
Indian Natural Beauty in the Poetry of Emma Roberts and Letitia Elizabeth Landon.

¹Dr. Narendra Kumar

¹Associate Professor, Department of English, Government .P.G. College Chharra, Aligarh (U.P.) India

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Abstract

India a land of vast resources attracted the native raiders, tourists, and intellectuals from the centuries before Christ. European travelers and business seekers also travelled India and had a long stay here. Wives of the company officials had the opportunity to invest their imaginative ink for the purpose of showing the beautiful flora and fauna of this country. Emma Roberts, Letitia Elizabeth Landon and several others put their efforts to paint the real natural glory. Orientalists had their deep fascination about culture and natural beauty. Sir William Jones and his wife Anna Maria Jones had deep interest in the botanical world. Peepul, Bunyan, Ganges Haridwar Mathura had a deep meaning for them.

Key words- European travelers, Flora and Fauna, orientalist, natural glory, botanical world.

Introduction

Emma Roberts and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, both in their works use the common currency of Orientalist tradition. India, in the work of Landon, is an illusion created from a glimpse of a peepul tree, the placing of a song in the mouth of a Hindu girl, a female subject identified as the Nizam's daughter. Emma Roberts created her own work through her first hand visit and information. Her observations of her Indian scenes are continually refracted through her memories of the Orient already familiar to her in her literature. Critics treat both these poets in the form of landscape artists. Her poems from 'Scenes and Characteristics' detail the picturesque beauty of India.

The heavens are cloudless, and the sunny plain
Rich with its fertile tracts of sugar-cane,
Its fleecy crops of cotton, corn, and oil,
And all the myriad plants that gem the soil,
Yielding their precious juice in costly dyes
Bright as the rain-bow tints of their own skies.
Smile in the golden light —a wide expanse
Of varied landscape where the sun-beams glance

O'er dotting mango topes, and snow white mhuts,
 Which peep besides the peasants' straw-thatched huts.
 Beyond, in eastern splendour beaming bright
 The city stands upon a wooded height;
 Its tall pagodas and its broad *Serais*,
 Shining, like pearls amid the noon-tide, blaze;
 While from each terrace shooting up afar
 Gleams the proud mosque and pinnacled minar.¹

Emma Roberts in her poems portrays the life in India as the most threatening to its British residents. More than the heat or the scorpions, the fear of death haunted Anglo Indians with good reasons. Roberts saw her sister die within three years of their arrival in India. In the idyllic portraits of her landscapes, intimations of mortality can be seen in the lines of her poems. Her poems 'The Brahmin' and 'Indian Graves' describe the atmosphere and climate as well as the mosquitoes and weeds in Indian plains.

... those crowded channels where
 A sickening taint infects the air.
 And o'er each dark and loathsome grave
 Earth's rankest weeds delight to wave
 Where from the branches of the trees.
 The vulture snuffs the plague fraught breeze
 And where the prowling jackalls lurk
 Mid whitening bones and ruins gray.
 And hastning to their filthy work.
 With the first fall of parting day.²

Thomas Moore in his poem 'India : Cashmere The Vale of Cashmere' cannot refrain himself from describing the beauty of Kashmir of India. The valleys loaded with beautiful flowers, singing rivulets and jumping of the musk deers.

INDIA: CASHMERE

THE VALE OF CASHMERE

WHO has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere,
 With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave,

Its temples, and grottos, and fountains as clear

As the love-lighted eyes that hung over their wave? Oh, to see it
at sunset,—when warm o'er the lake

Its splendor at parting a summer eve throws,

Like a bride, full of blushes, when lingering to take A last look of her
mirror at night ere she goes!

When the shrines through the foliage are gleaming half shown,

And each hallows the hour by some rites of its own.

Here the music of prayer from a minaret swells,

Here the magian his urn, full of perfume, is swinging, And here, at
the altar, a zone of sweet bells

Round the waist of some fair Indian dancer is ringing. Or to see it
by moonlight,—when mellowly shines

The light o'er its palaces, gardens, and shrines;

When the waterfalls gleam, like a quick fall of stars, And the
nightingale's hymn from the Isle of Chenars Is broken by laughs and
light echoes of feet

From the cool, shining walks where the young people meet.

Or at morn, when the magic of daylight awakes

A new wonder each minute, as slowly it breaks.

Hills, cupolas, fountains, called forth every one

Out of darkness, as if but just born of the Sun.

