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Fanny Parkes, who lived in India between 1822 and 1846, was the ideal travel writer - courageous, indefatigably curious and determinedly independent. Her delightful journal traces her journey from prim memsahib, married to a minor civil servant of the Raj, to eccentric sitar-playing Indophile, fluent in Urdu, critical of British rule and passionate in her appreciation of Indian culture. To read her is to get as close as one can to a true picture of early colonial India - the sacred and the profane, the violent and the beautiful, the straight-laced sahis and the more eccentric 'White Mughals' who fell in love with India and did their best, like Fanny, to build bridges across cultures.

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