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Security Threats to Trade Management During the Mughal Era in South Asia (1500-1750)

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ABSTRACT

Roads were developed by humans in ancient times. With the passage of time these structures went through development and took form of modern highways. A complex structure of road network existed in Indian sub-continent during imperialism in South Asia. When Mughals developed their Empire, they further developed that road network. These routes were used for various purposes like local as well as interstate trade, postal services, and movement of royal army. Individual travelers and caravans also moved on those roads. Valuable items were carried by travelers on these routes hence various groups of professional robbers, thieves and thugs were gradually formed who robbed and killed travelers. Mughal Emperors took various measures to address this issue. Administrative officers were given the task to make arrangements to provide security to travelers. Rest houses (Sarai) were made, check posts were created and local responsibility law was continued which required local village heads to provide security on roads which were present near their villages. A strong spying network was established which kept the emperor well informed about the happenings in the state. Culprits were either killed in encounters with Mughal troops or captured by the village vigil force or they were presented before Emperor and Judges who punished these criminals.

Key Words: Road Security Measures, Mughal empire, Transportation Management

Introduction

One of the first things man developed was roads. Initially paths were developed when man went in search of food and water. Later these paths were converted into

well-developed pavements so that people could move around easily. After some time, a whole network of pavements was laid which was further developed into roads which finally took the shape of modern well-developed roads of modern era. The journey of road development was probably started by Egyptians who were the first ones to develop roads followed by Indians, Chinese, Greek and Romans. Different sorts of material were used in making of roads. For example, Indus people used bricks to develop roads. There were various sorts of roads. Highways and local roads are two main examples. These roads served as a route for local, interstate and intercontinental traffic. (Jacobson, 1940) These also provided efficient means for the overland movement of armies and inland carriage of official communications besides carriage of trade goods. (Kaszynski, 2000) The term for measuring distance in medieval India was Kos originating from Krosa a word from Sanskrit. Kos was also called Kuroh in Persian. Babur fixed the length of a Kos equal to four thousand paces. Humayun slightly added few paces to the length. (Parihar)

Highway Routes in Mughal India

During medieval period or Middle Ages Road network was further developed. Mughal Empire or Gurkaniya (Persian name of Mughal Empire) was founded in Indian sub-continent in 1526, ruled by Turko-Mongol Chagatai rulers who were given name Mughal by Indians. (Richards, 1995) Mughal Empire at its peak extended over almost whole of sub-continent and some parts of modern-day Afghanistan. It is considered to be the second largest Empire in Indian sub-continent after Mauriya Empire covering an area of approximately four million square kilometers. (Taagepera, 1997)

Though various highways existed before Mughals came to India but Mughals developed a vast and extensive road structure. Highways were built throughout the Empire to facilitate travelers. They also improved the existing infrastructure. Merchants and passengers travelled through these roads to reach their destination. Horses, oxen and carts were the modes of transport in Middle Ages. Dr. Jadunath has given an account of the main highways that were functional during the Mughal era. He traced thirteen roads and was not sure about eight highways that whether they were functional or not. A chart of those highways is highly appropriate to mention here.

Roads traced: Agra- Delhi. Delhi-Lahore. Lahore -Gujrat-Attock Attock-Kabul. Kabul-Ghazni-Qandhar. Gujrat-Sirinagar. Lahore-Multan. Delhi- Ajmir. Delhi- Barili-Patna. Delhi-kol. Agra-Allahabad. Bijapur-Ujjain. Sironj-Narwar. Roads partially traced Golkonda-Asir-Hindia. Hindia-Sironj. Narwar-Gwalior-Dholpur. Multan- Bhakkar. Sirinagar- Atak. Ajmair-Ahmadabad. (Sarkar, 1920)

A detailed account of highways, trade routes and northern passes shall be given to develop a better understanding of the roads present during Mughal era.

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Ibn-e-Khurdadbeh, an Arab geographer in ninth century mentioned a route which connected the province of Kirman to Mansoor in Sindh. This route passed through the country of Jats (Jaats) who kept a watch over it. Muhammad bin Qasim altered the route and the road went to Sehwan via Moj. Qasim took another route after crossing river Sindh and went towards north-west from town of Masoor. Alor or Rai was the main town here. Rest of the route was same. Muqadasi mentions another route which was from Khuzdar to Juy or Nahr Sulaiman in Kirman province. Kiz was one of the largest towns on road towards India. Chahbar was another town which led to the port of Makran. Fannazbur was central point to many roads. A route from Fannazbur linked Daibal via Kiz. Another route from Fannazbur went to Sibi. A route existed from Fannazbur via Khuzdar and went towards Sehwan and finally ended at Mansoor. A route existed which was developed by Alexander when he descended towards north India. This route came from Kabul and after crossing Punjsher river and Tagao (an ancient town) it went in two directions one into Swat valley and the other towards Hotimardan. This route further went towards Bajur territory via Kunar. After reaching its destination the route led to lower Swat region and came to Peshawar valley. The same route also went towards south east reaching Buner. When this region was crossed and Barandu river was passed a pass called Malandrai was situated. The next stop was Shabazgarh where two roads came from Peshawar and Swat. From Hotimardan road came down to the plains of Yousufzai lands called as Hashtnagar. From Hashtnagar the road moved eastwards and reached the bank of river Sindh at Hund or Ohind. V.A Smith mentioned another route from Und that went southwards and reached a place where Beas and Satluj rivers met. To explain in detail this route reached Taxila from Und and then reached the town of Jehlum in the southeast covering a distance of hundred miles by way of Margalla hills. (Verma, 1960)

Historical Background

When Muslim rule started in sub-continent the Cis-Indus and Ganga Jumna doab regions gained prominence. Agra and Delhi emerged as central towns. There were various routes in these regions whose short detail is enclosed in this work. A route from Agra came to Delhi via Palwal, Faridabad. Jahangir has mentioned this route in his memoirs. This road was known as Agra-Delhi highway. From Delhi to Lahore a road existed which reached its destination via Badli-Narela, Taraori-Azimabad, Thaniswar, Ambala, Ludhiana-Phior and Sultanpur. Another important road came to Lahore from Sirhind after passing through Sarai Ammanat Khan. A route from Delhi also went towards Uch. Delhi-Gujrat road started from Delhi and passed through Ghati Sagon, Cambay, Patan, Nikin, Tando Khan and reached Thatha via Sonda. This road was called Delhi-Gujrat Road. Another road started from Shahdara passed through Hakimabadpur, Chakkar, Wazirabad-Gujrat, Khanaspur, Rawalpindi and reached Attock. This road was called Lahore-Attock

Road. River Jhelum could be reached by two roads from the river Sindh. Babur differentiated them as upper and lower roads. From Sindh to Hassanabdal the two roads came to same point. From here the upper route proceeded passing through Margalla pass and went to Dhamak and Bakrala via Rawalpindi. Then it went downward to Rohtas and then proceeded to open plains of Jhelum. The lower route proceeded to Jangi from Taxila and after passing through Margalla pass went to Dudhial. At this point the road was divided into two lines, one went to south towards Chakwal and the Salt range and reached Pind Dadan Khan and Ahmadabad while another road went towards east and reached Jalalpur.

