

Imaginary Travels: Halide Edib's Illusory Encounters with India

Roberta Micallef

Introduction

TURKISH AUTHOR, intellectual and prominent political figure Halide Edib Adivar (1884–1964) published *Inside India* in 1937 in English while in voluntary exile¹ in France. A shorter version in Turkish was serialized as “Today’s India”

in the newspaper *Tan* between March 16, 1938, and August 2, 1938. Two years later, between 28 December 1940 and 8 February 1941 it was reprinted with some additions in another Turkish newspaper, *Yeni Sabah*.² In 2014, the complete Turkish volume entitled *Hindistan’a Dair*, was made available to readers. *Inside India* combines biography, memoir, social and political commentary about Halide Edib’s trip, as well as details of her illusory encounters with India before she actually traveled to that country. Decades later Edward Said, in his



Adivar Halide Edib (1941). “Hindistan’a Dair” *Yeni Sabah*. February 5:2. Ankara Üniversitesi Veritabanı downloaded May 9, 2016. <http://gazeteler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/68/1710/26067.pdf>

1. Halide Edib Adivar and her husband Dr. Adnan Adivar went into voluntary exile in 1925, when opposition to the Republican People’s Party was suppressed. In what follows, I shall refer to the author variously as Halide Edib, Edib, or Adivar.

2. “Yayınçının notu,” *Hindistan’a Doğru*; made available online by Ankara University: <http://gazeteler.ankara.edu.tr/detail.php?id=68>.

seminal text, *Orientalism*, showed us that travel writers were influenced by previous cultural representations that they had encountered. In both versions of her narrative, Halide Edib shares the cultural information about India that she encountered before meeting any Indians or traveling to India herself.

Adivar's accounts of her trip to India provide her readers with examples of a type of twentieth-century self-reflexive ethnography and of social commentary travel narrative, which transcends gender boundaries and easy classification.³ Her texts are rich in information about the pre-partition⁴ Muslim-majority Indian cities and the landscape of important figures of the Indian social and political scene. Thus, they represent excellent examples of New Travel Writing, which Dea and Birkett define as a fusion of biography, memoir and fiction.⁵ One of the tenets of New Travel Writing is the importance of "how we see" rather than "what we see."⁶ Clearly, how we see is influenced by prior information about what we are looking at. Adivar's inclusion of her illusory encounters with India allows her readers to observe the prism through which she is gazing at India. At the same time, the manner in which she chooses to narrate these texts serves to present Halide Edib to her readers as an authority figure on this topic and believable to both the English-speaking and Turkish-speaking audience.

Inside India begins with a "Preface" and an "Introductory";⁷ The Turkish version, *Hindistan'a Dair*, has parallel sections entitled "İlk Sözler" (*First Words*) and "Hindistan'ın Kapı Eşiğinde" (*On the Threshold of India*).⁸ Since the two texts differ I will analyze these parallel sections in their different linguistic contexts to understand how they function to represent this complex author to her audience and how they frame what is "seen," by whom and when. While the differences between the two texts and the related details are of great interest to students of the interwar time period, pre-partition India, and travel literature, what is most exciting is the complex interaction between webs of presentation and representation of self and others that participate in forming identities.

3. Bassnett 2002, 225.

4. The Partition of India refers to the partition of the British Indian Empire that led to the creation of the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India (later Republic of India) on 15 August 1947.

5. Youngs 2014, 8.

6. Youngs 2014, 8.

7. Adivar 2002, 3–5 and 6–12, respectively.

8. Adivar 2014, 15–18 and 18–39. These pages are the first part of this section of the book.

The Preface/The First Words

Structurally both sections of *Inside India* and *Hindistan'a Dair* are similar. Edib explains that this particular text is an anomaly in her larger oeuvre and presents three reasons why she is bold enough to write such a book. However, the Turkish text has an additional section explaining its relation to the earlier English book.

