CHAPTER V

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This chapter aims at making a draft of Oriental elements in the poems of Emma Roberts, Anna Maria Jones and Felicia Dorothea Hemans. Under the study of these three women poets I have put the Oriental elements into categories, such as rivers, birds and animals, characters, cities, trees and flowers and so on. These elements reflect various concerns of the Orient. However, by putting these elements in segments, I have made an attempt to show the importance of these Oriental elements in the poems of these Romantic women poets.

Rivers

The rivers of India namely, Ganges and Yamuna have appeared in Roberts’s collection of poems, Oriental Scenes, Dramatic Sketches and Tales, with Other Poems (1830) while Jones includes another river of India, Houghly in her poem, “Adieu to India” (1793). Hémans talks of the Nile in her poem, “The Traveller at the Source of the Nile” (1826). The representation of these rivers in the poems of these women poets is discussed as follows.

The Ganges

The river Ganges plays a significant role in Roberts’s poem, “Night on the Ganges” (1830). In this poem Roberts represents the river through a vivid description of its course and flow. She glorifies the current of the river that flows under “the stream of melted chrysolite”. She emphasizes that the river “spreads its floods” over
its “silvery surface”. The course and flow that catch Roberts’s attention display the charming nature of the river. Almost the same description of this river appears in Roberts’s another poem, “The Bramin” (1830). In this poem she points out how the wastes, once mixed up with the “sacred waters”, are deposited on the breast of the river. The river is surrounded by the beautiful greenery and decorated by the “terraced stairs” that are made of marble stones. These stairs go step by step down to the river:

Ganges’ sacred waters spread

Their wastes below – and crowning that green height

In graceful beauty, with its marble dome,

And terraced stairs, descending flight by flight,

(The Bramin, 4-8)

Roberts represents the Ganges river in terms of the religious sentiments of the local Hindus. In the Hindu belief system, the waters of this river are considered sacred as it has always been associated with Hindu faith, devotion and worship. Assisted by the priests, many Hindu devotees perform religious rituals and practices beside and in the river. Bathing is one such practice. Roberts gives a complete picture of bathing in her poem “The Dying Hindoo”. The dying Hindu, the central figure in the poem, believes that a dip in the river will purify his soul by washing away his accumulated sins. Roberts describes his bath in the river thus:

He too had sought the Ganges’ shore,

And bathed within its hallowed stream.

(The Dying Hindoo, 15-16)
Offering flowers and other ceremonial substances to this river are also included in the life and cultural traditions of the Hindus. In her poem, “The North-Wester” (1828), Roberts talks about the crowded Hindus who gathered on the shore of the river. These Hindus completed their ritual of offering flowers on the waters of the river. But sometimes they throw flowers and other ceremonial substances in the river in such a heavy amount that causes damage to the course of the river. In her another poem, “A Scene in the Dooab”, Roberts also talks of offerings that are deposited on the breast of the river. These heaps of offerings bring a change in the course and flow of the river and consequently the river becomes stagnant. Roberts points it out thus:

Nor Ganges’ desecrated tides

Bear human offerings from its shore.

(A Scene in the Dooab, 39-40)

The representation of the Ganges river continues also in “The Rajah’s Obsequies”. In this poem Roberts describes the “sparkling wave” of the river on which the golden light of the sun falls. The “swift current” of the river scatters the granite-like precious stones on the banks of the river. The river flows in its own course and the image of the “holy city’s temples” is reflected in the “sacred floods” of the river:

Where Ganges spreads its sacred floods –

The holy city’s temples glow

Reflected in the stream below.

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 22-24)
There are certain "fertile plains" that are of particular significance along with the Ganges. These plains are extended from the shore of the river. The river spreads its water over the plains and as a result various kinds of crops are cultivated. The breeze blowing over the plains contributes to the pleasant atmosphere prevailing around the river.

Roberts emphasizes that the Hindus swarm on the banks of the river for funeral rites. When they set fire to the funeral pyre, a kind of scented perfume comes out from the burning pile. Roberts represents the ritual tradition of the Hindus on the shore of the river thus:

Perfumes are burning all the while;

And they have reached the Ganges flood,

And heaped upon the funeral pile

Cedar, and rose, and sandal wood.

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 141-144)

Moreover, Roberts describes the red-colored light of the sun that blushes on the breast of the river.