Literature Review

Abul Fazal has mentioned the Khairabad route as one of the fine roads that led to the province of Kabul. This road was difficult to navigate but Akbar improved it to an extent that even wheel carriages could pass easily and travelers frequently moved on it. Kabul-Ghazni route was another important route. Two roads went to Ghazani one road went via Rauza-i- Sultan and other from Urghandi. The Hindukush mountains were crossed by three main roads. The Panjshir road which consisted of three roads, the Khawak road, Tul road and Bazarak. The second main road was called the Parwan route. A road passed from this route which had seven passes called Haft-Bacha (seven children). These were small passes between Parwan and its main pass Bajgah. The two roads also came towards Bajgah from Andrab. This whole route was called Kandhar-Herat route. Another important route system was called Ghorband route system. It consisted of three roads. First road passed from Parwan called Yangi-Yul pass and reached Khanjan. The second road was called Qipchaq road which crossed the rivers junction of Andrab and Surkhab. Third road passed from Shibr-to pass. Another important route is mentioned by Abdul Hamid Lahori. This route was called Kabul-Balkh route. This route consisted of five passes known as Tul, Khawaja Zaid, Khinjan, Abdarrah and Maidan passes. Another route from Kabul went north west and passed through Unai pass and the upper waters of Helmand. Then it crossed the Koh-I-Baba range after crossing Hajjiyak and Irak passes and finally reached Bamian. A winter route reached Bamian after passing from Ghorband a road towards Balkh. Then the road reached Zarak and then to Bamian. Another road passed through Shibr pass in Hazara valley and reached Bamian. A road reached Balkh after passing through Zorak. Bamian was like central point. Two main roads then reached Balkh from Bamian.

There were various route systems in sub-continent. There were four main roads coming from India into Kabul. One passed through Khaibar other went through the Bangash lands, third passed Naghr or Naghz and the last one from Farmul. These roads can be further discussed. First road was called Lamghanat road and it passed between Kabul and Lahore and went towards Peshawar and crossed river Sindh near Attock. It was also called Shahrah (grand road). The other

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road was called Karappah road. It was a branch of aforementioned road and separated from Shahrah (grand road) near Jalalabad. Third one was called upper Bangashat road and crossed river Sindh near Dinkot or Reishikot. This road reached its destination after passing from Lahore and Bhira. Last road was lower Bangashat road which crossed river Sindh at chaupara or Chapari pass. This route also came to Lahore through Bhira and went to Ghazani and Kabul. The upper Bangashat route system consisted of the Kurram road which passed through Bannu and went to Ghazni. A road also passed through Tochi valley. This road passed through the Tochi pass and crossed the Bannu lands and went towards Farmul (Urganj) and after passing through it came to Birk (Barak) and then took a turn towards north-west and reached Ghazni. The lower Bangashat route system included the Gomal or Ghwaliri road. This road passed from south of Tochi pass and led to Ghazani. This road was parallel to Gomal stream and the stream had to be crossed many times. It reached Gomal-Ghazni Road via Farmul. The route reached Dera Ismail Khan southwards and then went northwards to reach Ghazani. Babur discovered another route known as Jamrud-Kabul circuit route. This highway passed through almost all-important routes. From Jamrud this road took a turn towards south and crossed the river Bara and came towards Kohat pass. Then the road went towards south-east and then took a turn to south-west and reached Hangu in Bangash areas. Hangu road was situated between Kohat and Hangu and passed through a valley situated between high mountains. This road ended after reaching Bannu. To reach Kohat this road passed through a defile which was about nine miles. The road was passing in both north and south directions. Towards north the road reached Peshawar and in south it was closed by a high hill from reaching district Kohat and the hill had to be climbed in order to reach the destination. After climbing the hill road reached Kohat. The second half of the route reached a rich valley from where the road led to Hangu. From Hangu it came towards Kahi after passing through some low hill valleys. From Kahi came the town of Darsamand. After crossing this area, the road reached Thal on the northern side of the river Kurram and Biland Khel to the south. Afterwards the road came down to Bannu and then to Isakhel village on Kurram river and then went westward and after crossing dry plains reached Gomal valley. After crossing Gomal valley and Suleiman range the road reached a village called Bilah. Then this road reached Pawat pass and finally ended at a village called Chotiali. From Chotiali to Ghazni the road was in north-western direction. An important but smaller road was from Attock to Bhira via Pirhala. Baber travelled on it from Mardan to Bhira via Pirhala. This whole route system was called upper Sindh route system. The lower Sindh route system consisted of various roads. A route was called Agra-Ahmadabad Road. Various roads reached Ahmadabad from Agra. One road reached Ahmadabad via Ajmer and the other road reached via Chitor. Different routes connected Sindh with Agra and Delhi. One direct road went to Nahrvara called Al-Jurz (King's Road) and in west it met a road which led to Ahmadabad and finally reached lower Sindh areas. Two roads led to Ajmer and

this route was called Agra-Ajmer route. First route passed from Fatehpur, Mughal Sarai, Ladana, Bandar Sarai and reached Ajmer fort. The second route was from Fatehpur, Mughal Sarai, Lalkot, Mandil, and Ajmer. Prince Khurram also used a route to reach lower Sindh whose stages are as follows i.e. Ajmer, Nagar, Jodhpur and Thatha. Same route was used by Humayun on his way to Sindh. A route existed which was called Ajmer-Ahmadabad route. It was from Ajmer to Garo then passing through various towns it reached Bhimmal and finally at Ahmadabad. An important route was called Ahmadabad –Lahri Boudar route. This route reached Thatha after crossing Patan. Bhakar –Jodhpur route was an important road. After crossing Rohri the road reached near village of Aru and the next stage was village of Mhow and then it reached Uchh. After crossing dessert this road reached the town of Jaisalmer. After passing through this town road reached Amerkot after crossing Sehwan Village of Runai. This route was used by Hummayun when he travelled after getting invitation from Maldev a ruler in lower Sindh. Another route is mentioned in accounts known as Jodhpur-Peshawar route via Bilara. This road passed through Bilara, Nosaria, Chulkai, Vai (in Fatehpur district), Lahore, Rawalpindi, Attock and finally reached Peshawar. Uchh and Multan were focal points of various routes in Medieval India. After reaching Multan from Uchh the road went to Tulamba a town in north-east situated on the left bank of river Ravi. The road then went towards south and reached Jal. The next town was Shahnawaz a populated town on the bank of river Beaaas. After reaching this town the road went up to Janjan. After reaching here the road reached Delhi via Shawal, Jahwal, Ajodhan (Pakpatan), Khaliskotli, Bhatnir, Firouza, Tonka, Samana. A road called Delhi –Multan Road was a famous route for travelers in those times. This road went to Delhi via Lahore. Army convoys and caravan generally used this route because it passed through fertile areas of Punjab. Food, water and fodder for animals were ample here. From Lahore the road went towards Nowshera (a town in Punjab in medieval India), Jhok, Chichawatani, Sahawa Gharib, Tulumba, Sard, Mandanpur and then finally reached Multan.