The "Preface" to *Inside India* and its counterpart in *Hindistan'a Dair* both begin with a well-worn trope – Halide Edib declares that she is engaging in this task of describing another culture unwillingly, but she also establishes what a qualified interlocutor she is for such a task:

It has been a rule of life not to write anything about a country not my own beyond personal impressions, and that very rarely. I have not made an exception to this rule even in the case of England, a people I have known since early life, a culture which has formed me side by side with my own, a country where I have lived for more than four years, not counting the numerous visits made at different periods. I break the rule in writing *Inside India*.⁹

In the Turkish edition, Halide Edib distances herself somewhat from English culture, which is reduced to a conduit to Western culture:

It has happened that I have written my impressions shortly about foreign countries and nations. But it was as if I had made it a rule not to write a long and serious work about them. I got to know the Western world via English culture.¹⁰

She seems to be arguing that her familiarity with Western culture allows her to see India in a different light, but her Turkishness allows her yet another vantage point, which creates a more complete picture. Her familiarity with English culture, which is emphasized in the earlier text, qualifies her as being able to speak about this region since she brings both the Eastern – Turkish and Muslim – vantage point and an understanding of the culture of those who had ruled India since 1858.

The author provides the same three reasons as to why she can write about India, and yet in all three cases the details are different. In *Inside India* she writes:

First, I felt India to be nearer to my Soul-Climate than any other

9. Adivar 2002, 3.

10. Adivar, 2002, 15.

country not my own.... Even among Hindu friends who have kindly opened their homes to me, a people whose social structure is so different from my own, I felt entirely at home. And it is this senses of belonging in a spiritual sense which has made me take the liberty of writing about Indians so freely.¹¹

Whereas in *Hindistan'a Dair*, Edib writes:

I did not find India foreign to my own Soul-Climate. I did not find these people who opened up their homes to me, who lived in a completely different manner strange at all. I haven't analyzed the reason for this properly myself either. Only this spiritual oneness that I felt during the India trip gave me the courage to write about them in an open and free manner.¹²

With these sentences, Halide Edib is maintaining her distance from India and at the same time establishing herself as part of the same collective as her Turkish readers. Here the Indians and India are firmly "they." While in the English text the author writes that she felt at home, in the Turkish text she writes that she didn't feel strange at all. Between the English and the Indians, she is closer to the Indians. Between the Turks and the Indians, she is closer to the Turks. The author uses the term Soul-Climate (or *ruh iklimi* in Turkish) to indicate that spiritually she feels close to the people of India, whether Muslim or Hindu, but she acknowledges that there are vast differences between her society and India, thereby affirming the fact that she is, despite everything, a visitor.

Halide Edib presents her second reason for writing this text as a promise made to a good friend. She cannot break her promise to Dr. Ansari, she writes, a friend and one of the founders of the new Jamia Millia University and its chancellor from 1928 to 1936. He had invited her to India and had since died. Edib's second reason for writing this book underlines her visitor status, as well as fulfilling multiple other functions. Edib informs the reader that she has a prominent friend who is a doctor and an Indian and close enough to her that he can make such demands. In other words, she is seen as worthy of such tasks by a prominent Indian.

The Turkish version captures a similar sentiment, a promise given to a dear friend, who has since departed. However, the conclusion of the paragraph is shorter and significantly different. Here she writes, "There is no salvation from a promise given to the dead. Because of that I took it as a sa-

11. Adivar 2002, 3.

12. Adivar 2002, 15.

cred debt good or bad to write the work to the end.”¹³ The author omits any mention of the fact that the conclusions she has reached may not be correct or that what she perceives as the “truth” may be different from what the Indians themselves see as the “truth.” She also omits the part of the English text where she writes that she is impressed with how the Indians in India have “frank” discussions about their problems. Omitting the first statement removes any doubt about her objectivity or the nature of truth. The second part may have continued to be problematic in Turkey, which remained a one-party state for twelve years after its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s death in 1938.¹⁴

