It is situated on the Jammu-Poonch highway. Highway itself is very picturesque. Sunderbani earlier was known as "Bhajwal Jagir". Present settlement was un-inhabited and there was nothing apart from shrubbery. Only one Haveli of Rai Ghulam Hussain, the Jagirdar of the area existed on a mound, which was known as Phulwari located on the upper side of present Sunderbani. In 1980, Sunderbani emerged as new Tehsil. The region is geographically, climatically and culturally worth seeing. [2]

Tatta Pani

Tatta Pani is a hot spring, situated in Kalakote tehsil at a distance of around 35killometres from Rajouri district headquarters. In local terminology Tatapani means “Hot water”/ Hot spring. Owing to the importance of the spring, the village besides it has also been named as Tatta Pani Village. There are various myths and stories attributed to the origin of this hot spring. Some people believe it to be the fruit of blessings of a Muslim Saint in the past, while

others believe that during the ancient times, some travellers discovered this place by spotting a gigantic cobra belonging to Lord Shiva, the god of Hindus, at the position from where spring originates. However, regardless of the evidences of authenticity of either of the myths, the place catches the attention of people from all walks of life. Regardless of their religions, regions, castes, creeds and colours people bathe in the spring, in their prefect harmonious and secular manners. It has rather become a symbol of Human brotherhood. Tatta Pani is surrounded by opaque forest cover and is quite peaceful and tranquil. The bathing in spring water is believed to cure numerous bone, joint and skin diseases. The water, is rich in various minerals, is very hot and its degree of hotness sometimes rises around boiling point. People, however adjust them gradually by dipping in part by part. Tatta Pani is a fast growing tourist preference.

Samot Sar

Samot Sar is an oval shaped blue water lake situated at an altitude of 3,550 meters on the northern extremity of Badjari Marg. The lake is reachable in 4 hours from Budhal town.[7]

Chandan Sar

Chandan Sar, a bean shaped lake, dotted with icebergs till the end of July. It is situated at an altitude of 3,800 meters from the mean sea level. It is 2 kilometres in circumference. It is the source of Chamar Nullah which joins Bafliaz Nullah near Behram Gala. It is at a day's trekking from Ravi Wali marg. [7]

Divya Sar

Divya Sar looks like an Indian earthen lamp and hence named as "Divya Sar". it is Situated at an elevation of 3,600 meters from the mean sea level.[7]

Gum Sar

This is another small lake at the foothills of Dhakyar peak at an elevation of 3,600 meters. Dhakyar peak is the highest peak in this range. It is a pyramidal mountain with height of about 4,660 meters. [7]

Manyal Gali

Manyal gali is a mountainous village situated on the Jammu –Poonch highway via DKG. It is a beautiful sight seeing destination, with exceptionally pleasing climate. One can locate the whole region from there. It is at a distance of half an hour from Dehra Ki Gali (DKG).

Wild life

1. **Fauna**

Wild life of Rajouri is diverse and rich owing to its varied climate and geography. As the mountains get higher to around 4600 meters in north eastern side of the district, we find alpine areas where snow falls heavily during winters and prolongs up to April-May. Flora and fauna of alpine regions are those which withstand these altitudes and peculiar climatic conditions. As we come down in the direction of lower elevations, the climate becomes temperate type. Animals here thus have to move towards lower altitudes for the duration of winter months. However the large part of the district experiences sub tropical climate. These areas of the district are rich in wild life. They are known to possess leopard, jungle cats, Felis bengalensis, Hogdeer (parha) Porcupine Black bear, Goral (wild goat), Musk deer, snow leopard, and Marten etc. Wild Boar, Monkeys Mongoose, squirrel and Hare, Jackal, Bats are also in plenty.

Leopard

Koel

Apart from these, Peacock and other birds like Thrushes, Bablers, Orioles, Bayas, Bee-eaters, Fly-catchers, Shrike, Tailar bird, Wood pecker, Cuckoo, Koel, Doves, Hawk, Shikra, Eagle, Brain feverbird (Papiha) owlet, Barn owl, king Fishers and Egrets, Partridge, Quail, Bulbul, Parrots, Hoopoe, Pigeon, Sparrow, Crows, Jungles fowl, Kiter Buzzard, and vultures can be seen in plenty the district.

Reptilian fauna comprises of Lizards and Snakes. Varanus (Kas Karoh), Agama, Calotes and Hemidectles python. Snakes include Cobra, Coral snake, Krait, Viper, Natrix, Zemnis, Lycodon and Typhlops are also found in the district. The rivers of the district are abounding

with fish fauna. Trout is important to mention. Monal and other pheasants are found in Darhal and Budhal.[2]

2. **Flora**

Owing to its climate and topography, Rajouri is quite rich and diverse in flora as well. Variety of trees, grasses, crops and flowers which district have is the only of its kind These Wild flowers not only add to the beauty of the region but also have medical importance. The important flora of the district includes NARCICUSS (Nargis), BANAFSHA, VICIA FLOWER HUND FLOWER,DIGITALIS,VERBASCUM OR MULLEIN ,WILD ROSE TRIFOLIUM REPENSE (White Clover and Red Clover), TARAXACUM OFFICINALS.[2]

TREKKING ROUTES OF RAJOURI

Trekking has come a long way since the dawn of human history. However all trekkers did not trek with same purpose. Trekking is both adventure and exploration. Generally, trekking is a voyage on foot to explore new. To meet new people and their products, to discover new routes, places, topographies and natural environments is all a trekker desires. Trekking is to gratify a man's essential desire i.e. to travel into the world and seek adventure.