Another popular road from Lahore to Multan passed through Bhira. After crossing Ravi River, it went towards Hazara village. Then after crossing Chenab River the road led to town of Bhira. Then the road went downwards (south-west) towards Khushab. After crossing Khushab the road split into two roads one going towards Kabul via Bannu and other went to Multan and Uchh where it reached another important route. A direct route also existed from Bhira to Kabul via Salt range (Koh-I-Jud). The road reached Kabul via Dinkot, Bannu, Iriab. This route joined the Bangash routes to Multan through Dinkot and Bhira. A route existed from Ghazni to Bhira. This route reached Khushab and Shahpur via Bannu and after crossing river Sindh at Isakhel reached Bhira and from Bhira ended at Khushab. A road went from Multan to Kandhar via Sangar pass and Thal Chotiali. The route passed through river Chenab and reached Petoali a village near river Sindh and then came to Alam Khan an area twenty- five miles north of Dera Ghazi Khan. After that the road passed through Sangar pass then entered Jajah lands and

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reached Sung-I-Nuksan pass and after crossing this pass reached Chatzan. Then this route reached SihGotah after crossing hills. This road went further and reached Pushang or Pishin and after crossing it reached Mandarra pass. After that this road reached Mard-Kalah. This route was used by Dara Shikoh when he moved from Multan to Kandhar. A road between Multan and Kandhar also passed through Bolan pass. It was narrow route and difficult to cross. A very important city i.e. Quetta lay on this route. This city was called the watch tower of the western marches.

Some routes also led to Malwa from North India. A road went from Delhi to Malwa via Gwalior and Nagor. Another highway went to Malwa from Delhi through Gwalior and Bayana alongside the Chambal River. After reaching Mewar roads were divided and one route went towards Gujrat while other reached Malwa. A road from Ajmer reached Malwa via Deo Rai, Mawal and Kherabad. Another route took travelers to Bayana through Rathambor.

Mountain passes in north-western India were points to enter sub-continent thus they had a significant importance. Those invaders who came to Sub-continent via north-west travelled through these passes. Travelers also moved on some of these passes. A brief description of these passes is highly relevant. The Hindukush passes, the upper valley Helmand passes, the Swat valley passes, the Sulaiman range passes, the Kithar range passes, the lower Derajat passes. The Hindukush passes were further divided into three categories i.e. the Chitral division, Kafirstan Division and Kohistan Division. In Chitral Division passes were called Ishtirak, Baroghil, Nuksan and Dora. The Kafirstan pass was not a well-known pass in Medieval times. In Kohistan division the passes were called Panjshir valley passes, upper Panjshir valley passes, the lower Panjshir valley passes. The upper Panjshir valley passes included Anjuman pass, Thal or Tol pass and Zarya pass. These passes were situated towards the north of Hindukush Mountain. The lower Panjshir passes included Yatumak, Umraz, Shwa, Parandih and Shatpal passes. There were some passes in Parwan valley. The largest pass was called Parwan pass. Seven minor passes called Haft-bacha (seven Children) were situated near main road of Parwan pass. These were passes in Ghorband valley called Gawalian, Gwazyar, Chardarya, Ghalalaj, Farinjal and Shibr. They were present towards west of Hindukush mountains. Babur named Chardarya pass as Qipchaq pass. It was a point where Humayun fought a battle with his brother Kamran. The upper Helmand valley passes were also called Koh-I-Baba passes. Three passes lead towards Bamian from eastern side of Koh-I-Baba. These were called Irak, Hajiyak and Pusht- Hajiyak. There was another pass called Akrobat pass which crossed Helmand valley and went towards north. A pass called Jou-Kal lay on the main Kabul-Herat Road. Various passes were crossing Swat and Bajour valleys. These areas belonged to Yousufzais (a Pashtun tribe). The Sulaiman range passes included Khaibar, Kurram and Waziristan passes. Waziristan had two passes i.e. Tochi and Gomal. Another pass existed in Khaibar region called Jagdalak pass. The Kurram pass included various passes called Darwaza, Paiwar, Sikrim,

Ispingwai, Shutr-Gardan, Tograi, shink-I-Kotal and Khusora. Kohat pass was one of the famous passes of northern India. In north it reached Peshawar while towards south it reached district Kohat. Another pass existed in Medieval India which reached Peshawar from south called Sindh-Basta pass. Aurangzeb used this pass to reach Peshawar. Another important pass existed on Kabul-Ghazani Road called Sher-Dahan pass. The Bolan, Khojak and Mula are significant passes in the Kirthar and Hala ranges. Some smaller passes are Harbab, Phusi, Rohel and Garre. Khojak pass is located after crossing Khawaja Amran an offshoot of Toba-Kakar mountains situated in the Pishin district of Balouchistan. Mula pass is situated towards south of Bolan pass. There are some other passes present in north-western region called Kaurah, Wahwa, Liriah, Bhati, Sangar, Drug, Lundi, Mohuey, Shori, Kaleri, Suri, Rekharn, Ghazi, Kahbi, Raey, Choti-I-Baba and Choti-I- Pain. But during medieval times Kaura, Sangar, Bhati and Sakhi Sarwar passes were famous and important.

Material and Methods

In this case, we will explain the road security measures and transportation management during Mughal era. In order to answer research questions, the researchers pursued an historical and descriptive route by reviewing extensive literature and different research studies on the topic. This article has qualitative scope. By applying this research method, road security measures and transportation management during Mughal era would be discussed in its contemporary contexts for the better understanding of war of trade between imperial forces at defined time. Moreover, given the historical background of the Mughal era transportation management will be examined thoroughly by applying the historical framework. By analyzing the multiple dimensions of this issue, a perfect continuity and suitable assessment can be drawn regarding the methods and strategies behind road security measures and transportation management during Mughal era.