Roberts depicts certain places along the Ganges where some Oriental birds and flowers are found. She talks of the ‘dainty plumes and glittering wings’ of the Peri bird that attracted her most. She compares herself with the bird, making her nest on the breast of the chumayla (a scented flower in India):

My soul shall pass to happy things,

With dainty plumes and glittering wings;
A Peri bird, I'll build my nest

On the *chumayla*’s odorous breast.

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 189-192)

Roberts praises the beauty and glory of the river through a vivid description of musical instruments that the Hindus play on the shore of the river. In her another poem, “Night on the Ganges”, Roberts speaks of “the bulbul’s notes” and the glossy leaves of the *peepul* tree, thus drawing attention to the pleasant atmosphere of the river. The “broad-leaved lotus” blooms in the waters of the river in such a way that seems to be more beautiful. Roberts maintains:

With snowy vases crowned, the lily springs

In queen-like beauty by the river’s brink;

And o’er the wave the broad-leaved lotus flings

Its roseate flowers in many a knotted link.

(Night on the Ganges, 33-36)

Roberts mentions some wild animals in her poem, “Address for the opening of the Cawnpore Theatre”. The wild animals - panthers, jackals, and wolves in particular - dwell in the jungle along the shore of the Ganges. Roberts emphasizes that their presence enhances the scenic beauty of the jungle along the river.

In sum, it may be said that the detailed panoramic view of the Ganges is reflective of Roberts’s admiration and appreciation of the Orient.
The Jumna [Jamuna]

Another river figuring in the poems of Roberts is Jumna. Roberts alludes to the Jumna (also known as Yamuna or Jamuna in India) as a tributary stream of the Ganges. In her poem, “The Taaje Mahal”, she talks of Jumna River, on the bank of which the famous Taj Mahal is located. She represents the river with its “chryystal tide” that meanders in “many a breeze-curled wave”. She emphasizes that the “sparkling currents” of the river blow through the green tufts of the oleanders. In her other poem, “Nour Juffeir Khan”, she speaks of the uninterrupted and unaltered course of the Jumna. She appreciates the beautiful flowers that bloom on the breast of the river. She also emphasizes that the tall towers of the buildings and the “arching port” are beautifully reflected on the waters of the river. Her account is as follows:

And while on Jumna’s roseate breast

The beautiful reflection glows

Of turret tall and arching port,

And on its liquid mirror shows

(Nour Juffeir Khan, 68-71)

Moreover, she talks of the shore of the Jumna that produces different kinds of grain. The sands of the shore, Roberts emphasizes, are also famous for producing all kinds of fruits, and water melons in particular. Thus, Roberts shows her interest in the Orient, and especially the Jumna River.
The Houghly

Known as Hooghly in Bengali, this river is figured in Jones’s poem “Adieu to India” (1793). The East India Company chose this river as an important transportation channel and sailed in to Bengal. The trading network on the banks of this river was expanded in a way that it became the centre of commerce during the British rule. Jones recalls the ‘sacred Haunts’ that led her travel on the breast of this river. She points out the continuous flow which increases the tide of the river. She emphasizes the fact that the mariners sail in the river with utmost eagerness and establish the ‘Seat of Commerce’ on the banks of it. Her account of this river is as follows:

Farewell, ye sacred Haunts, where oft I’ve strayed

With mild Reflection – solitary Maid! –

Ye streams that swell the winding Houghly’s Tide,

The Seat of Commerce and the Muse’s Pride,

Farewell! – the Mariners unfurl the Sails,

Eager to meet the Pressure of the Gales;

(Adieu to India, 39-44)

The Nile

Hemans draws an account of the Nile river in her poem, “The Traveller at the Source of the Nile” (1826). In this poem she talks of the ‘green solitude’ through which the ‘fountains of the Nile’ blow in great spontaneity. She marks the presence of the ‘wild sweet voices’ on the shore of the Nile which surpass the ‘thousand streams
of lovelier flow’. She emphasizes that these voices metaphorically represent the childhood haunts of the traveler while the ‘sounding waves’ stand for ‘his father’s hills and graves’. She also points out the mystic atmosphere prevailing on the shore of the Nile, thus reflecting its importance in the Orient.