Rajouri is situated at the foothills of Pir Panjal Range of the mighty Himalayas. The snow laden peaks of Pir Panjal have their own charm and beauty with many of them unexplored and virgin. Prominent among them are, Dhakyar Peak which elevates up to 15290 feet, Kotoria Peak which ascends up to 15000 feet above, Budhal Pir Peak which rises up to 15170 feet, and Brahma which get higher up to 15400 feet. Apart from these Kagha Alana and Handoo Peaks near Chamcchi Sar Lake are one of the best mountaineering destinations. There are eye catching stupendous lakes like Simar Sar, Kotoria Sar, Dhakyar Sar etc which are surrounded by beautiful snow covered peaks for most time of the year. There are tens of amazing passes which connect the state with Rajouri. These passes also serve as meadows (Dhoks) of tribal people, like Gujjars and Bakarwals. However most of these passes stay enclosed with snow during winter and the snow starts melting in April or May. The passes are open from the first week of October and the Gujjars and Bakarwal shepherds start moving up along with their sheep. The significant and well-known trekking routes of Rajouri are:

Base: Rajouri

1. Rajouri - Kandi - Kesri Hill - Kenaki Water Fall - Dada nar - Talyani - Talyani Galli - Marguri – Bela - Simar Sar Lake - Bela Top - Dhakyar Peak - Rupri Galli Pass.

2. Rajouri - Thannamandi - Dehra Kee Gaali – Girjan - Panjtari - Khuha Gum Sar - Nandan Pass - Nandan Sar Lake and 6 Other Lakes - Jaldi - Aliabad - Hirpur - Srinagar.

Base: Darhal

3. Darhal - Kanda -Shaker Marg - Cha Sari – Dood Wali - Chamber - Chamchi Sar Lake - Handoo Pass - Bhagh Sar - Sarota Valley of Flower - Neel Sar - Panjtari - Girjin - Noori Chamb - Bheram Galla - and Back to Rajouri.

Base: Budhal

4. Budhal - Saveri Marg - Khodra - Simar Sar Lake - Bella - Kotoria Sar Lake - Dhakyar Peak

Base: Rajouri

5. Rajouri - Budhal - Sar sot - Reta Wali - Harshou - Goray wan - Parhi Wali Marg - Konsar nag lake - Mahinag - Kungwattan - Aharbal (water fall) - Srinagar.

Base: Thannamandi

6. Thannamandi - Noori Chanbv - Chandi Marh -Poshina - Bagla - pir Pass - Aliabad - Mirpur -Suphian - Srinagar.

7. Choti Thannamandi - Chandi Marh - Kabar Pathran- Bagla - Ganga Choti - Choti Marg - Choti Galli Pass - Kundhlan - Yous Marg - Srinagar.

Base: Rajouri

8. Rajouri girjan - Panjtari - Khuya - Sarota – Shaker Marg -Roopri Pass Bela - Khodra - Budhal.[2]

❖ **Religious Sources**

ZIARAT (Shrine) SHAHDARA SHARIEF

Ziarat Shahdara Sharif is located in the Village Shahdara, about 35 kilometres from Rajouri town. The shrine is bounded by beautiful lofty mountain peaks, luxuriant forests, sea green pastures and eye catching springs. Village Shahdara in ancient times was known by different names like Simha Dwara, Shindhara etc. In 1765 AD, a Muslim Saint Syed Ghulam Shah Badshah arrived here, and started preaching the message of love and humanity. The village has thus been named after his name. People of all faiths and ideologies in thousands visit the shrine every year. Community kitchen (Langar) provides food and tea to thousands of people regularly. Shrine complex has the capacity to accommodate approximately 10, 000 people.

And the same number can offer Prayers in Jamia Masjid Shahdara Shrief. The annual congregation (Urs) of Ghulam Shah Badshah is celebrated on 10th of Muharram every year.

Front View of Shrine of Baba Ghulam Shah

GURUDWARA CHATTI PATSHAHI BANGLA SAHIB, RAJOURI

Rajouri has a number of Gurudwaras (Sikh Temples).Apart from a number of Gurudwaras. However Gurudwara Chhati Padshahi Rajouri has its own significance owing to its history. It has been constructed in the memory of 6th Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji (1595-1646 AD) who

stayed at this place in 1616 AD while he was on the way to Kashmir along with Mughal Emperor Jahangir. As per the legend, once Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji Maharaj had a dream that Mai Bhag Wanti in Kashmir had prepared a Cloak (Cholla) for him and she was praying to God to meet (darshan) of Guru Ji so that she could present it . As she was quite old, she was not in a position to visit Punjab and fulfil her desire. Therefore, Guru Ji decided to visit Kashmir and accept the present from her and to advocate Sikhism in the mountainous belt of Pir Panjal and Kashmir Valley. In 1960, a memorandum was passed by the Sangat for reconstruction of Gurudwara Chhati Padshahi Rajouri and the Committee was asked to work for the construction and collection of funds. In 1964, the blue print of new Gurudwara was prepared. After the approval of blue print by the Sangat, the construction was started in 1964. The masons and carpenters were brought from Punjab for giving Sikh architectural touch. By this way, the first phase of the building had been completed. The four storey building of Gurudwara has 15 rooms and a large Diwan Hall. A Pathshalla comprising of 8 rooms is being constructed and a school namely "Shri Hargobind Sahib Ji Institute of Education" has been running from April, 2000. The Gurudwara Chatti Padshahi is having great importance for not only Sikhs but Hindus too visit the Gurudwara daily. Congregations are organized on Sundays. However the Birthday of Guru Hargobind Ji is celebrated with great enthusiasm and zeal both by Sikhs and Hindus every year. [2]

MANGLA MATA

Mangla Mata Dev Asthan is located near village Bhawani in Nowshera Tehsil of District Rajouri. Originally, it was located in Hamirpur after the name of Mangla Mai (Pakistan).

