

Chingus Fort in J & K - Built on Mughal Architectural Style - India

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Jammu and Kashmir is a land of rich heritage, culture, monuments and tales. And for this the state makes a hotspot for holidays and vacations. Situated in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, Chingus Fort or Chingus Sarai, is one of the oldest fort that dates back to 16th century. Built by Mughal Emperor Jahangir, this fort is also called one night fort as Mughals used it every year to stay for a single night while on their way to Kashmir. While poorly maintained, this fort offers a panoramic view of the valley and it lies on the banks of Tawi River. Chingus is a small yet historical village and Chingus Sarai is located about 2,000 feet above sea level on a nallah. Built in Mughal architectural style, Chingus Fort holds two apartments. Well planned, this fort comprises a residential complex and an open yard. There are separate passages to enter both apartments. However, from inside, both of them are connected. The residential complex within Chingus Fort is surrounded by walled enclosure. There are arched cells that open towards the courtyard. There's a central chamber at the entrance in the western wall with arched roof and a small guard's room on either side. On the outside, there are shops on both the sides. The fort is constructed of rubbles, large pebbles and lakhauri bricks in lime surkhi mortar.

I. INTRODUCTION

Chingus is an ordinary village, but off the main road, in the forest, stands its connection with history. The Chingusserai (rest house) is one of the many medieval Mughal serais built on this road for travellers to rest and water their beasts. Chingus Sarai is one of the most important Mughal Monuments on old Mughal road constructed by an Iranian engineer Ali Mardan Khan on the orders of emperor Jahangir in between 1605 to 1621 AD. This Sarai was the fifth halting station for the royal caravans on Mughal road which was 170 miles long from Gujrat (Now in Pakistan) to Srinagar and divided into 14 halting stations. The monument is surrounded by natural atmosphere located on the right bank of Sukhtao river in between Nowshera and Rajouri which is about 131 KM away from winter capital Jammu and 255 km from summer capital Srinagar via Mughal road. C.E. Bat who visited this sarai in 1867 AD writes in his book 'The Gazetteer of Kashmir' that Chingus Sarai complex is constructed on a flat table land about two hundred feet above Sukh Tao river. The Sarai is Located at 2000 feet above the sea

level. The whole village is known as Chingus and famous for this Mughal monument. Apart from this the village is also known for a prominent Hindu Bawali, ancient stone sculptures with figures of snakes and small lingams under Pipal trees. The sarai complex is surrounded by thick pine forests, scattered Pacca houses. The original name of the village was Khanpur which was established by Jaral Rajas of Rajouri. However, after the burial of entrails of emperor Jahangir in the Sarai the name of the Sarai and village was changed to Chingus Sarai. Chingus is a Persian word for entrails. The overlooking view of snowy peaks of Pir Panchal range is marvelous from this station. There is a tourist cafeteria, small dhabas, tea stalls and tourist guest houses for the convenience of tourists. During summer season there remain great hustle bustle at this spot. From 2012 onward, with opening of Mughal road, the passengers and tourists start avoiding the journey from Srinagar to Jammu via national Highway due to rush and on the road and prefer to travel from Srinagar to Jammu and vice versa via Mughal road instead of Jammu – Srinagar Highway.

The Mughal Sarai Chingus is about 300 years old monument which had remained center of hustle bustle of royal carvans during Mughal period from 1586 to 1751 AD. With the downfall of Mughals in Kashmir, the renowned Mughal road and monuments constructed at each halting station also got severe setback and no attention was paid towards the maintenance of these monuments for centuries together. R. C. Kak writes in 'The Antiques of Rajouri and Bhimber' that Mughal Sarai Chingus was in dilapidated condition in 19th century AD. It was only in 1997 when the local MLA and the then forest Minister Mohd Sharif Tariq had taken a bold decision for the restoration of old glamorous and glorious Mughal monuments. Initially he got the restoration work started through his Community Development Funds. Later on, he prevailed upon archives department and got the whole Sarai complex restored in its original shape up to 1999. Mughal sarai Chingus is a spacious inn with a mosque, the burial place of the entrails of Jahangir, 44 small Hujras (Residential Cells) and three Dalaans. The outer walls are covered with coat of lime plaster, the surface of which is divided into large shallow rectangular panels and arches. It is believed that the Hujras located on the southern side were used by the family members of Emperor Jahangir and other Mughal Kings while going to Kashmir or returning from Srinagar. There is a Dalaan near the southern Hujras which was used by queens and their female attendants. In the middle of north wall there is another Dalaan believed to be used by the emperor. In the Centre of the Sarai, there is a mosque which was constructed later on and renovated during 1997. In the last edge of mosque premises there is a burial place of entrails of Emperor Jahangir. The main gate (Deodi) large in size is located on the western side. This main gate was used by Darbaries and royal caravans. There are two other entrances also in the Sarai towards the northern and southern sides. The northern entrance was used for the movement of royal families towards Sukh Tao River. The southern gate is opened towards the renowned Bawali. There was no encamping ground near the Sarai for royal caravan. It is believed that only personal families of Mughal kings halted in this Sarai while the Mughal caravan encamped on the opposite side of Rajouri River where there was a plain area which is now converted into agricultural fields