Birds and Animals

Roberts displays her familiarity with some birds and animals that underscores her varied interest of the Orient. Bulbul is one of the birds referred in the poem, “The Bramin”. In this poem she points to the presence of this bird in the vicinity of the Brahman’s ‘dwelling place’. She appreciates the sweet-song of this bird that touches the Brahman’s heart:

The bulbul breathes to him its sweetest strain

(The Bramin, 47)

In “The North-Wester” she eulogizes the melodious song of the bulbul that permeates the air of the Ganges’ shore. In “Night on the Ganges” she describes ‘the bulbul’s notes’ that echo in ‘the balmy clime’ prevailed above the Ganges.

Roberts goes on to refer to some Oriental animals. Her appreciation of the deer-like gazelle appears in the poem, “A Scene in the Dooab”. In this poem she compares the eyes of the gazelle with the eyes of those maiden whom she sees dancing on the floor of ‘bright Zenana’s halls’. Moreover, in “Nour Juffeir Khan” she speaks of an ox-like animal, nyl ghau, which dwells in the ‘mid bushy dells’ along the shores of the Jumna.
Oriental Characters

Emma Roberts sketches some life-like Oriental characters in order to explore cultural identities. The Oriental characters figuring in her poems have been discussed under the category of proper names, including those of historical, religious or legendary persons.

Shah Jahan (Mughal emperor)

Shah Jahan (1592-1666) was the fifth Mughal emperor of India (1628-1658). Out of his deep love for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan decided to construct the world’s most magnificent monument in her memory. This domed structure, known as Taj Mahal, was constructed in Indo-Islamic style, using white marble and inlaid gems. This monument is now considered one of the seven wonders of the world.

Roberts refers to Shah Jahan in her poem, “The Taaje Mahal” (1830). She sets this historical figure in the poem, displaying her precise knowledge of the Orient. In the beginning of the poem she describes the beauty of Shah Jahan’s Taj Mahal. She calls it as the “Empress of beauty”. Some Oriental similitudes – ‘Fair forms of genii’, ‘Cashmerian rose’ – are used to describe beauty of the Taj Mahal. Roberts employs these similes in order to enhance the effect of beauty of the Taj Mahal:

Oh! thou wert far more beautiful than those
Fair forms of genii by poets sung,
More blooming than thine own Cashmerian rose,
O’er thy soft cheek a crimson tint was flung,
Like morn’s first flushes, or the blush that dyes

The glowing sun-sets of our eastern skies.

(The Taaje Mahal, 7-12)

The above passage underscores Roberts’s interest in the Oriental supernatural beings, ‘genii’, and her fascination for ‘Cashmerian rose’. These Oriental images bring out the beauty of the Taj Mahal and also present Shah Jahan as a devotee of beauty.

Roberts tells how Shah Jahan made the Taj Mahal glorious over the world. As a memorial for his wife, Shah Jahan got this monument built across the Jamuna River near his royal palace at Agra in Uttar Pradesh (India). The sands of the Jamuna River were used in the construction of the monument. The precious ‘pearls’, ‘gems’ and ‘gold’ were brought from different parts of ‘Hindoostan’, now known as India. Though Shah Jahan was in ‘fading health’ at the moment of the construction of the monument, he showed utmost enthusiasm in the construction of this shrine. The following lines reflect Roberts’s interest in the fabulous wealth of the Orient and in Shah Jahan in particular:

Oh! Could the treasures of the world restore

Thy fading health, beloved one, - Shah Jehan

Countless as yon bright river’s sands would pour

The pearls, and gems, and gold of Hindoostan,

And yield his empire o’er the world to be

Master of one poor straw-thatched hut-with thee.
Roberts pays attention to the noble structure of the monument. The domed structure of the monument is perhaps reflective of Persian architecture during the reign of Shah Jahan. Some precious and semi-precious stones, especially gems, pearls and gold were mined to adorn the monument. These materials are so delicately employed that they manifest 'surpassing loveliness' of the monument. The 'surpassing excellence' of the monument also evokes the 'tribute homage' offered by the Mughal emperor. Thus, the Taj Mahal becomes 'the world’s wonder', symbolizing Shah Jahan’s love for his beloved wife.

Roberts notes Shah Jahan’s interest in the world of art and architecture, reflecting the ‘rich and radiant pomp’ of his empire. She catches a glimpse of an ‘ample dome’ situated on a raised platform of the Taj Mahal. The slabs of precious gemstones are carved on the dome. The dome is unique in its size and beauty. This gemmed dome highlights not only the glory of Mughal empire but also the love that Shah Jahan had for his wife.