A dam has been constructed by Pakistan after her name under the name of Mangla Dam. This remained an unknown place till 1965.

The legend says when the construction of Mangla Dam in Hamirpur was started and the Dev Asthan of Mangla Mai came under the dam, without delay after that, a Brahmin of Bhawani area, Pandit Nihal Chand had a dream in which Mangla Mata had given him darshan and asked that I have shifted my Asthan from Hamirpur to the forests of Bhawani and desired for exploring. Not only this, Mangla Mai also told the exact location to the Brahmin. After some days, the Brahmin came to this place and found the Pindies (a shape of Devta made by natural stone) of Mangla Mai in the cave. After performing the havans and other rituals, he established an Asthan of Mangla Mai at this very place and people started coming for darshan. With time several other myths have also been associated with the temple. Whatever are the facts, but it is a beautiful cave. People visit the site every day in good numbers. Besides these gatherings, two important congregations on a large scale are organized annually during the days of Navratras and in the months of April and September. Apart from main cave, there are two other caves also namely Vishnu Cave and Naina Mata Cave. The pindies of Naina Mata are also installed in the cave. Every month on the night of full moon, the devotees from the adjacent neighbourhood come for Jagrata (nightly prayers of Hindus) and remain engaged in bhajan and kirtan for the whole night. A Yatri Nivas has also been

constructed apart from the link road which leads towards the Asthan. Power and water supply is available at site. Pilgrims cook their meals in the Langar. The Asthan is placed in a beautiful jungle area.[2]

PEER BADESAR

Peer Badesar is a temple, in Veer Vadweshavar village, at a distance of 60 kilometres from Rajouri city. It is situated near the present Indo-Pak border. The temple named after Veer Vadweshavar, is located on a peak at an altitude of around 5000 feet. Some villages of the Pakistan Administered Kashmir can be seen is quite clearly from here. The temple was constructed by the King Kanishka in 142 in the memory of Veer Vadweshavar, the Son Shiva the god of Hindus. The temple is the finest example of Hindu architecture of the antiquity.

It is said that in the historic times, the father of Sati, King Dakasha had once organised a massive congregation where food was provided to the people after the "Havan" service. In this congregation king Dakasha did not invite either Shiva or Sati, but Sati however came to attend the congregation. King Dakasha talked very ill of Shiva as well as Sati, upon seeing her. As She could not bear this disgrace to her and her husband, She preferred to burn herself alive in the burning "Kund". When Shiva was told about the happening, he was so annoyed that he powerfully threw his "Jata" (entangled mass of hairs on his head) on the ground. Veer Vadweshavar took birth out of this "Jata" to retaliate the humiliation meted out to his mother. Thus later on he attacked the empire of Dakasha and defeated him. On his way back Veer Vadweshavar lived at this position where the temple is constructed. Subsequently this area was called as Peer Badesar. [2]

ZIARAT SAIN GANJI SAHIB

The shrine of Saint Ganji Sahib Qadri located at a distance 10 kilometres, from Rajouri city, overlooking Darhal Nullah, is a centre of spirituality for a number of pilgrims all the year. An annual congregation (Urs) is held in the first week of October every year where people of

different faiths come in large numbers. The Shrine is regarded as a symbol of clarity, secularism and tolerance. Born and brought up at Fatehpur, Rajouri, the Saint was a spiritualist who developed into a legend in his own life time. He dedicated all his life for the betterment of human kind. He propagated love, peace and harmony throughout his life.

DERA BABA BEERAM SHAH

During 17th Century, the 6th Guru of Sikhs had sent number of Saints from Punjab towards this region for preaching of Sikhism. Baba Beeram Shah Dutt was one among them. He belonged to Sialkote (Pakistan). He established his Dera at Jhangar and kept visiting Nowshera, Dharamsal, Rajouri and Poonch and NWFP. His Dera is located on a beautiful hillock. A Gurudwara and a pilgrim house have also been constructed now. The place is visited daily by large number of his followers. The main congregation is organized annually on the next Sunday of each Baisakhi. Hindus and Sikhs from all over Poonch and Rajouri visit the place in large numbers to take part in the congregation.

PANJ PIR (five Saints)

Panj Pir is situated at a distance of few kilometres from Rajouri town. It is named after the five saints, who were all brothers and sisters to each other. They had from Punjab in the past. A large number of people visit the shrine round the year.

ZIARAT BABA SAKHI SULTAN

This shrine is situated in the core of Rajouri city. Baba Sakhi Sultan is known for his message of peace, harmony and tolerance. People of all religions visit the shrine regularly.