This second reason for writing *Inside India* shows her readers that Halide Edib has a unique vantage point. Her gaze is unlike that of the English male or female traveler. In an essay about English-language travelogues and gender between the Victorian age and the 1920s, Bassnett writes that women travelers differ from more socially conformist women and from male travelers who use the journey as a means of discovering more about their own masculinity. According to Bassnett, the women travelers in the volumes she has studied appear to be escaping the constraints placed upon them by their families or societies, whereas male travelers wrote of themselves as heroic, risk takers.¹⁵ Halide Edib was traveling to India on the invitation of Muslim intellectuals to give a series of lectures. During January and February 1935, Halide Edib gave eight lectures at the Jamia Millia Islamia (National Muslim University) in New Delhi.¹⁶ The fact that she was an invited and honored guest, a woman who was to deliver lectures at a university to an audience of prominent men, tells the reader that this author is no ordinary traveler, male or female. We know from Halide Edib’s earlier autobiographical works that she was neither a socially nor a politically conformist woman. In *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928),¹⁷ she writes about her fears and trepidation before giving a rousing, nationalist speech to a large crowd on June 6, 1919. In exposing the damage her father’s polygamous marriage did to family harmony in *House with Wisteria* (1926), Halide Edib broke social mores. Halide Edib had already shattered any constraints placed upon her by family or society.

Halide Edib first provides the readers with information about herself. If

13. Adivar 2002, 16.

14. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first President of the Republic of Turkey died in 1938. The Adivars went into self-imposed exile because Adnan Adivar was accused of being part of a conspiracy to assassinate Atatürk. Open discussions of the issues facing the Republic of Turkey at this time would have been frowned upon.

15. Bassnett 2002, 226.

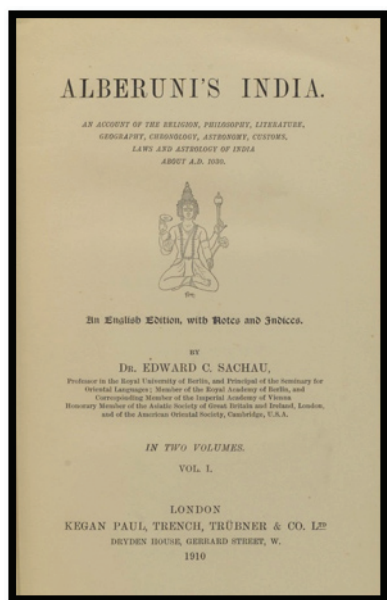
16. Hasan 2002, viii.

17. Adivar 1928, 31.

we agree with Hulme and Youngs, “travel writing consists of predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator.”¹⁸ It becomes clear that the author is concerned with her ability to narrate India “truthfully.” There are many versions and many visions of India depending on the observer’s vantage point. She reiterates the fact that what she produces in this volume will not be the “objective truth.” She writes, “The conclusions I have reached may not be right. What I say about India need not be the truth as the Indians themselves see it, but it is the truth I see and believe.”¹⁹ Halide Edib’s gaze is not one that reflects a singular, dominant culture. Perhaps she recognizes the relationship between power, travel, empire, and capitalism that became articulated in postcolonial studies decades later. Halide Edib has a more varied gaze. On the one hand, her use of pronouns serves to distinguish her from “Indians themselves”; on the other hand, she is not suggesting that her perspective or their perspective is the one and only “true” perspective, but rather that the image can

change depending on the characteristics of the person engaged in the act of looking. She is demolishing the notion that there is one Truth.