II. HISTORY OF THE CHINGUS FORT

As per Iqbal Nama Akbri, Emperor Jahangir visited Kashmir 13 times, Akbar two times and Shahjahan and Aurangzeb once. Jahangir visited 11 times via Mughal road in between 1605 to 1627 AD and stayed in the Sarai for few days during each journey. In 1627 emperor Jahangir while returning from Kashmir fell seriously ill at Behramgala in Poonch area. He was advised by Physicians for complete rest of few days. Therefore, the royal caravan halted at Bharmgala. During this period the king started recovering. One day he decided for a hunting trip. He came out from his camp along with Queen Noor Jahan, sat on a terrace near NooriChambwater fall and started waiting for a deer to hunt. At that time an attendant was trying hard to bring a deer in front of the king on the opposite hill so that he could shoot him. When the attendant reached on a dangerous spot exactly on the opposite side of the emperor, he abruptly slipped from a stone, fell in front of the emperor and died on the spot. His mother who was present there started crying and weeping badly on the death of her son. This was very shocking scene for the king and affected adversely his health and his condition became critical. Therefore, Queen Noor Jahan immediately decided to rush towards Lahore. However, Emperor Jahangir passed away at next halting station Rajouri. In order to avoid possible confrontation of succession among the princes, Noor Jahan kept the fact a secret from the people and the caravan and to avoid decomposition of the body the entrails were buried at Chingus Sarai while the rest part of the body was taken to Lahore where it was buried at Shahadara Lahore. After the burial of entrails this Sarai came to be known as Mughal Sarai Chingus.

III. INFRASTRUCTURE

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Jehangir with two graves

Mughal emperor Jehangir, besides enjoying the distinction of being the rebellious son of Akbar, is perhaps the only person in the world to have two graves — one in Jammu's border district of Rajouri and the other in Pakistan. It's a little-known fact that the intestines of Noor-uddin- Mohammad Jehangir, alias Salim, were buried at the Chingus fort in Rajouri when he died in 1627 on his way to the Kashmir valley.

Chingus is a Persian word meaning intestine. While the intestines of the Mughal emperor were buried at Chingus, his body lies entombed in the northern suburb of Shahdara in Lahore, Pakistan. While the tomb in Lahore has been well-maintained by the Pakistan government and is visited by a large number of tourists every year.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is immense tourism potential in the areas of Districts Rajouri and Poonch which is unexploited and could not be developed. If pilgrimage, Heritage and Leisure tourism potential of the area would properly identified and improve as per required parameters, Rajouri and Poonch may become tourism hub of the northern India. As we go through some important heritage places and Monuments these are all directly and indirectly associated with great happiness moreover these sites are at places where other types of tourism may groom like leisure, adventure, MICE etc., So proper research work by reputed agency rather professional with the involvements of locals may provide inputs for policy measure and result oriented implementation. There is also need to address the non involvements of non professional in tourism development activities. Beside this there is need to undertake aggressive programmes like promotion and awareness activities for tourism in the area. Similarly large numbers of tourist return back from Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu, they can be easily diverted to Rajouri and Poonch by development of tourism product and appropriate infrastructure like hotels and by increasing promotion programmes. Tourism is the only hope for overall development of region otherwise its economy cannot improve because region is like in industrial, agricultural and other fronts.

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