NAOGAZI ZIARAT

Naogazi Ziarat is the shrine of Qutab Shah. It is situated at Dhanidhar. Naogazi means nine yards long. The grave of the saint is believed to be of 9 yards and hence the name, Naogazi Ziarat.

CHANI PRAT TEMPLE

It is located at a distance of around10 kilometres from Sunderbani at an remote place near the village Chani Prat. It is believed to have been constructed during the time of Maharaja Gulab Singh, through the efforts of a Saint who had unceremoniously visited the place as a matter of custom wandering. After spending some time, he thought of building a temple at this place. The architecture and of the temple is only one of its kind. Small paintings on the walls portray different episodes of the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. An impressive Yagya is organised here, in the month of June.

MANMA MATA TEMPLE

Shrine of Manma Mata is at a distance of 6 kilometres from Kalakote. There is a cave at the site apart from a temple. It is believed that Shiva had gone to Kashmir passing through this cave. Manma Mata Devi had come to this place, later on to meditate. Every year, a congregation is organised on the eve of Navratras.

ZIARAT SAIN WALIDAD

The Shrine of Sain Walidad is located in the village Bhathian in Thannamandi.

Ziarat Rattan Pir

The Ziarat at Rattan Pir also a prominent shrine and receives grand admiration by people of different communities. It is situated on the border of Rajouri and Poonch districts.

Shrine of Manma Mata

Another important place in Kalakote area is "Shrine of Manma Mata". The temple is about 6 kms from Kalakote Town located in the Southern side. There is a cave at site and legend goes that Lord Shiva had gone to Kashmir via this cave. Later on, Manma Mata Devil had come to this place and meditated for several years in the cave.

❖ **Historical Sources**

Rajouri Temple, Sarai, Mosque and Fort

Rajouri has a rich heritage. Its rich cultural and historical background and its proximity to the Colonial Mughal Road leading to Kashmir have endowed it with the remnants of architectural sophistication of the past. Architectural remains of early medieval and ancient periods of Indian history can be seen at many places in Rajouri. In Andarkot Mohalla, for instance, we find vestiges of ancient Hindu rule and Kashmir style temples.

Buildings of Mughal Period, like Sarais, forts and Palaces, Mosques and temples, gardens and other remnants are still in a good position. Many of these structures have now been converted into public buildings like schools, hospitals, police stations etc. The important historical sources of Rajouri include:

MURADPUR: SARAI AND MOSQUE

Muradpur is situated at a distance of 7 Kilometres from Rajouri on Rajouri -Chingus route. Here is the medieval Sarai overlooking the green fields. With bastions at the corners, and the enclosure wall extending around 30 metres in length, it is a great centre of attraction for heritage lovers. One of its sides is made up of rubble stones in lime Surkhi Mortar. It also has residential compartments. At a distance of around 1 kilometre from this edifice and on the bank of the river Tawi one can find remnants of an old Mosque and a planned cell of congregation hall. The mosque is of impressive dimensions with a courtyard ahead of it, which has now been covered with vegetation.

CHINGUS: SARAI AND BAWLI

Chingus is a tiny village, on the right bank of the river Tawi, on Jammu- Poonch highway. Mughal Sarai of the village is a celebrated place for having mortal remains of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. The emperor died on his way to Kashmir. It is a wall planned edifice having two buildings i.e. the residential complex and the open yard. Both the apartments have

their own entrances. However they are also linked internally with each other. The residential compound has been built within walled enclosure. It has curved cells with openings in the direction of the courtyard. Its doorway from the western side comprises a central chamber with arched top and a undersized room on either side for the guards. In the construction of the edifice random rubbles, large pebbles and lakhauri have been used in a lime Surkhi Mortar. There is also a mosque. At a distance of about half a kilometre to the north of Sarai there are remains of an old well (Bawli).

KHEORA: KUSHAN SITE

Kheora is a Village, situated at a distance of about 1.5 kilometres from Rajouri city. It is located on the Rajouri-Darhal link road. The village is known for the red wave shreds of Kushan period characterized by profound bowls with razor edged rims and thin sides towering towards the bottom apart from a portion of an enclosure wall built with stones of lime Surkhi Mortar.

SARAI, MOSQUE AND HAMMAM at NOWSHERA

Sarai of the Nowshera town is larger and diverse than other Sarais in its design and outlook. It has two enclosures. The outer enclosure is comprised of double storied bastions at the corners and is crowned by crenellated fortification. It has a row of alcoves on the inside and has machicolations. A magnificent gateway in the middle of western wall provides an entrance into the Sarai. The gateway is the only of its kind in the region, which has square stone pillars surmounted by bracket with bendent, a feature conspicuously found in the Mughal architecture at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The residential is situated in the south western bend of the enclosure wall. It also is comprised of a common courtyard having curved cells facing towards it. Above the eastern front entrance of the Sarai facing river side splendid complex is seen in dilapidated condition. It was built by Emperor Akbar as an inscription on the western gateway. Opposite to main entrance lies a Royal Mosque, which is still in utility. Remnants of a Hammam can also be seen nearby.

NADPUR SARAI

Nadpur Sarai is situated at a distance of about 10 kilometres from Nowshera. It was used as a small halting station during Mughal period. It consists of a large rectangular courtyard enclosed by a walled enclosure with battlement shaped embellishment at the top. It is provided with two rows of machicolations. The entrance is through impressive gateways on the eastern and western sides. The facade of the gateway has alcoves at the bottom and is adorned with recessed panels.