Finally, Halide Edib’s third reason for writing her book on India links her to an eleventh-century traveler, Alberuni,²⁰ the author of an encyclopedia of Indian civilization. This at once lets her readers know that she is familiar with what has been written about India and again confirms her status as a visitor, an essential element of travel writing.²¹ Alberuni was a medieval Muslim scholar, polymath, and founder of Indology, who was brought to India in 1017 by Mahmud of Ghazni, a Turkic conqueror and ruler. Halide Edib writes that she was “as strongly impressed by the Hind [India] of the



Google Images. Downloaded May 9, 2016

18. Hulme and Youngs 2002, 3.

19. Adivar 2002, 3.

20. As this is the spelling favored by Halide Edib Adivar, I will use it in this text.

21. Youngs 2014, 7.

twentieth century as Alberuni was of the tenth.”²² Her citation of Alberuni fulfills two functions. It establishes her as a well-educated person who can communicate effectively in English, but who is also familiar with the great scholars and philosophers of the East. She also tells her readers that “I wanted to leave as truthful and objective an account of my period as Alberuni has done of his ... the quality of Alberuni’s work seems the highest among the strangers who have written about India.”²³ While Halide Edib may have arrived in India ten centuries after Alberuni, they are both scholars and they are both Muslims. Both wrote accounts of India as they saw it.

In the Turkish version, Halide Edib repeats her statement that reading Alberuni’s “*Tahkik-i Hind*”²⁴ in English had enabled her to embark on this project.²⁵ The rather long paragraph includes all the information in the earlier English version and a great deal more. Edib describes Alberuni as an extraordinary man who was as much imbued with the soul of an artist, as he was a scientist.²⁶ Alberuni, she writes, was “originally Turkish but in terms of culture, he was a Muslim.” While Islam is not emphasized in the English version, it became important for Edib to connect herself in the Turkish text to a non-Ottoman, Muslim intellectual. Thus, she is participating in the creation of a new Turkish imagined community with an expansive historical geography that precedes the Ottoman Empire.

However, while Edib had excellent reasons for linking herself to Alberuni, the lack of an Ottoman tradition of travel literature referring to non-Ottoman Muslims may have also been part of her reticence about travel writing and her desire to connect her work to Alberuni’s encyclopedia. Herzog and Motika, who published an extensive article on the Ottoman travelogue genre, argue that there were few Ottoman autobiographies and travelogues.²⁷ While there were many diaries of military campaigns, pilgrimages, and such that were written by travelers of necessity, such as

22. Adivar 2002, 3–4.

23. Adivar 2002, 3.

24. Bīrūnī’s completed *Kitāb taḥqīq mā li’l-Hind min maqūla maqbūla fi’l-‘aql aw mardhūla* (The book confirming what pertains to India, whether rational or despicable) consists of a wide-ranging examination of Sanskrit scientific sources, supplemented by conversations with Hindu pandits whom Bīrūnī met while accompanying his patron, Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazni, on military campaigns in northern India in 1030. Encyclopaedia Iranica online.

25. An English edition of Alberuni’s text prepared with notes and indices by Edward Sachau, titled *Alberuni’s India*, was published in 1910. This work is available online through many sources, including the Open Library website: <https://archive.org/stream/Alberunisindiaac01biru#page/n5/mode/2up>.

26. Ibid. Alberuni was born in Khorazm, which today is in Uzbekistan, and died in what is today Afghanistan. He was proficient in many languages but wrote in Arabic or Persian.

27. Herzog and Motika 2000, 162.

government officials and military officers,²⁸ no overall picture or discourse that defined the non-Ottoman Muslim existed.²⁹

This is Halide Edib's first attempt at telling a story about a place as opposed to a person or her nation. It is interesting that she chooses a model from the eleventh century, when there is an Ottoman travel narrative to India written in 1877. Ahmed Hulusi Efendi Şirvani was part of a British Ottoman delegation to India in 1877. He published a *seyahatname* (travelogue) (1883) that described his trip to India. For Ahmed Hulusi, however, travel reports also include "weird and wonderful events" in order to "provide useful information for his compatriots."³⁰ Halide Edib may not have had access to the narrative.