Roberts speaks admiringly also of ‘the marble halls’, ‘the storied walls’ of the Taj Mahal. She observes that the travelers, who come ‘from many a distant clime’, are astonished by the panoramic view of the Taj Mahal. They look upon ‘the work’ designed by the famous architects of the Mughal empire. The halls are beautifully carved with intricate patterns of inlaid precious stones. The travelers also praise the sculpture of ‘the storied walls’. The surfaces of these ‘storied walls’ are adorned with floral and geometrical designs and the verses and passages from the holy Quran. The calligraphy of ‘the storied walls’, inscribed by the copyists of the Mughal period, points to Shah Jahan as a follower of Islam.
During the reign of Shah Jahan Mughal art and architecture reached their zenith. Roberts points out that though Shah Jahan was defeated by the ‘warriors of the western world’ and the ‘red cross banner’ of a foreign land was unfolded over his empire, ‘Jumna’s chrysalis tide’ meandered in ‘many a breeze-curled wave’ in Shah Jahan’s reign. Even the ‘sparkling currents’ of the Jamuna River flowed through ‘clustering tufts of Oleanders’.

Roberts gives an account of an Oriental garden which, to some extent, provides details of the luxuriant atmosphere around the Taj Mahal. The garden, a symbol of paradise in Islam, was an integral part of Shah Jahan’s palace. That garden beautifying the Taj Mahal was abounded in trees and colorful flowers. Roberts stresses that the trees and flowers point to a keen aesthetic sense of Shah Jahan.

Roberts gives a description of the ‘splendid mausoleum’ that Shah Jahan had got built to commemorate the demise of his beloved wife. In Roberts’s view, when a stranger visits the ‘mausoleum’, his eyes dazzle with the rapturous beauty of the ‘mausoleum’. The stranger comes to know about a tale of love that Shah Jahan bore in his heart until his death. The love story of this Mughal emperor and his wife moves the stranger’s heart deeply. The ‘precious marbles’ carved on the monument display the achievement of Shah Jehan.

Apart from Shah Jahan, other characters portrayed by Roberts are Meer Jah Asiph and Nour Juffeir Khan. In her poem, “Nour Juffeir Khan”, Roberts draws Meer Jah Asiph to emphasize his neutral role in the battle between the British and the Indians. In the same poem Roberts delineates a legendary figure, Nour Juffeir Khan, who bears slight Oriental characteristics.
Maimuna

Hemans draws an account of a Muslim woman named Maimuna in her poem, “The Indian City”. She makes an attempt to explore the role played by the Muslim women with a particular focus on Maimuna. She describes how Maimuna’s son unknowingly entered in a city dominated by the Hindus and was stabbed by some orthodox Hindus. After her son’s killing, Maimuna neither shrieked nor became upset. She simply ‘knelt in her son’s young blood’. Hence it seems that Hemans gives a positive emphasis on Maimuna, thus reflecting her participation in the secular activities.

Social and Cultural life

In describing the traditional clothes and ornaments of the Orient, Roberts reflects the social and cultural life of the Indians. She refers to the simple cotton fabric, muslin, in her poem, “The Brahmin”. She describes how the Brahman, the central figure in the poem, wraps the ‘triple thread’ of muslin across his shoulder. He ties this lightweight and inexpensive cotton fabric around his waist in an ample fold. Roberts adds that the fold of this muslin reaches below the Brahman’s knee. However, she appreciates the Oriental culture in pointing out the Brahman’s dress. In another poem, “The Rajah’s Obsequies”, Roberts talks about the ‘muslin robes’ worn by one of the Rajah’s wives. This type of muslin is beautifully decorated with gold-like gems. Roberts reflects how the ‘muslin robes’ are used to magnify the unveiled face of one of the Rajah’s wives. Roberts refers also to Syah, an exclusive garment for women in the Orient. She shows her familiarity with this loosely designated garment tied by one of the Rajah’s wives. She emphasizes how the edge of this garment is decorated with spangles. She then shifts her attention on the ‘shining fold’ of the
Ornee that is used by the Rajah’s wife, indicating the delicate beauty of her bright face. Moreover, she describes the bangles that are used to enhance the beauty of the Rajah’s wife. The following lines are reflective of the traditional clothes and ornaments of the Orient:

Their muslin robes are wrought with gold,

The Syah's hem beset with spangles,

And bright the Ornee's shining fold,

And richly gemmed the glittering Bangles.