When the Spirit of Fragrance is up with the day,

From his harem of night-flowers stealing away;

And the wind, full of wantonness, wooes like a lover The young aspen-
trees, till they tremble all over.

When the east is as warm as the light of first hopes, And Day, with his
banner of radiance unfurled,

Shines in through the mountainous portal that opes, Sublime, from that
valley of bliss to the world!³

Thomas Moore, a great romantic poet, could not remain untouched by the beauty of fountains in Indian Kashmir.

INDIA: CASHMERE**THE FOUNTAIN OF CHINDARA**

FROM Chindara's warbling fount I come,
 Called by that moonlight garland's spell;
 From Chindara's fount, my fairy home,
 Where in music, morn and night, I dwell.
 Where lutes in the air are heard about,
 And voices are singing the whole day long,
 And every sigh the heart breathes out
 Is turned, as it leaves the lips, to song!
 Hither I come
 From my fairy home,
 And if there 's a magic in music's strain,
 I swear by the breath
 Of that moonlight wreath,
 Thy lover shall sigh at thy feet again.⁴

'Lays of Ind' is among the notable poems about the fauna of India that describes interestingly about Indian snakes. Legends of wonder, veneration and fear about snakes in India abound in journals, memoirs and sketches of the British in India. Many an encounter with snakes is described among the interesting stories told or written by white Sahibs in India. Indian snakes and snake-charmers about in foreign accounts of India and scholars studied mythological tales of snakes and origin of serpent worship. There have been several graphic descriptions of their encounters with different kinds of snakes, specially the King Cobra or the hooded snake. Patrick Russel studied Indian snakes, their curious patterns, behaviour in different seasons and poisonous and non-poisonous and remedies for the snake-bites.

British settlers lived in continued dread of snakes usually found in houses, courtyards, under thatched roofs, in bathrooms and in camps and even on roads. Several devices were used to keep these venomous creatures away from the houses, but their presence was very common. People used to have big wooden tongs to pick these snakes easily and leave them far away from the houses. Even after such precautions, they still managed to find their way in, sometimes darting out from the roof, or getting under foot. These venomous creatures coiled in bookshelves, crawled down verandahs, rested on beds or hid in creepers and made their way through drains which were dry and uncovered by the road. It was very commonly experienced when memsahibs were taking baths in their tin bath tubs and

a cobra was coolly surveying the scene. A popular humorous verse 'Lays of Ind' 'A Sahib's Encounter with a Cobra in his Bathroom' depicts the whole scene very interestingly.

From time immemorial men have agreed
That serpents are very cute creatures indeed.
I propose to narrate a remarkable case,
which happened quite lately before my own house:
Well I sat in the water and revelled, and rolled
Through my heat-thirsty pores deep inhaling the cold,
Dashing it down on my head in my face,
With a whoop and a splashing all over the place,
When-and just at the 'moment supreme' of my joys-
I heard, 'neath the tub a peculiar noise.
The sound was a sound which makes guinea-pigs quake,
And men for the matter of that. 'Twas a snake.
Slowly from under the tub he appeared,
Hissing; then stopped and his angry crest roared;
And I cannot declare I felt eased in mind
When I saw 'twas a cobra of deadliest kind.
He sat there, erect, wide expanding his hood,
As if he'd get at me if only he could;
But I stuck to my tub, and its lofty green side
Was a bulwark from which his assault I defied.
An impulse heroic coursed swift through my veins
To give that old cobra a dance for his pains,
From my tub like a burglar I noiselessly stept,
Like an Indian stalking a chicken I crept,
With a grin of delight, I believe, on each feature,
At thinking what glory to diddle the creature.
I stood by the hold—I stood over his tail;
I seized it, and hauled as you'd haul at a sail.

He wriggled and hissed with a horrible sound,
But the hole was so small that he couldn't turn
round;
So I held him there writhing, and laughed as he tried,
Half his length in the bathroom the other outside.⁵

Encounters with snakes abound in their stories very usually. A very interesting incident with Mrs. S occurred when she in her palanquin found a coiled snake under the mattress over which she slept for three hours in a journey of eleven miles.

Many Sahibs openly admitted that the sound of flute worked powerfully on snakes. Snakes, they believed, were induced to come out of hiding, to be caught or killed, and that the snake charmers could tame serpents, especially the cobra and make them dance to the melody of his gourd pipe. James Forbes had an extraordinary opinion about the cobra.

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