Adivar's Turkish text has an additional section explaining how and why it differs from the original English version. Here, Halide Edib writes that the Turkish version includes everything that the English version includes, but that it is not a translation. The Turkish version, she tells her Turkish audience, was written separately and independently. Topics that may be of interest to Turkish readers are comparatively longer and those that may not be of interest are relatively shorter, she explains. Furthermore, she writes that the conclusions she has reached may not be those of other travelers to India or Indians.³¹ Then she refers to herself in the third person – the reporter of *About India* is far from claiming that she has reached any definite or true conclusions about such a confusing and difficult topic.³² I have argued elsewhere that when Halide Edib is called on to take actions that she finds intimidating she writes about herself in the third person singular.³³ Here again, by using this technique, she indicates how difficult she finds this task. Not only is India complicated and multi-layered, but she herself is not an experienced "travel" writer, she explains to her readers. She is, nevertheless, the first modern Turkish traveler to India to have produced a narrative detailing her impressions of India and Indians.

In the "Preface" and "First Words" Halide Edib establishes herself as a traveler who has a unique point of view. She is a Turkish, Muslim woman born in the Ottoman Empire, which she helps transform into the Republic of Turkey. Furthermore, through her education and travels she is proficient in both English language and culture. When we compare her to the male and female European travelers discussed in Bassnett's work we see that she

28. Herzog and Motika 2000, 155.

29. Herzog and Motika 2000, 195.

30. Herzog and Motika 2000, 155. It is not clear that Hulusi actually went on such a trip.

31. Adivar 2002, 17.

32. Adivar 2002, 17.

33. Micallef 2013, 151–71.

has a unique voice in travel literature overall. However, Edib's insistence on writing about her identity and the existence of many "truths" make this text an excellent example of the new, twentieth-century self-reflexive travel narratives.

Introductory/On India's Threshold: The Credible Narrator

The Introductory in the English-language text becomes part of the section entitled "On India's Threshold" (*Hindistan'ın Kapı Eşiğinde*) in the Turkish version. In the English version, we are given three pre-glimpses to India, whereas in the Turkish version the readers are only provided with two. In addition, there are differences in details and explanations. An analysis of these two sections demonstrates the importance of prior information about places, objects or people in "how we see" them.

Three Pre-Travel Glimpses of India

Glimpse One: Fantastic Tales

The first line of the English "Introductory" is, "Tales had three ways of beginning in my country,"³⁴ which is followed by the first beginning. Whereas the Turkish version starts with "I heard the earliest mention of this country's name in the tales I heard during my childhood. Because two of the rhymes (*tekerleme*) in the beginning of the tales are particularly suitable to India I will repeat them here."³⁵ These opening sentences introduce the notion of tales and introduce the reader to the idea that the information they will receive here is not scientific and cannot be interpreted as objective or truthful. In the English version, her statement "my country" serves to emphasize the fact that while there is a country where she belongs, that is "hers", this country is neither India nor England. The utterance, "I heard about this country in my childhood," assumes a communal Turkish space where children are told tales about places like India. There is no need to elaborate on "my country" because she is in a place and writing in a language where she is part of an "imagined community." However, her "country" has changed dramatically from her childhood to the time of her writing, 1935–37. The Republic of Turkey had replaced the Ottoman Empire of her childhood. Edib does not interrogate or elaborate this point. It would appear from her formulation that her "country" and her audience have remained the same through the seismic shifts in borders, boundaries, and populations that took

34. Adıvar 2002, 5.

35. Adıvar 2014, 21.

place in the aftermath of World War I. Perhaps the explanation lies in the webs of belonging that she has created through her writing of people who share her Soul-Climate, Muslims, whether Persianate or Turkic, and those who speak her language (whether it be Turkish or English).