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 123-126)

As to traditional clothes of the Orient, Roberts lists the ‘Silver and silk, and gold brocade’ worn by the chiefs in her poem, “Nour Juffeir Khan”. She notes that the chiefs used the ‘crimson shawl’ to display their ‘regal pomp’. The following lines display her admiration for the exotic culture:

And chiefs in regal pomp arrayed

Silver and silk, and gold brocade,

The crimson shawl across the breast

Above the graceful shoulder hung,

(Nour Juffeir Khan, 137-140)

Moreover, Roberts points out the social and cultural status of the ‘Chobedar band’ in her poem, “The Rajah’s Obsequies”. She observes that the Chobedars are employed as servants at the Rajah’s court. She emphasizes that the lower ranked
Chobedar wave their ‘silver maces’ on high in front of the cavalcade. She represents another group of servants known as Chuprassies. She describes how these Chuprassies ‘clear the way’ at the moment of ‘the Rajah’s obsequies’ and how they keep themselves busy in swelling ‘the pomp and the parade’ at the Rajah’s court.

Religious Life

Roberts makes an attempt to focus on some religious rituals and traditions of the Orient that form an integral part in her poems. In “The Bramin” she represents the Brahman who, being a reverential person in the Hindu caste system, is the master of the religious scriptures of Hinduism, studying the Vedas and passes his time in his prayer. He imparts the knowledge of the Vedas which forms the bedrock of Hindu religion. Roberts’s account of the Brahman is as follows:

He ponders o’er the Vedas day by day’

Passing the silent hours in lonely prayer,

Or shading from the sun’s too fervent ray

(The Bramin, 10-12)

Roberts informs how the Brahman decorates ‘the holy shrine’ with the wreaths of variegated flowers, collected from the surroundings of his native place. The temple is embellished with flowers and leaves, though some flowers fall scattered on the ‘granite floor’. He girds ‘the chaplets’ around his hands two times. He performs religious activities in a way that reaches ‘the world’s dark confines’. After sunset ‘he trims the lamp’. The ‘beacon light’ of the lamp enters ‘the Mhut’s rich sculptured cell’, and the whole place seems like a starlit night. Roberts observes and finally
reports all these Hindu traditions, performed by the Brahman, which indicate her understanding of the Hindu religion.

Roberts provides further details of the Brahman’s pious life. He takes little food, fruit and juice offered by the devotees. The fruit, juice and grain that sustain his life are collected from a variety of exotic trees grown in the fertile land:

_The Bramin’s meals are frugal – some fair tree_

Yields him its fruitage, and the precious grain

Springing around in rich fertility,

The few and simple wants of life sustain.

(The Bramin, 21-24)

There is a reference to prayer in Roberts’s poem, “The Moosulman’s Grave”. In this poem Roberts talks of the villagers’ prayer. She emphasizes that the villagers offer prayer to thank the founders of their temples.

Apart from the religious traditions of Hinduism, Roberts depicts also one obligatory ritual of Islam. She talks of Omrah that is performed by the pious Muslims throughout the Orient. In “Nour Juffeir Khan” she marks how the Muslims complete their Omrah in order to wash away their worldly sins.

Cities

The Oriental cities featuring in Roberts’s poems are Agra, Benares, Delhi and Mussaul.
Agra

Agra is an important city of India. It is located on the banks of Yamuna River. It was the capital of the Mughal empire up to Akbar’s day. It got its historical importance when Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Roberts refers to this Indian city in her poem, “The Taaje Mahal”. This city is dotted with ‘lofty towers’, ‘mosques and minarets’, displaying the genius of the Mughal architects. The abundance of green trees and colorful flowers contributes to the scenic beauty of the city. Roberts emphasizes the influence of Shah Jahan’s empire that prevailed over the whole city for long time. The ‘lofty towers’ of Agra denote the pinnacle of the Muslim culture in the period of Shah Jahan’s reign. The following lines are reflective of the tradition and culture prevailing in Agra:

A hundred years have winged their flight

O’er princely Agra’s lofty towers,

A hundred years of sunshine bright

Have reveled through its summer bowers-

(The Taaje Mahal, 55-58)