Strategies and Methods of Transportation

Caravans

Transport system was primitive during medieval times. Common people travelled on foot. Carts driven by bulls, horses and donkeys were also in use. Manarique compared these carts to European coaches. Ovington wrote that these carts could carry only three to four persons. Thevenot mentioned carts which were pulled by eight to ten oxen. Abul Fazal wrote that Akbar had developed a cart which included bathrooms. Paliki or Palanquin (a covered room like transport) was also a popular means of transport. It was carried by four to five men. This was an expensive mode of transport and only rich men and nobility used it. There was another transport called Chandol (a sort of palanquin). (Parihar) Roads were

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thousands of kilometers long. There was always a danger of dacoits and thieves. This led travelers to form groups. Various Persian and Urdu sources indicate towards this arrangement. These groups were called Kafila or Caravan. In Kafila (caravan) people desiring to travel moved together due to security reasons. The main part of caravan were usually traders. These caravans could move all around the year except in monsoon (rainy season in sub-continent) when rivers overflowed and roads were full of mud. (Parihar) Manrique after missing the caravan to Kandhar joined a caravan of a noble going in that direction. In medieval India the largest caravans were led by Banjara community. They were cattle raisers who used to transport cattle to various parts of sub-continent. Thomas Roe encountered such a caravan which consisted of ten thousand bulls carrying corns. (Parihar) Roe saw another caravan of camels accompanied by three hundred men who were going to capital from Kandhar with gifts from governor of Kandhar. (Thomas Roe) Mughals also facilitated these groups. The leader of the caravan was called Mir, Salar or Bakhshi and was appointed by traders/travelers. All important decisions were taken after formal consultation with Mir. This person was authorized to seek help from state if the caravan was in trouble. (Idrees, 2007) These caravans had armed guards with them. Guards were called Santaris. William Howkins hired fifty Pathans as guards with the help of Khan Khanan and those guards escorted him. William was impressed by loyalty of these guards. (Farooque, 1973) William Hodges has described a picture of passing caravans on main roads where soldiers were present around these roads. Travelers who travelled on main roads formed groups. They took rest under the shade of trees or by the side of wells where they took out water. The soldiers were armed with swords, bows and arrows. Merchants used to spend their time in calculations while resting under the shades of trees. Breads (Chappati) were baked by travelers and fire was lighted at night. (Hodges, 1703)

Road Safety Measures

As wealthy traders and travelers (carrying various commodities and merchandise) travelled on these roads various groups of robbers and thieves were gradually formed who used to rob and kill people. Mughal Emperors made arrangements to protect travelers from these roue elements. Orders were given to highway patrolling units, police check posts and officials were appointed to secure roads. Imperial orders were called Dastak, Qaul or Farman. (Farooque, 1973) In a letter written to Asad Khan (Umdat-ul-Mulk or best in the kingdom) Aurangzeb wrote the conditions on which governorship of a province should be given. The conditions included that governor should make the main roads safe for travelers under his jurisdiction. (Bilmoria)

Trade is an important activity in a state. In Mughal era traders used to travel on different routes. Local as well as interstate trade was done. The economy of the state was in good shape. In order to encourage travelers and merchants, Mughals

improved existing trade routes and developed new ones. Central Asia which lies towards north of Indian –subcontinent was homeland of Mughals and Sultans of Delhi. There were routes between central Asia and sub-continent. Mostly travelers used roads present in the north-western India. Merchants and traders passed through Khyber and Bolan passes. These passes were entry points into sub-continent for anyone who came from Afghanistan or central Asia. Peshawar, Lahore and Multan were the main towns of north-western India where travelers stayed before moving further deep into India. Spices, dry fruits, sugar, indigo, drugs, precious stones, pearls coral, perfumes such as amber, musk, camphor and sandalwood. Woolen stuffs, carpets, silk (Alam, 1994) and expensive horses were one of the main products and items which were traded. Slave trade was also thriving. Slaves with specialized skills were in high demand.

Both Mughal and central Asian rulers were aware of the importance of safe and peaceful roads and they took necessary steps for the said purpose. Jahangir used to boast that he was able to bring fresh fruits from central Asia without getting rotten. A notable number of central Asian Scholars and Sufis also traveled on these routes usually without trouble. These roads were busy routes and significant traffic has been recorded in historical accounts. Obviously, this could not have been achieved without proper co-ordination between the rulers. There are interesting narrations in books of history. It appears that there was a system of co-ordination and sharing of information between rulers in Persia, central Asia and India. Rulers had framed a mechanism to share information about the caravans moving on important roads to ensure their safety. One can understand that this system was not as accurate as it is in modern times when states want to co-ordinate on some regional or international level. Rivalries and enmities did not affect this system of sharing information. The flow of traffic on Qandhar and Kabul roads was not affected when Safvids and Mughals were wrestling for control over Qandhar. Local governors had a contact with each other so that they could take necessary steps to ensure safety of travelers. The emergence of a strong Khatari business community in Mughal era is an example of safe and peaceful roads during Mughal era. When Mughal Empire became weak and there was an uprising of peasants in Punjab (one of the significant changes during the start of decline of Mughals) the roads were no longer safe and the situation prevailed for quite some time. This is an added argument in support of stance that roads were safe during Mughal rule until the decline of Empire started. (Alam, 1994)

Babur remained busy in wars so he did not had time to develop an administrative system. Yet he made few administrative changes. After the death of Babur, Humayun ascended to the throne. Soon after getting to the throne, he was driven out by a dynamic noble Sher Shah Suri who was founder of the Sur dynasty. Sher Shah made administrative changes during his rule which were continued by the Mughals. Sher Shah improved, constructed and repaired various roads. Grand trunk road (G T) road which is still used in modern times. He introduced the concept of local responsibility. One of the primary purposes of this

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rule was to protect roads from robbers and thieves. This rule stated that if a robbery on roadside occurred Muqqadam (village head) under whose jurisdiction the road lay would be responsible for it. If he could not find the culprit Muqaddim had to compensate for it. If jurisdiction was not known then all Muqqadams of nearby villages had to compensate. If robber was found then the Muqqadam under whose jurisdiction such robber was found had to pay fine. Headmen of villages personally supervised the security arrangements on roads for the fear of getting punished if travelers got hurt or robbed by the bandits. Sher Shah had given orders to his Ammal (officers) to treat the travelers kindly so that when they went back to their countries, they would project a good image of India. If a traveler died in some accident his property was to be secured. Thieves and robbers were punished according (Sarwani) to sharia. (Iftikhar, 2016) Aurangzeb had given a Farman in 1672 to keep a surveillance on suspicious elements so they could be nabbed before they did a robbery or theft. (Ahmad) A tax called Rahdari was levied on travelers when they travelled on roads. It can be equated with fare paid by travelers on motorways in modern times. This tax (Rahdari) was used to repair roads and to provide security to travelers. An officer called Rahdar was appointed who collected Rahdari tax and worked with other officials to make roads safer. Special posts (Chawkis) were made where Rahdari was levied. During the reign of Jahangir Rahdari was collected on all major roads of Mughal Empire. Zamindars (landlords) were made responsible for security of roads where Rahdari was not levied. These officers also collected taxes to maintain the system (Farooque, 1973) of security. (Farooque, 1973) Thevenot paid half a rupee as a toll tax which was collected by governor and he has mentioned that this governor was responsible to keep a check on robbers present around roads. (Fawcett, 1951)