"Once upon a time....' That is common to the whole world, but will not do for what I have to say about India. India is no longer 'was': it is very much 'is'."³⁶ This is the one of the three beginnings of tales "in her country" that is missing from Halide Edib's Turkish text. Halide Edib writes these lines in the English text where it serves to connect Turkey, India and the world in multiple ways. It indicates that humanity as a whole shares a story-telling tradition and that everyone in the world shares at least one way of articulating the entry to a fantasyland. An attempt to create a common human trait can be seen as an attempt to demystify those who have been seen as strange or exotic and upon whose otherness the English had defined their identity. One might ask why this beginning was excluded from the Turkish text. Had India, once the partition took place, reverted to a state of "was" rather than "is," or did the author deem this uninteresting for Turkish readers? Perhaps it was politically problematic at that point in time to discuss the partition of India, since the British and French involvement in the Middle East had led to the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps 1941, just about the middle of the Second World War, was not the time to remind the Turkish audience of British involvement in the demise of their own empire.

In India, Edib writes in the English version, there are ideas that will influence humanity for thousands of years and there are ideas in the present that belong to the distant past: "there are facts in its present condition which should belong to the jungle, to the early appearance of man upon earth."³⁷ The Turkish version is bereft of any allusions to evolution; it simply states, "belonging to the first days of humanity."³⁸ The English version ends with: "This is why the child of the twentieth century, who is wandering around there, is constantly face to face with the beginning of time and the end of time."³⁹ Edib's third beginning starts: "'once there was, and once there was not....' Thus the storytellers of our childhood began every Indian tale." This was her first glimpse of India. However, the same beginning in the Turkish text is introduced as "the *tekerleme* that is much suited to this strange country is '*bir varmış, bir yokmuş*,'" a literal translation of "once there was and once there was not." Again the English lines set her up as someone

36. Adivar 2002, 5.

37. Adivar 2002, 5.

38. Adivar 2014, 21.

39. Adivar 2014, 21.

from a different culture than her intended audience, but also as someone familiar with India, since she grew up in a country where children were told tales about India that all began with a certain rhyme. The Turkish version does not at all indicate that anyone was being told tales about India, but rather marks India as a strange and exotic country. In both texts, Halide Edib describes her vision of India in terms of atoms and physics, setting herself up as a well-educated person who is capable of objectivity in scientific terms. According to Youngs, “women travel writers must become ‘honorary men’ in order to be recognized within a genre that is shaped so powerfully by a discourse of masculinity.”⁴⁰ Are the references to science Edib’s way of marking herself as an honorary man, not just someone well versed in the Western sciences? The remainder of the paragraph in the English version proceeds to link the India of these children’s tales to the fantastic: “it was the invisible spirits who pulled the strings of power and shaped the destiny of its children.”⁴¹ Missing in the Turkish version, these lines are evidence of what Herzog and Motika call “Orientalism alla Turca.” Edib tells us that she heard these lines as a child while the Ottoman Empire still existed and India was exoticized; it was the land of magic and spiritualism not the land of science and rational thought exhibited by the work of Western scholars such as Einstein.

These reflections by the author present us with an India and an author who is linked to East and West. The author is believable in both contexts because she belongs to the imaginary community of one and she knows India and England well enough to translate one for the other accurately. They also tell us that the author is a good storyteller.

Glimpse Two: The Governess/The Teacher

The differences in the way the second glimpse is described in the two publications show that the political and social environment and the chronological time when a story is narrated have an impact on how it is told. Halide Edib’s second glimpse of India is informed by what she is told by the wife of a tea merchant who had spent many years in India. The details about this character’s nationality and role vis-à-vis Edib’s life differ in the two versions of this narrative. Edib writes in the English-language text that her “English governess,” Mrs. Percy, described the India of forty years ago, which according to my calculations would make it the India of the 1890s. The widow of an English tea-planter, her governess had spent thirty years in India.⁴² In the