Roberts rightly marks an allusion of ‘the crescent’ that establishes the presence of Islam in Agra. But she stresses the fact that though the Islamic culture reached its zenith in Shah Jahan’s reign, the ‘Moslem glory’ of Agra faded away as the ‘warriors of the western world’ defeated Shah Jahan and hoisted the ‘red cross banner’ over the city.
Benares

This city is considered as one of the holiest cities in India by the Hindus. This city is situated on the banks of the Ganges River. Roberts talks of this religious city in her poem, "The Rajah's Obsequies". In this poem she emphasizes that the temples constructed in the city are beautifully reflected in the water of the Ganges:

The holy city's temples glow

Reflected in the stream below.

(The Rajah's Obsequies, 23-24)

Roberts points out that the pious Hindus assemble on the banks of the Ganges and take their holy bath in the water of the river in order to cleanse away their sins. The holy bath performed by the Hindus and the presence of the temples and domes in this city affirm the religious tradition of Hinduism. She also lauds 'Benares’s far-famed webs' that compete with 'rarest, finest looms' of Persia. She represents the city with reference to the religious and cultural symbols of the belief system of Hinduism.

Delhi

Delhi, the capital of India, figures in Roberts's poem, "Nour Juffeir Khan". In this poem Roberts points out that the image of the holy temples of Delhi is reflected in 'the Jumna’s sparkling waters'. She also marks the presence of some Oriental flowers in this city which captured her attention and displayed her 'undivided love' for the Orient.

Besides, Roberts talks of another Oriental city, Mussaul which appears in her poem, "The Rajah’s Obsequies". Under the study of the cities I am not discussing the
importance of this city in Oriental context because I have already included it in chapter four.

Mecca

Generally known as Makka, this city is located in Saudi Arabia. This city "is the holiest of holy places, because it houses Ka’aba, the house of God, to which Muslims turn in prayers, and because it is the birth place of the prophet of Islam" (Kidwai 104). Hemans includes this city in her poem, “The Indian City”. In this poem she points out how Maimuna, the mother of ‘a noble Muslim boy’ stabbed by the Hindus in an Indian city, made her journey toward Mecca and halted ‘the march of her pilgrim’ for ‘a few brief hours’. The following lines convey Hemans’s concern about Maimuna’s journey to Mecca:

She, on her way unto Mecca’s fane,

Had stayed the march of her pilgrim – train

Calmly to linger a few brief hours

In the Bramin city’s glorious bowers,

(The Indian City, 57-60)

Trees and Flowers

Some trees and flowers have been a subject of those poets who have written on the Orient. These trees and flowers move the poets’ heart not by their charming beauty but also by their significance in the Orient and hence they occupy a special position in their writing. Roberts mentions some Oriental trees and flowers in her poems. The trees that represent the cultural and religious aspects of the Orient in her
poems are: Baubool, Peepul, Niem and Banian. In view of their role in the human life, these trees are valued throughout the Orient. Roberts refers to the Baubool tree in “The Taaje Mahal” and “The Moosulman’s Grave”. In “The Taaje Mahal” she speaks of the gold-like gum that the Baubool tree exudes. She focuses on the importance of this gum used for tanning and dyeing in her days. In “The Moosulman’s Grave” she mentions it again:

And the magnolia’s richly scented vase

Droops o’er the Baubool’s bells of golden light.

(The Moosulman’s Grave, 55-56)

Peepul is widely regarded as a sacred tree in the Orient. Hindus use its leaves in their religious offerings. Roberts refers to this tree in “The North-Wester”, “Night on the Ganges” and “The Moosulman’s Grave”. What she states about ‘the dark peepul’s glossy foliage’ in “The North-Wester” is quite appropriate in context of Oriental culture. In “Night on the Ganges” she speaks again of ‘the glossy peepul’. In her another poem, “The Moosulman’s Grave” she describes how ‘the tall peepul’ grows and the shadow of its leaves falls on the Muslim’s tomb:

Where the all peepul spreads its grateful shade

Above the pious Muslem’s lowly tomb.