MANGLA DEVI FORT

Mangla Devi Fort is located in the Mangla Devi village which is situated at a distance of around 18 kilometres from Nowshera town, on the pinnacle of a picturesque mount. It is a secure fort and is not easy to access because of its location and well-built fortification. On three of its sides, it is astonishingly surrounded by a river and on the fourth side it has a

difficult uphill rise. The main gateway is linked with a flight of abrupt steps. It now however has been a treasury building for long. It has a large tank in dilapidated condition besides a modern temple of Mangla Mata. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, Mian Rattan Dev had conducted the siege of fort for some years and then brought it under his possessions. It is said that the Sikh Sardar Sahib Singh of Gujrat and Mohan Singh Sukarchaka invaded Khairi-Kharidi and attacked Mangla fort but without success. Finally Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupied the fort after the death of its master Raja Umar Khan.

Dhanidhar Fort

In the year 1846, Britishers sold Jammu and Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh. At that time Maharaja Gulab Singh appointed Mian Hathu as a Governor of Rajouri by removing Raja Raheem Ullah Khan. Mian Hathu then Governor of Rajouri erected Dhanidhar Fort in the year 1855. The main intention of construction of this fort was to keep the Dogra forces at a safer site. Henceforth the edifice was built at a place from where whole of the v Rajouri Valley could be kept under observation. It is situated at a distance of two kilometres from Rajouri city. The fort has been used by Indian Army in the past. The fort is in a dilapidated condition now.[2]

Usman Memorial:

Usman Memorial has been constructed at Jhangar in the memory of Brigadier Usman, of Indian Army who played an important role in recapturing the area around Jhangar. Subsequently Brigadier Usman fell prey to intense shelling of the Pakistani forces on 3rd July 1948. The memorial is maintained by army at Jhangar. A congregation is organised on 3rd July every year, as Jhangar Day.[5]

Balidan Bhawan:

This Bhawan is a memoir of great sacrifices made by the people of Rajouri during 1947-48.

- **Cultural Sources**

People

Rajouri is a blend of different faiths, religions, castes and tribes etc. People of different religions, castes, tribes speaking different languages with diverse dialects live in harmony and peace. Gujjars, Bakarwals, Paharis, Punjabis, Kashmiris and Dogras etc are all dwelling in different places in the district. They speak Gojri, Pahari, Kashmiri, Dogri and Urdu, with a great diversity of local and sub regional dialects. There are populations who are still transhumant. Temporary migrations are common among many families especially, Paharis, Gujjars and Bakarwals with the changing seasons for food and fodder. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others are integrated by a common culture and language in different parts of the district.

Festivals and celebrations

Owing to its diverse socio cultural back ground, people of the district celebrate a wide range of festivals. Important fairs and festivals, which are celebrated in a unique fashion with a specific and matchless regional touch in the district, since long are

DUSSEHRA

Ram Lila is held at Town Hall in Rajouri town. On the Dusshera day a procession is taken out in the city. The effigies of Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Meghnath are burnt publically. People from different walks of life gather here in large numbers.

BAISAKHI FARE AT BANPURI

At a distance of around 2 kilometres from Sunderbani on Beri-Pattan road, there is a Shiva temple at a village Ban Puri. The temple is sited on the roadside. Thus it serves as a great centre of magnetism for travellers. The village is named as Ban Puri after the name of Ban Ganga (Now in Pakistan). It is believed that around 500 years ago, the great saint, Gosain Baba Kashi Das Ji, after seeing "Light" and achieving great spiritual fulfillment from the great shrine of Amarnath, had decided to stay for the meditation for years, for wellbeing of human kind. The Saint is believed to be spiritually eminent and miraculous. After the partition of India, he built the temple at Ban Puri. A grand congregation is organised at the shrine, which is attended by large numbers of devotees, from all over the state.

Nowshera Day

On February 6, every year locals and Indian military remember the heroism of civilians of Nowshera in repulsing the attack of Pakistani invaders in 1975. A celebratory function is organised, which is attended by large no of people including many civilians, ex-soldiers and army personnels. Rural Sports, Cultural Programmes, stalls of developmental accomplishments in various areas are organised by the local administration. However, tableaus of war heroes are the most important attraction of the festival.

Holi

Holi has its own charm, when it is celebrated in Rajouri. On first day, the tableau of Hanuman is taken out from the Sanatan Dharam Sabha. From next day, the tableau of Bhairav, the Lord of Devil is taken out from the Sabha, which also takes a round of the town. Thousands of people from all walks of life join in the congregations. They throw colours

(Gulal) on each other and dance on the drum beats. This presents a unique scenario of social life in Rajouri. The tableau of personified Bhairav walks down to Darhal Nullah, and bows his head before the sacred stone, which is around 3 meters in height, and is prevalently known as Bhairav Pathar, every day.

Folk Songs and Dances

Rajouri is beyond any compare and is only one of its kinds when we talk of its rich and diverse heritage, colourful cultural life and superb folk songs and folk dances. Folk songs and dances of any region portray the life style of its people, their tastes, traditions, costumes, rituals and culture. Rajouri has unique cultural forms and styles of singing and dances.