40. Youngs 2014, 135.

41. Adivar 2002, 5.

42. Adivar 2002, 5.

Turkish version, the same character is introduced as a *hoca*, or a teacher, not a governess. We find foreign governesses in other Turkish narratives, both fictional and autobiographical, from this period.⁴³ A teacher, however, would be expected to have more professional training and qualifications than a governess. In the Turkish version, the readers are told that this teacher, who is not given a name, is of Irish extraction and the dates when she was in India are different. The Turkish reader is told that this woman had come to Turkey to teach forty years ago and she had spent more than twenty years in India as the wife of a tea merchant.⁴⁴ In both texts, this woman appears to be impossibly old, but perhaps this explains her views of India and its residents. That she is Irish, rather than English, softens the reactions the readers might have about the English upon reading her racist, fervently British imperialist comments. Her name in the English version, Mrs. Percy, is the kind of detail that strengthens the relationship between the author and reader, rendering the author more believable. In the Turkish version, the name is irrelevant. There were many nameless, older, foreign women tutoring or caring for children of elite Turkish households at that time.

The glimpse of India provided by the governess in the English version sounds more fantastic than a fairy tale. Through the voice of the nanny, Edib criticizes the colonial rulers and their view of themselves. From the governess's vantage point, the English are the main actors and the Indians are in the background. The Indians who are allowed to emerge in this tale of India are the serving classes and the untouchables. "Caste frontiers were eternal," the governess states in Edib's account. Edib states that the imperialist race created new lines, rather than erasing the old boundaries. However, the new lines were equally rigid. In the governess's view, white men had remarkable backbone and colored men were wild beasts and the unseen "succumbed before them."⁴⁵ The "unseen" in the Turkish version has been transformed into "snakes,"⁴⁶ but otherwise the texts are the same. In an interesting juxtaposition of empire, gender and class, Edib, by providing the character of governess/teacher, positions herself as a privileged, modernizing, upper-class woman who sympathizes with people colonized by Western imperial powers. She grew up in an upper-class household where modernization implied giving girls access to education and foreign languages and adults were educated enough to know tales about India that they could share with the children of the household. Her critical comments about the British Empire

43. For example: *Aşk-ı Memnu*, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil and *An Ottoman Woman's Search for Freedom*, Zeyneb Hanoum.

44. Adivar 2014, 22.

45. Adivar 2002, 6.

46. Adivar 2014, 22.

reflect that there was a difference between what the English claimed that they were doing and what they actually accomplished. The fact that a member of the British imperialist mission, the wife of a soldier, had been reduced to serving an Ottoman household also tells the reader that the British Empire was perhaps overstretching when it shifted its gaze from South Asia to the Middle East.

An event that is represented significantly differently in the two texts is “The Mutiny,” the widespread but unsuccessful rebellion against British rule in India in 1857–58 and a moment of great imperial crisis, referred to variously as a “rebellion” or “war of independence” by British and Indian historians.⁴⁷ In the course of this episode, over two thirds of the Bengal army, comprised of Hindus, Muslims, and Pathans, rose up against the British. The “mutiny” spread to become the largest rebellion against the British Empire in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ The governess of the English version and the teacher of the Turkish text describe the Mutiny as the only instance in which the white man was taken “unawares.” In the Turkish version, we are told that this was the 1857 rebellion. Edib elaborates, “When she narrated this I sensed a fear in my teacher’s eyes that will follow the English who lived in India for eternity.”⁴⁹ In the English version, she writes: “All this awesome upheaval was due to the objection of some Indians to pig’s flesh and fat.⁵⁰ The people had risen, not because of tyranny or oppression, but because they were made to touch the accursed swine-flesh by their masters.”⁵¹ For an English-speaking audience, this may have seemed absurd. The notion that the English would have forced the Indians to touch the pig or its flesh, but also the notion that a community would be upset enough about such a thing to overthrow a ruling class, might have seemed fantastical. To a Turkish audience, however, which had recently fought a war of independence against a group of Christian nations, being forced to eat pork products would have symbolized a new version of the Crusades, a war with religious overtones. They would have been very sympathetic to the citizens of India.