Travelers could hire messengers. They also brought information about the condition of roads ahead. Nicholas Withington an English traveler hired such a person and send him to Sindh so he could investigate the commercial prospects but he never returned as the roads were unsafe. Peter Mundy sent a messenger and learned that thieves had stolen some camels from a Dutch traveler and killed his guards. (Farooque, 1973) One of the features of Mughal royal caravan (when king moved on a route) was a lamp attached on the top of Akasdiah (a camp where a lamp was purposefully lighted) so that those people who had lost their way could stay at night near this camp. The camp was secured and there was no fear of robbers. Every Ameer (noble) provided watchmen who guarded the royal camp and its surroundings. The guards shouted Khabardar (beware). Kotwal (most probably in charge of nearby town) ordered the soldiers to patrol the whole area including bazars. (Fawcett, 1951)Jadunath Sarkar was of the view that the policing of the rural area was left to the locals. Chowkidars (guards) appointed by the villagers were not appointed by the state. Though faujdar was appointed but he was unable to patrol large swaths of the land. (Sarkar J. , 1920) This may not be very accurate description of a system. Faujdars were appointed as head of police department though he had some other duties as well. A system of local

responsibility remained enforced in Mughal Empire which required local village heads to organize security system around the main roads which passed near their villages. The Chawkidars (guards) were though appointed by local village heads but if security situation deteriorated in particular area the village head was answerable to state officers for negligence. Further various accounts mention presence of soldiers (Fawcett, 1951) around the main roads which indicated towards the fact that state arranged security for travelers and the local responsibly system was to strengthen the security system of a huge country.

Emperor's Movement on Highways and its Impacts

Mughal Emperors Shifted their capitals due to various reasons. During Mughal rule which spanned over two hundred years, six Emperors established their capitals in five different cities. There were various reasons for change of capital and scholars have debated on it. It is an interesting historical fact that when Emperor decided to move his capital hundreds of thousands of people, cattle and horses moved with him. The army units stationed at previous capital also moved with him. The speed of royal caravan was quite slow. It took months before reaching new destination. The royal caravan was preceded by royal agents, scouts and laborers who had specified duties to perform. Royal agents secured co-operation of local landlords and merchants. Soldiers accompanying Emperor were vigilant and ready to defend Emperor if attacked. This caravan not only displayed the royal grandeur but also had an impact on those areas from where Emperor passed. The shifting of capital by Emperors also had an impact on law-and-order situation around the roads and those elements who created troubles were discouraged to carry out their activities for some time. (Sinopoli, 1994)

There were other reasons when Emperor left the capital e.g. hunting expedition, war, recreational trip etc. Mughal princes also moved in same fashion. Whenever Mughal Emperors came out of their capitals they moved with great pomp and show. Monserate records that when Akbar went on a journey hundreds of soldiers and laborers were sent prior to the King's movement to clear roads from rocks etc. The royal camp had a huge kitchen where cooks specialized in cooking specific dishes were present. An officer was appointed to keep a watch over royal kitchen. Hundreds of camels carried gold, silver and robes of honor in royal caravan. Royal office records were also loaded on camels. The personal tent of king was carried by eight to ten horses. A trumpet was blown at night which meant that now caravan shall stop. When Emperor came out of tent instruments were made to create sounds. (Parihar) When Aurangzeb came to power there were rumors that he wanted to visit Lahore and Kashmir. For the purpose of recreation and to avoid the summer in his capital. Emperor started his journey towards Lahore Road. Thirty-five thousand cavalry which was his personal guard accompanied him on this journey. The artillery consisted of seventy heavy and sixty small cannons. Some of those cannons were so heavy that elephants carried

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them. This led Bernier to become suspicious about the intentions of the King that whether he wanted to lay a siege on Kandhar or was he going to a pleasure trip. He further writes that when King travelled, he had two personal camps. One was always in advance of other. The camp in advance was called Pesh- Khema (camp in advance). This camp was kept ready one day in advance so when king reached his next stop the camp was ready. The camps were so huge that they were carried on elephants. (Bernier, 1656-1668)

Sarai

There were some other arrangements which were done by Emperors. These measures made the journey of travelers safer and easy. One of the noticeable measures was construction of caravan Sarai (rest houses/motels). Caravan Sarai (rest houses/motels) were square or rectangular structures encircled with high battlemented curtain wall. Each corner was enclosed with a palisade so it resembled forts. The central courtyard was an open place without a roof called Dalan. Rooms were made close to the walls to accommodate travelers. There was a permanent staff in these Sarai (rest houses/motels). Facility was provided to hold animals. There was a masjid inside the Sarai (rest house/motel) and ulema were given residence. Sarai (rest houses/ motels) differed in their construction in different parts of the Empire. When a traveler reached a Sarai (rest house/motel) he was explained about the facilities. When a room was given to a traveler no one could dislodge him. Mannucci wrote that a Sarai (rest house/motel) had eight hundred to one thousand rooms. Peter Mundy observed that Nurmahal Sarai could hold five hundred horses and up to two to three thousand people. When Manarique travelled on Agra-Delhi Road he was unable to find a room as all rooms were booked. Thomas Roe was given four rooms. Each traveler was given a bed but bedding was his own. Items of daily use could be bought from inside of Sarai (rest house/motel) as there was a marketplace to facilitate travelers. These Sarai (rest houses/ motels) were kept clean. Sometimes thieves broke into rest houses. Thugs also visited Sarai (rest houses/motels) and looted simple travelers, this is also indicated in folk lores. (Parihar) Thevenot described a Sarai (rest house/motel) as a building having many lodges and a balcony standing on pillars made of fine stones. The entry was a large porch having a dome like roof. The gates opened into building. Building was two stories high with chambers on all sides. (Jean Baptiste Tavernier) Caravan Sarai were built after every eight Kos. (Parihar) Sher Shah ordered construction of Sarai (rest houses/motels) and Dakchukis (post offices). These places were guarded by Chawkidar (guards) and there was a Darogha (watchman in charge). These places also worked as a sort of Checkposts. A traveler could get help in case of emergency. These buildings were present after every few kilometers. On special occasions these Sarai (rest houses/Motels) provided complimentary food and water. Horses were given fodder and grain. This proves a fact that roads in early modern India were not haunted or desolate places.