(The Moosulman’s Grave, 3-4)

Niem is another Oriental tree that appears in Roberts’s poem, “The North-Wester”. She points out that the green leaves of Niem flutter and dance in the slightest breeze. Another exotic tree of the Orient is banian tree. This tree is widely worshipped
by the Hindus. Roberts marks the presence of the ‘majestic banians’ on the banks of the Ganges. She metaphorically equates the ‘green luxuriance’ of the banians with the ‘lofty minarets’ that symbolize eternity. Her description of the banian tree is as follows:

And there majestic banians fling

Their green luxuriance beside

The lofty minarets that spring

With upward flight in towering pride;

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 13-16)

Apart from the exotic trees, Roberts mentions a variety of flowers which reflect the cultural heritage of the Orient. Baylas, Chumayla, Champa and Jessamine are some of the Oriental flowers that appear in her poems. In “The Taaje Mahal” she talks of baylas in the garden that encircles the Taj Mahal. The buds of this flower blossom in a way that moves her heart much. The flower exudes its sweet smell which contributes to the soothing environment of the garden:

And baylas perfumed buds unfold

Their crests of snow, o’er the pink bed

With the broad lotus thickly spread.

(The Taaje Mahal, 78-80)
In “The Rajah’s Obsequies” she mentions *chumayla* flower. “The Moosulman’s Grave” contains the reference to *Champa* and *Jessamine* flowers. Hindus use these two flowers in their religious offerings.

**Musical Instruments**

Roberts refers also to some musical instruments of the Oriental origin. These musical instruments reflect the historical and cultural tradition of the Orient. Her poems, “The Rajah’s Obsequies” and “Nour Juffeir Khan” mention two musical instruments, namely Sitar and Dhole. Sitar was one of the percussive instruments used in Indian classical music during the Mughal period. In “The Rajah’s Obsequies” Roberts reports that ‘the dark-eyed maids’ celebrate some festivals in ‘the Zenana’s halls’. These maids listen to a soft variety of resonance and harmony produced by the sitar. They also show their interest in hymns that glorify the notable themes and ideas of the Oriental cultures:

> The dark-eyed maids hold festivals,

> And listen to the soft sitars,

> Hymning those sweet and gentle themes

> Which young hearts picture in their dreams.

>(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 31-34)

Roberts points out also the melodic sounds of the Sitar played at the Hindu funeral ceremonies. In “Nour Juffeir Khan” she exalts the ‘*cittara’s* softer sounds’ that underscore the tradition of Indian classical music.
Roberts talks also of the Dhole, and its significance in Indian culture. The Dhole is one of the important percussive instruments used generally in folk-music of India. In “The Rajah’s Obsequies” Roberts appreciates the melodic sounds of the Dhole that highlights the rich variety of Indian culture. In “Address, Spoken at the Opening of the Cawnpore Theatre” she mentions the exotic sound of the Dhole that creates melodious ambience at the Cawnpore Theatre:

And the adjacent city only rang

With the deep dhole.

(Address, Spoken at the Opening of the Cawnpore Theatre. 7-8)

Food, Dishes and Drinks

Roberts’s poems – “The Rajah’s Obsequies” and “Nour Juffeir Khan” – refer to the culinary aspect of the Orient. In “The Rajah’s Obsequies” she shows her familiarity with Dal, an important side-dish in Indian cuisine. In this poem she reflects how the Hindus take ‘the silvery rice’ with the ‘golden dal’ and other vegetables:

Milk, and some vegetable root,

The golden dal, the silvery rice,

The plantain’s, or the mango’s fruit,

The Hindoo’s simple wants suffice.

(The Rajah’s Obsequies, 41-44)

In “Nour Juffeir Khan” Roberts refers to paan, pillaus, kaaries and sherbets that indicate local food habits. Paan is generally served as a digestive after meals.
Chewing paan is a cultural tradition throughout the Orient. “When chewed after meals, it sweetens the breath and acts as a gentle stimulant” (Bakhru 43). Roberts draws the image of the zumeendars’ habit of chewing paan:

The Zumeendars and vassals share –

Rose water, paan and spices prest

Profusely on each welcomed guest.

(Nour Juffeir Khan, 174-176)

In the same poem she shows her appreciation for delicious pillaus, kaaries and sherbets, pointing out the rich culinary life of the Orient.

To sum up, the chapter underscores that the Oriental elements discussed here play an effective role in the poems of Roberts, Jones and Hemans, and reflect genuine interest of these poets in the Orient.
Works Cited