Gujjars and Bakarwals are one of the most important segments of the population of the district. The main ballads of the region are "Noora" & "Taago". Folk songs like "Dhindi", "Baisakhi", "Kenchi", "Lucko", "Chann", "Dholan", "Sahiban", "Mehndi", "Laari", "Saif-ul-Malook" and "Bar-Shams" are very famous amongst the people. Kashmiri songs like “Wanawun”, “Chakri”, Dogri "Chann", and Punjabi "Mahiya" also echo in the mountains. People have their unique myths behind all songs. Apart from these “Kenchi” is a love song of a Pahari belle. In other words it is a true love story of a Pahari girl with "Munshi" of a forest contractor. Kenchi expresses the broken heart of the female lead and brings tears in the eyes of the villagers. It is indeed a melancholy. Similarly Chann & Dholan are Pahari romantic songs.

Folk Dances

Folk Dances in the district are generally connected with some function, celebration or with the devotion of some god or goddess. Important folk dances of Rajouri are Dogri and Punjabi Bhangra, Gojri Dance, Letri, Chowki Naach, Jattar, Jagarana, Keekli and Rouf etc.

In performance, set pattern of clothes and songs, Dogri Bhangra is entirely poles apart from Punjabi Bhangra. These dances are performed on the fairs and festivals and at different occasions like Letri is performed on the event of Mass Grass Cutting or Harvesting.

Gojri Naach

Gojri dance is very illustrious of the Gujjar culture. It is generally performed on marriage ceremonies. It is effortless and delightful. Male dancers dance in their customary costumes forming a line having sticks in their hands. Female dancers dance on the other side adjust pattern on the rhythm of Drum. The dance is always going together with a folk song.

Letri

This dance is performed on grass harvesting in the autumn months.

Chowki Naach

It is a religious dance performed in the honour of the Gram Devta or Kul Devta. People assemble in the temple or in a place of worship on a particular day and perform Jaatar with iron chains in their hands. The dance is accompanied by devotional songs.

Bindloo and Jagarna

The Bindloo and the Jagarna are the folk dances subject matter of which is matrimonial relationships. Only Women perform this dance. Children and men are not allowed even to see the dance. It is performed when the Barat leaves for Bridegrooms' house and is carried on all through the night.

Keekli

No musical instrument is used in it. The girls perform this dance. They catch hold of each other's opposite hands and take turns in a balanced fashion.

Roff and Chhakri

This is the distinguished dance which is performed by women on the occasion of marriage.

Costumes and Jewellery

1. Self designed beads necklaces woven in coloured silken threads

2. Coins of Indian currency - Key shape Lockets - usually having silver plating

3. Chargul or "loung" - either of gold or plating of gold as a nose ring

4. Jhumka or Kanta - of silver, for ears

5. Kangan or Mareedehis and Kada for arms

6. Haseeri for neck

7. Do - Ladi hear of silver for neck

8. Angoothies or rings of silver

9. Silver - hairpins - joints by a chain at both ends

10. Chippri - a scarf of chheet cloth - They always keep their heads covered with topi and Chippri

Arts and Handicrafts

Rajouri is rich and diverse in handicrafts. Embroidery, Chikhri-wood carving, Tilla work, basket and blanket weaving, Namda and Gabba making etc are the chief handicrafts of the recent past. However with the fast industrial development around the world, some of these handicrafts could not survive. However Embroidery, Namda, Gabba making, Blanket (Patti and Loee) making and Chikhri wood crafts somehow still survive managed to live to tell the tale of a glorious art. The key crafts are:

EMBROIDERY

The main items under embroidery craft consist of Shah Embroidery (both Sojni and Aari).

NAMDA GABBA MAKING

This craft is on the verge of due to poor socio economic conditions of the people.

TILLA (COPPER) WORK

The Tilla (Copper) work used to be the main stay of the cobblers. Darhal, Thannamandi and Budhal are known for it.

BLANKET (PATTI AND LOEE) MAKING

Blanket (locally Patti and Loee) making is one of the oldest crafts. It is still carried on. Pattis and Loees of Rajouri are unparalleled.

CHIKRI WOOD CARVING

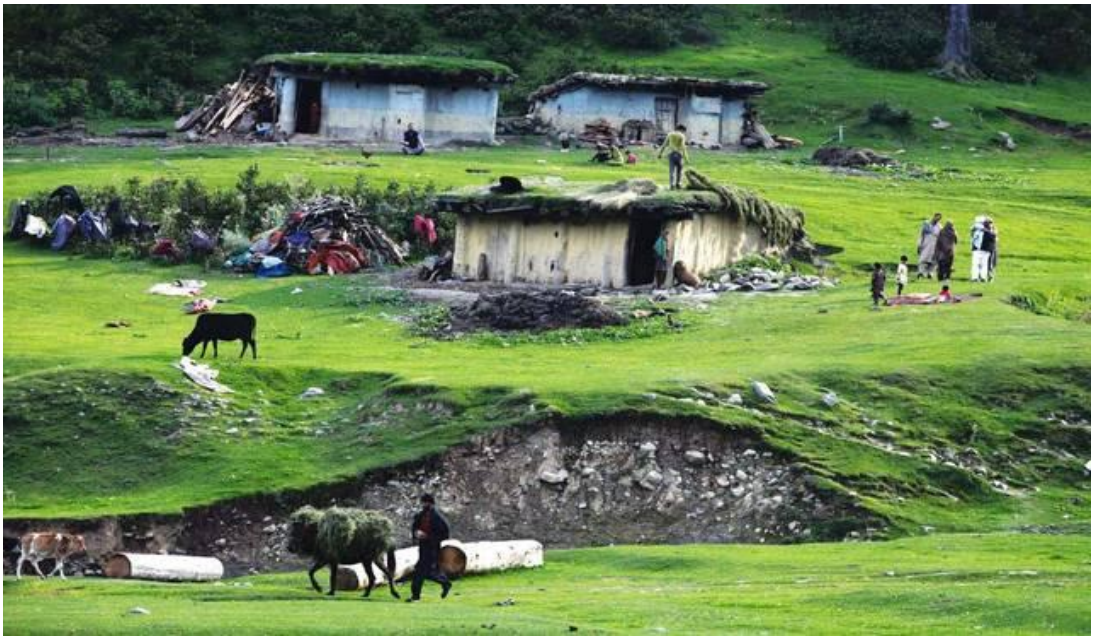
The artisans involved in this craft are mainly located at Shahdara Sharief, Thannamandi and Budhal. These artisans of these areas are famous for manufacturing a number of articles for domestic use as well as for decorative purpose.