(Sarwani)When Mughals regained throne they further improved the system. (Tyagi, 2014) Mughals liked to build Sarai (rest houses/motels) they built rest houses in almost whole of north –western India. (Parihar)Akbar built Sarai (rest houses/motels) at Ujjain and Bhunsara. (Parihar) Ahangir had ordered Jagirdars (landlords) to build Sarai (rest houses) and Masjid near roads so that people could rest and say their prayers. If the road was near Khalisa (state) lands then the administrators of these lands were responsible to build Sarai (rest houses) and Masjid. (Rogers) Jahanara eldest daughter of Shahjahan was famous for building Sarai (rest houses/ motels). Nur Mahal is a unique specimen alongside Lahore-Agra route. Her famous Sarai rest house was Begum Sarai. Mannucci and Bernier have mentioned about this rest house in their chronicles. (Parihar)Thomas Roe stayed in a rest house which had an impressive front door and chambers or rooms with round roof. (Thomas Roe)Aurangzeb built a Sarai (rest house/motel) near the site of victory which he gained over Dara Shikoh (elder brother of Aurangzeb). (Parihar)

Postal System

It is a well-known fact that one system promotes other. The postal or Daak system existed in Indian sub-continent for centuries. An informal or primitive system of delivering posts existed almost 2500 (two thousand and five hundred) years ago. Systematic postal services were started during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (a famous king of Maurya Empire). With the start of medieval period turning point came in the history of Indian Postal department. Mughals established a very centralized postal department. Sher Shah who ruled India for only five years converted this institution into a highly developed one. Sher Shah introduced horse courier system and posts were delivered on horse carts and reached destination in shortest possible time. He was pioneer to allow traders to use this courier service to deliver letters. Postal department also handled letters of business communication. If one goes into deep all these posts were delivered through various routes. There was a need to secure these routes so that important state documents were safe from enemies of the Empire. Travelers also benefited from this as roads became safer. (Anshu Tyagi And Babita Tyagi, “Postal Communications In Ancient And Medieval India” International Journal Of Education And Science Research Review, 2014) Emperor’s Farman (orders) to his officers were delivered within short time. The Dak Chokis (post collecting points) were made at every four to five Kos (according to Palsaret). (Moreland, 1952)Mughals continued with this postal system till there Empire was taken over by the British. (Tyagi, 2014)

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Provincial Administrative System of Mughals

Mughal Empire was one of the largest Empires of the world. There were numerous routes and roads in this Empire. There was an administrative system through which Mughals used to manage security on roads. (Satya Prakash Sangar) Before discussing further it would be pertinent to discuss the basic provincial administrative system of Mughals without going into details. Only provincial system shall be discussed because roads were managed by provincial heads under the direct supervision of the Emperor. The head of the province under Mughals was called Sipah Salaar, Subahdar or Nazim. Diwan was next to him. These were two chief officers in a province. The Subahdar had the duties of executive, defense, to provide justice in criminal cases and to supervise the whole province in general. The Diwan's duty was to collect revenue and provide justice in civil cases. These officials were assisted by the Bakhshi (paymaster) and Sadr (head of department providing grants and charities). Qazi (judge), Kotwal (head of police department, health department, sanitation and municipality) Mir Bahr (Incharge of ports) Waqia Navees (report writer) and Khufia Nigar (Spy officer). Emperor used to send some nobles who assisted Governor. Sometimes young governors were appointed (mostly in the case of princes who were made governors). A learned and experienced official was sent as Ataliq (guide). A committee of high-ranking nobles was also constituted to help Vice-Roy. In certain cases, a Vice-Roy appointed an agent to manage the affairs of province while he himself was away from province with the permission of Emperor. Interim governors were also appointed. Subahdar appointed the Faujdar-I-Gard. Deputy Faujdars and Thanadars were appointed by Faujdar-I-Gard. In Diwani(civil) department superintendent of Kacheri (civil court), inspector of the Daftar-Khana (royal secretariat) called Musharaf-i-Daftarkhana, Tahvildar(treasurer) and some servants were appointed. There were four main ministries in a province called Diwans. Diwan-i-Arz (war), Diwan-I-Wizarat (Finance), Diwan-I-Insha (local government), Diwan-I-Riyasat (Markets). (Saran, 1973) When it comes to administrative system of the Mughal Empire, the system is a bit complicated which led historians to record slightly varying accounts. The management of law and order was duty of Governor in province, Faujdar in district, Thanedar in Parganah and Kotwal in the cities. (Satya Prakash Sangar)The organization of police department during Sher Shah 's rule needs a special mention here as his local responsibility rule was continued by the Mughals with slight modifications. The local responsibility rule which got fame stated that it was the duty of local Muqqadims (village heads) to maintain law and order on roads which were under their jurisdiction. In case of a robbery Muqqadim (village head) was to pay the compensation to victim and in case of murder, if Muqqadim failed to find the culprit then rule stated that Muqqadim (village head) was to be hanged. This rule applied to both roadside crimes and crimes committed in villages. The functions of police were also given to the army during the reign of Sher Shah. Shiqdar-i-

