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PhD. Thesis Title: **European Travellers in Kashmir**

ABSTRACT

European travellers visited Kashmir during different intervals of time as traders, merchants and surveyors who came out with their respective descriptions regarding Kashmir and its people. Their accounts of Kashmir, on the one hand, were guided by an imperialistic understanding and on the other they were relatively successful in portraying the socio-economic and political aspects of the Kashmiris. They not only introduced Kashmir's scenic natural landscape and its people to the outside world but also made a rich contribution towards the writing of history of Kashmir. The importance of European travelogues lies in the fact that they were inspired by a liberal political philosophy and interpreted problems of people from a socio-economic perspective. European travelogues introduced the Valley to the Western world and reflected on and recorded for posterity its culture, art and literature and opened new ways of understanding Kashmir. The purpose of this research work is to focus on the changing agenda of the European travelers in Kashmir.

Kashmir acquired a distinctive position in European travel writings during the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. European travel texts throw sufficient light on the social, economic, and political existence of Kashmir and hence constitute a valuable source material for the time period they cover. European travellers have represented Kashmir through various travel narratives and have played a significant role in exploring the knowledge of Kashmir and introduced the Valley to the outside world, mainly; Colonial Europe. The purpose of this research work is to focus on the changing agenda of European travelers in Kashmir and also tries to explain the imperial policy of the British in India who wished to expand their boundaries into Central Asia via Kashmir to check the Russian aggression from the side of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The present research ponders to the evolution of the political interest of the Valley from the Mughal times to the end of the nineteenth century. While explaining in detail the travel narratives of the European travelers who visited the Valley in order to pen down their thoughts, their expeditions and outlook towards the pristine Valley of Kashmir and different versions of their narrations and political scenario that prevailed in Kashmir during that time have been paid

due attention. This way the travel texts enabled the European authorities to know about the unexplored or veiled Valley of Kashmir. The agenda of Empire and political interests had been an integral part of European travel writings on Kashmir.