- **Rural tourism/ Village Tourism**

Any form of tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, there by benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling

interaction between the tourist and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience is termed rural tourism. [6]

Villages in Rajouri have a huge prospective for rural ecotourism. This potential if make use of can be an benefit for locals. Villages can be used for halts and other purposes. Interaction with local communities is not new to the tourists. To know different spaces, folks and their products is not new to those who travel to discover, explore and learn. The religious, cultural and lingual diversity of villages in Rajouri is of immense significance for the ecotourists. As ecotourism is the travelling to observe and admire not only the nature, but to be acquainted with the diversity of flora and fauna, with the identification of the different traditions and cultures, that are unique to different people and places.



- **Transhumance Activity**

Paharis, Gujjars and Bakarwals are the prominent ethnic groups of the state. They are essentially animal (cattle, goat, and sheep) keeper. Pahari farmers migrate to Dhoks (meadows) where they find green pastures and fodder for animals in the summers.

They make Taras or Kothas (mud houses with thatched roofs) and Bandis (for animals). These Dhoks are located at higher reaches. In winter they return back to their permanent settlements. These people essentially speak Pahari. Paharis are however temporary migrants and are sedentary as well. Like Paharis Gujjars and Bakarwals have become sedentary to a large extent. But a large population among them is still transhumant, especially Bakarwals. They migrate seasonally along with their cattle, sheeps and goats in search of fodder. In summer they also migrate to Dhoks (Meadows). They live in Tamboo (tent) and settle temporarily wherever, they find fodder. Some of them have also constructed Taras and Bandis in these Dhoks. These ethnic groups are the best example of symbiotic relationship of man and environment. They me serve as an important tourist destination.

Conclusion

Owing to its untouched natural magnificence, multitude and exceptionality of its cultures and rich legacy Rajouri District has enormous possibilities for ecotourism. However, this vast potential for ecotourism has been unnoticed since long. It can be utilized only with the necessary infrastructure and advertisement. The beyond compare magnificence, natural beauty, unique and rich cultural and religious heritage of Rajouri District must be conserved and preserved and make use of, for ecotourism. In order to do so, the very first step is its

advertisement and serious concern of State Govt towards necessary and vital infrastructural facilities. District authorities must consult and ask for cooperation from State and other national ecotourism organisations regarding the problem. Awareness among the masses is of prime importance. Thus local authorities should generate consciousness among local people, especially villagers by educating them about the economic and environmental merits of ecotourism. Local people should be given technical and financial assistance for selling their own products to the tourists. In this way ecotourism apart from providing the eternalness of the natural and cultural possessions, may also offer a side income for the local people.

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Chapter 4

Problems and Recommendations

Major Problems

a. Lack of Awareness

Lack of Awareness is one of the important causes of backwardness of tourism in Rajouri-Poonch. People seem to be least aware of the possibilities of ecotourism and the economic opportunities there from. District administration and State Govt could play an important role in this direction. However tourism department in the district was established only a few years back. There is urgent need for training and awareness programmes by the local administrations and the state govt.

b. Transportation and Communication

The region has only one form of transportation, i.e. Road. There are although a huge possibilities for the development of Railways and Air ports, but least attention has been paid to it. Through PMGSY many villages have been connected. But a large number of villages are still waiting to be connected especially those which are situated around tourist spots. Due to lack of any transportation many potential tourist destinations are still unknown even to the local people.

Apart from ill Connectivity in the region, the districts along with the whole state suffer from communication problems as well. For example due to the political instability over there govt has banned SMS services since 2008.

c. Insufficient Advertisement

The region owes its backwardness of tourism also to the lack of sufficient and necessary advertisement.

d. Inconsideration to Training Programmes

There is lack of Training programmes for technicians, local traders, tourist guides, crafts men and the professionals for inculcating in them tourism ethics and for training them for tourism management.

e. Border Location and Political Turmoil

Tourism activity and tourist arrival are negatively correlated with Political turmoil. Both Rajouri and Poonch districts are located near LOC, between India and Pakistan. It might be a factor stopping the potential tourist for the visit. As the region has been witnessing the political turmoil since long, it thus puts a check on the behaviour of tourism. Insufficient Way stations and Wayside Amenities

f. Lack of Research and Data

There is lack of research on the ecotourism of Rajouri-Poonch. There is paucity of data for planning purposes. There is non availability of data regarding tourist arrivals and turn overs even for the well developed tourist destinations where local and regional tourism has flourished to great extent.