Shiqdaran (head Shiqdar) was assigned to maintain peace in the Sarkar. In Parganah, Shiqdar was responsible for maintaining peace. These officers were responsible to find out culprits in case a crime was committed on roads. The police department in Mughal era was divided further into three sub-departments. Village police, district police and urban police. The headmen of villages had to maintain law and order in their areas and in case of failure they had to pay for the stolen goods. Faujdar was responsible for maintaining law and order in district or Sarkar. His primary duty was road patrolling. Faujdar also patrolled Shahrahs (main roads). In case of robbery or theft near road Faujdar was required either to recover the property or compensate the owner. In case of failure to arrest the culprits sometimes Faujdar was dismissed from service. (Saksena, 1931) It was the duty of Faujdar to send the arrested culprits (Mahajan, 2020) to Governor. (Satya Prakash Sangar) Barkandazes (armed police) and Sipahis (constables) worked under faujdars. There was no formal post of provincial police head. Faujdar was given additional troops called Ahdis added to Barandazes (armed police) and Faujdar was assigned to check robbers and thieves present near roads. All police stations in Sarkar (district) were under Faujdar. In emergency situations Faujdar was entitled to call help from neighboring Sarkar (district). The kotwal was subordinate to Faujdar. Kotwals were provided with Swars (riders) and foot constables. The kotwals also had deputies. The shiqdar had a duty to keep public contended. The Parganahs came under the jurisdiction of Thanas (police stations). Thanadar (station house officer) had infantry at police stations. There were police check posts called Chowkis. These police stations were inspected by Emperor, Governors and Faujdars. The village heads were required to make lists of residents and new comers in order to maintain law and order. Villages had watchmen who worked as police force. Zamindars were given duties to patrol roads. They had to co-operate with the state to maintain peace. (Ahmad) If robbery occurred at night, then traveler was held responsible for not stopping at caravan Sarai (rest house) and no compensation was paid. According to Dr Jadunath Sarkar the duties of Faujdar who was commander of provincial army was to quell rebellions on provincial level, disperse or arrest gangs of robbers and to take the cognizance of all violent crimes and to make show of force which is known as flag march in modern days. Another official was called Kotwal who was police officer in charge in town. He also had magisterial powers. Besides he had some other duties to perform as well. But after reading primary sources on Mughals, it appears that kotwal was sometimes assigned the duty to punish robbers who looted or killed travelers. As an instance has been quoted few pages back when Shah Jahan had ordered execution of robbers who harmed travelers and it was Kotwal who implemented these orders. May be that robbery occurred near some town and that is why Kotwal was ordered to carry out the execution of criminals. (Mahajan, 2020)

According to Zahir-ud-din Farooki, In Mughal administrative system a group of villages were placed under administrative unit called Parganah or Mahal.

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Several Parganahs formed one Sarkar or district of those times. An aggregate of Sarkars formed a Subah (Province). Head of village was called Chawdary or Muqqadam and he was responsible for maintaining law and order and collection of land revenue. There was an officer called zaildar or Tehsildar who was head of various villages. Zail means circle. Parganah was controlled by Zamindars or Deshmukhs. They supervised Zaildars and they were also responsible for guarding roads within their jurisdiction. As payment Zamindars were given salary from the land revenue. Aurangzeb ordered that only two Chawdaries shall be appointed in a Parganah. Faujdar was head of Sarkar and his duties were to enforce rules made by government and to suppress rebels and robbers. He also patrolled roads and if some traveler was robbed, he had to pay compensation. (Faruki, 1935)

Badayuni wrote that the chief police officer was responsible to patrol roads so that he could help those who had lost their way and no fugitive (rebels, robbers and criminals) could make a hideout on those roads. (Badayuni, 1990)

There was another official called Waqia navis (report writer) who was responsible to keep the Emperor informed about happenings in his Empire. He was responsible to write reports and send them through postal system to Emperor about all significant happenings in his Empire. Mughals also had a spying network. Spying officer was called Khufianigar who was a check on the system. This officer provided reports to the Emperor secretly (Mahajan, 2020) The reports of these officers kept Emperor well informed about the events taking place in his Empire. If security situation near main roads deteriorated Emperor took necessary action. (Srivastava, 1959) It was written in the manual of duties issued by Mughal government, that governor should be kind towards the local Waqia-navis (report writer), Swanih-nigar (detail report writer) and Harkarah (spy) so that they would write their reports accurately. (Mughal administration)

Cases of Highway Robbery

Despite taking various steps and developing a system to secure roads instances of robberies near roads happened. During the reign of Akbar parents of Banarasi Das a historiographer were robbed when they were travelling. Jamal- ud -din son of Mahmoud Barah a Mughal official fled the court of Akbar (Emperor was annoyed with him) and resorted to looting the villagers and travelers. Mirza Masum (an officer in Mughal court) and his father got injured when they were attacked by robbers while travelling to Gujrat. Nicholas Willington recorded a case in Sindh when Balouch robbers took seven Italians and a Portuguese as hostages. A fight took place and only one Portuguese survived but he was later killed by robbers and his fat belly was ripped open to see if he had hidden some valuable things. In march 1638 a complaint was filed by east India company claiming that an English caravan was looted by robbers. (Satya Prakash Sangar)

While returning from Surat (a town in south India) in 1638 the caravan of Madelslo (a European traveler) was attacked. A fight took place between robbers

and guards of the caravan. Robbers were forced to withdraw. Two Frenchmen who came to the court of Aurangzeb were unable to meet him. These men were robbed on their way back. In July 1667 some relatives of Quli Khan (an officer at Aurangzeb's court) were robbed of 7,000 rupees near Akbarabad. The Faujdar under whose jurisdiction the particular area fell was ordered to inquire into the matter and make compensation to the affected party. A group of Banjaras filed a complaint that their 200 oxen were looted by the robbers. In 1675 a large number of robbers looted a consignment of cloth belonging to east India company. On 31st August 1681 Barsar Khan who was commander of Rathambor wrote a letter that rebel leader Fateh Singh Naroka was involved in robbing travelers. Emperor sent orders to Faujdars Syed Khawaja and Rup Singh to chase and drive the robber away. Ganj Singh of Barol was involved in robberies near roads. Aurangzeb ordered to demolish Ganj Singh's fort. His fort was demolished. Nearly hundred robbers grouped together and started looting travelers. Orders were passed to arrest them. Afzal son of Khushal Jang a landlord had looted twenty-seven thousand rupees from traders between Peshawar and Kabul and he also destroyed a Sarai (rest house) of Khairabad. Aurangzeb gave orders to punish the culprit. (Satya Prakash Sangar) In a letter to his eldest son Azam Shah Aurangzeb wrote about security situation around Chamarkudeh-Kadirabad road where robbers used to attack travelers. Aurangzeb admonished his son and ordered him to take immediate action to make road safe for travel. (Bilmoria)

Discussion

Mughals did efforts to maintain peace on roads and highways. Severe punishments were meted out to criminals who were captured. This enabled monarchs to maintain pace and order around roads. A habitual robber was given death sentence. If a person was suspected of looting or strangulation, he was arrested and if government officers were sure that the person was guilty of an offence, then such person was put behind the bars till he repented. If the person was just a suspect his case was referred to a Qazi (judge) for trial. (Bilmoria)

Sher Shah was an able administrator. Once he came to know about presence of robbers in an area, he sent Bairak Niyazi, Shiqdar of Qanuj was ordered to punish robbers. (Sarwani) Akbar punished robbers who looted travelers thus creating a pro trade environment. Jahangir was famous for dealing with robbers and thieves in an extreme harsh way. He claimed that his actions were to ensure peace and to provide safe journey to travelers on roads (Bilmoria) Trade and travel on roads especially main roads was at its peak during the reign of Shah Jahan. A robber who was thrown to elephant during the reign of Shahjahan survived and was confined but later on he was executed when he was recaptured because he escaped from the facility, he was kept in. (Bilmoria) A group of thieves and robbers who had infected an important road for a long time were captured during the reign of Shah Jahan. These robbers used to hide under bridge and after