g. Insufficient Miscellaneous Tourism infrastructure

Despite the immense possibilities for Toy Trains, River rafting, Cable Car Development, Lake Tourism etc the region is lacking in the infrastructure.

h. Lack of People Participation

No development is possible without the active participation of people. However unlike other tourist destinations of the state , people in the region can hardly be seen promoting tourism activity or products around even the well established tourist destinations.

i. Occupation of Ecotourism sites by Army/ Military

Occupation of Tourist sites and heritage places in the region has a twofold loss. It hinders the visitors on the one hand and ruins the heritage sites on the other. Besides, the buildings like forts, palaces and temples etc military has also occupied some natural destinations of tourist interest. Moti Mahal, Dhanidhar fort etc are some examples.

j. Occupation of Heritage Sites by local Administration

Places of immense importance like Poonch fort has been used as a public building since long.

Suggestions

1) Infrastructural Development

We cannot think of Ecotourism Development in the region independent of the basic infrastructural development. Thus there is urgent need to develop the following sectors:-

a. Transportation

Transportation system needs a lot of improvement in the region. Majority of tourist spots do not have any means of connectivity. There is only one form of transport i.e. Road. However all the villages do not have road network. And the villages which are connected somehow do not have all weather road networks. There are many spots which are least known even to the local people, due to lack of any means of transportation to reach there. There is thus dire need to improve road networks beside the development of Railway network.

b. Communication

Improved communication system would definitely foster the tourism growth in the region. There is need to enhance the mobile network system and internet beside the development of traditional modes of communication.

c. Health Facilities

Health facilities in and around the tourist destinations are the basic necessity. Thus all tourist resorts must have access to the health facilities. Opening of dispensaries and medical shops may fulfil the purpose.

2) Miscellaneous Tourism Infrastructure

Besides Basic Infrastructural development there is urgent need for the enhanced tourism infrastructure. There is enormous scope for other tourism activities which would in return accentuate the process of tourist arrivals. These include

a. Art and Craft Development

Although the government has taken few initiatives for the development of local art and handicrafts but there are many crafts which are on the verge of extinction due to the technological development. Hence there is need to rejuvenate the local art and craft. The responsibilities lie on the shoulders of districts and State governments.

b. Tourism Resorts

Development of existing resorts and discovery and development of new diversified health and heritage and natural resorts is also important.

c. Cable Cars / Gandolas

Poonch Rajouri by and large is a mountainous region with a very few but fascinating valleys and fewer plateaus. There is enormous scope for Cable Car Travelling which indeed has least effect on the environment. Cable car is a wonderful tourist attraction, which brings handsome amount of money as well.

d. Horse travelling

Travelling on the back of horse is not new for tourist. All we need to do is that to train the horse men for the trade. We just need to develop their skill. This will have two fold effect viz. Employment for the horse men on somewhat regular fashion and Increase in the production of horses in the region.

e. Toy Trains

Apart from enhancing the connectivity in the region development of railways would increase the tourist arrivals as well. Toy trains are an important attraction in the hilly tourist resorts world over. The region has thus immense scope for toy trains and related forms of tourism. The state government should thus take necessary action towards railway development.

1) Advertisement

In the present age nothing can be sold without advertisement. Poonch Rajouri Region is perhaps least known as a tourist destination. What is more disappointing is that the region has not been put on the tourist map of India till now. District and State tourism Departments should advertise as much as they can through both print and electronic media.

2) Research, computerisation and information compilation

Tourism department at Poonch was established only a few years back. The department lacks in necessary information about the tourist destinations and the turn over. There is lack of Research and information compilation. The same is the case with Rajouri. There is thus urgent need for research computerisation and information compilation about the visitors, turn overs etc.

3) Withdrawal of Army/ Military from Heritage sites

Presence of paramilitary forces on the tourist destinations and heritage sites like forts and palaces would check the tourist movement on the one hand and would destroy the sites on the other hand. Thus army should be withdrawn back from the tourist destinations and social space.

4) People Participation and Training Programmes

Active People Participation is a must for ecotourism development. It is indeed development for the people and it can be made possible by the people only. Local population should thus be trained for the management of trade, tourism ethics, environmental and cultural conservation and preservation and hospitality. For this there is need for the organisation of large scale training programmes for masses.

5) Exploration of new tourist spots and their development

The region by and large is virgin from the tourist point of view. There is need to explore as much as we can for adventure and leisure apart from seeing and learning.

6) Increased Investment

There is need to increase the investment in this sector. The tourism depart must be kept on priority in the state budget.

7) Improved visitor Facilitation

Provision of sophisticated goods and services with ease and effortlessness should be the hall mark of hospitality.

8) Cooperation of District authorities with the state and other organisations

District authorities must ask for cooperation from state and other tourism organisations for help and direction. They must strive for the ecotourism development with least effects on ecology

9) Reallocation of Public offices

The district administration and State government must move all the public offices from the heritage edifices as soon as possible

10) Conservation, Preservation and Sustainability

In the management of Tourism activity it must be kept in mind that natural cultural, historical as well as religious sources of ecotourism are well preserved for the future. All travelling should be made eco friendly

11) Hospitality

People participation at every level is a must. They must welcome the visitors with love and affection. They must make them feel at home. They need to follow the ancient Indian talisman of "Atithi Devo Bhava- the Guest is a god."

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