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strangling travelers with the help of a rope which they had made to commit crime. Then after killing people, they took the belongings of the victims. Emperor ordered their execution and they were hanged; their hands and feet were chopped and they died due to loss of blood. (Bilmoria) Aurangzeb inquired from Prince Muazzam who was appointed as governor of a province about a robbery near Bahadurpur where criminals had looted and killed travelers. Emperor ordered the prince to take action against those criminals. His letter also contained some advises for the young prince. (Sarwani) Aurangzeb came to know through a report that a Maratha warlord had looted merchants on a road eighty miles from Surat (a town in India) and area fell under Azam Shah's governorship (son of Aurangzeb) but Azam had refused to take action by taking plea that the said area came under the jurisdiction of Ammanat Khan and he was responsible for necessary action. Aurangzeb punished the prince by issuing a royal decree which stated that prince will pay from his own pocket an amount equal to the value of the goods looted from merchants. The decree contained another order and that was a decrease in the Mansab (rank) of prince by five thousand (Panj Hazar) and all these steps were to be taken without any investigation as lack of investigation was part (Sarkar J. , 1952) of punishment. (Rogers) Raja of Kalabagh was in a habit of robbing caravans. Aurangzeb after ascending to throne executed the raja and his accomplices. Towers were made on the orders of Emperor where heads (Francis Gladwin) of aforementioned robbers were placed. Tavernier witnessed these towers in 1665 while passing through this town. Mannucci's stay in sub-continent was around thirty- four years. He was a frequent traveler on Agra-Delhi route. Whenever he travelled on this road, he found bodies of thieves hanging from trees and fresh heads placed alongside road. Manucci wrote about a thief who was beheaded for committing a theft in a Sarai. (Rogers) Thomas Roe reached Ramsar (a town thirty miles south-east to Ajmer) and saw bodies of hundreds of men in the fields who were killed for committing robbery. (Satya Prakash Sangar)

Sometimes military expeditions were sent in pursuit of robbers who looted travelers. The Faujdar, governor or the Emperor himself led the expeditions. Robbers were killed or captured and then punished according to the law. Sometimes these robbers fled to far off areas and then reassembled after long time. Examples of such expeditions can be quoted. Fulad Khan, a Faujdar was sent against a gang of robbers who wanted to plunder Sarai (rest house) of Ruhullah. Three robbers were killed and forty were captured by the Faujdar. Durjan Singh and Pahar Singh were two rebel leaders who had created troubles and used to loot the merchandise of travelers. On October 1685 Aurangzeb ordered Faujdar to chastise these men. These chieftains were killed near Ujjain in a battle with Mughals. (Thomas Roe) Aurangzeb in his letter to his eldest son Azam Shah wrote that road between Bahadurpur and Khujasteh-Buniad was not safe. Travelers and merchants were robbed by criminals. Emperor ordered Azam to change his news reporters (waqia-navis) and punish the dismissed officers for negligence. He further ordered the prince to take action against robbers (Bilmoria)

Conclusion

When the European age of exploration (1400-1700) started various travelers from Europe reached Sub-continent via sea routes. These travelers wrote about the road conditions of India at that time. Burnier recorded in his account that while travelling on Agra-Delhi route he encountered robbers and also complained of long journey which was almost seven week long. He claimed that he lost his money in that episode and was forced to take a job at king's court.¹ Burnier narrated that eastern caravan Sarai (rest houses/motels) resembled grain and fodder storage houses. Hundreds of men could be seen in them mingled with their horses and camels. These buildings were hot and suffocating during summer and there were no arrangements to keep them warm during winter. The roads between Agra and Delhi which was the main route where Bernier mostly travelled during his stay in India seemed simple and unimpressive to him. He narrated Agra-Delhi road to be a simple road where trees were planted on both sides and few simple rest houses/motels were present and after every few miles there were wells which supplied fresh water to men (Bernier, 1656-1668) and trees. (Bernier, 1656-1668) Bernier provides a reason for change of route by travelers who travelled towards Agra from Lukhnow. The reasons why travelers stopped travelling on Gawalior road which led to Agra and started to use Ahmadabad road to reach Agra were tough road conditions and difficult mountainous terrains which lay in the way. (Bernier, 1656-1668) Beveridge wrote that robbery and theft were almost unknown and the travelers slept near roads without fear and traders carried their goods safely from sea of Bangal up to Kashmir. (Bernier, 1656-1668) Edward Terry wrote that roads were safe and travelers could carry their goods and money without getting in trouble. Though during trouble times highways were not safe. (Parihar)Tavernier wrote that he was told that routes were dangerous, infested with wild beasts and dangerous criminals but he did not find any problem on these routes. He travelled from Golconda to Ramulkota in search of diamonds. (Ahmad) (Jean Beptice Tavernier) Petro Della Vella travelled throughout India and did not complained about robbery. (The Travels Of Petro Della Vella In India, ed. Edward Grey, 1892) Thomas Roe travelled in India, sent carts with merchandise, stayed near hills and areas which had a reputation for presence of dangerous thieves and robbers but he had no personal experience of encounter with robbers or dacoits. (Thomas Roe)Thevenot wanted to travel to Surrat (Gujrat) by sea route but he was forced to go by land route due to high tides in the river. He was warned by his friends about the danger of robbers on the roads. But after safely travelling on road, he wrote that there was no such danger on roads against which he was warned. (Thomas Roe) During Mughal era modes of transport were primitive. If a robbery occurred near an important road it took some time before the authorities came to know about the happening. During emergencies situation of roads used to get bad. In 1630-33 there was a terrible famine in western parts of India.

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Indeed, European travelers had simplified things on some occasions. European travelers were unable on some occasions to distinguish between those territories which came under Mughal rule and those which did not fall under their control. This created some confusion. In medieval times there were vast areas comprising of forests as population was much less than modern times. These areas were favorite hideouts of robbers, thieves and thugs. They had created safehouses in these jungles. It was near to impossible for a regular army to clear out these forests from criminals nor it was possible to make check posts in forests. Harsh weather, easy to ambush a whole army in dense forests without getting caught and capacity to engage a huge army with a small number of men were the advantages criminals had in forests. Supply lines for army check posts could be easily interrupted in forests. Mughals cannot be easily blamed for not carrying out military operations in forests. Those roads which were close to forests were more dangerous and there was a high chance of robbery on such roads in comparison to those roads which passed near villages and towns. If we study the situation of law and order around European highways in medieval times it was arguably worse than sub-continent. (Satya Prakash Sangar)

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