Perhaps because this would have been rather inflammatory in a text

47. Anderson 2007, 1.

48. Anderson 2007, 2.

49. Adivar 2014, 23.

50. The mutiny broke out in the Bengal army because it was only in the military sphere that Indians were organized. The pretext for revolt was the introduction of the new Enfield rifle. To load it, the sepoys had to bite off the ends of lubricated cartridges. A rumour spread among the sepoys that the grease used to lubricate the cartridges was a mixture of pigs’ and cows’ lard; thus, to have oral contact with it was an insult to both Muslims and Hindus.

51. Adivar 2002, 6.

published in 1941 in Turkish as the British were fighting the Nazis, in the Turkish version Halide Edib writes:

What was the reason for this rebellion? ... According to my teacher this was far from a national independence cause, not against tyranny or oppression but a reactionary movement lacking in goals, born out of ignorance and extremism.⁵² ... While the cause may have been represented differently, in both cases the punishment for the uprising was so severe that even the ghosts of the mutineers could not walk on the earth where they had been born.⁵³

In the Turkish version, the teacher is describing a powerful British Empire facing an unreasonable and irrational mob. According to Halide Edib the British response was excessively harsh.

Glimpse Three: Literary Sources

Literary texts provide Halide Edib with her third glimpse of India. Once again, despite using the same material, the differing representations in the English and Turkish-language texts demonstrate her understanding of her audiences. In both narratives, the first author mentioned is Rudyard Kipling. Under the subtitle "The India of Fiction", or simply "Literature" in the Turkish version, Edib writes about her admiration for Kipling's *Jungle Book*, published in 1894. The time period described in Kipling's book would have coincided with the India described by Edib's governess/teacher. Edib writes about Kipling: "Never had genius captured animal life with such truth, though the form was fanciful; and no other land, ancient or modern, was such a home for animals. They lived their lives as animals should; yet they made one realize the oneness of all life on earth."⁵⁴ In the Turkish version, Halide Edib writes a longer evaluation:

For some reason I was not that interested in these works that were about people. Maybe because I was of the age to sense that there was always a story genre in the way the Western world saw the East. But when I read the work called *Jungle Book*, the work that talks about animals, it was as if I had seen a brand new world. It is not possible to think of a country that is as real a home to animals as India. This great genius was describing how the animals live in such a way that,

52. Adivar 2014, 23.

53. Adivar 2002, 6; Adivar 2014, 23.

54. Adivar 2014, 23.

what appeared to one as products of the imagination at first began to appear realistic by the end.⁵⁵

After decades of post-colonial studies one might criticize Edib for failing to see that even a book describing a country as an ideal setting for animals, could be orientalist in its own right and that perhaps a book advocating that “animals live as animals should,” was referring to the various inhabitants and castes of a nation. However, given when she wrote this text, and what she told us previously about her uneasiness about the reader assuming that Halide Edib is writing the objective truth, we might just as well read this paragraph to mean that it is easier to be objective about animals than people.

The second literary glimpse in both books, subtitled “The Human Side,”⁵⁶ is provided by a much-loved Turkish playwright, Abdülhak Hamid,⁵⁷ whom she describes as “the greatest dramatic poet of late nineteenth-century Turkey.”⁵⁸ Halide Edib writes simply that the play, “Lady Finten,” was put on stage in 1908, although in the Turkish version she names the time period as the immediate aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution (1908–9), which would have been of more interest to the Turkish reader. The play is about an aristocratic English woman and her Hindu servant-lover, Davalagiro. In both of Edib’s texts, the actress representing Lady Finten is described as unsuitable, “anything but English.” In the English-language text, we also learn that she is a “puny Armenian actress.” We are not given this information in the Turkish text since all actresses in that time period would have been members of the non-Muslim minorities. The Turkish audience would likely have assumed as much. In both versions, the Hindu lover is represented as strong and powerful. In the English version, his character is described as “un-Indian” because he raved about “tearing the darkness” and “facing the dawn” because of a desire, because of an aim.

Halide Edib describes a scene where Davalagiro, the Indian “coolie” proclaims:

I have taken the road with such determination that I will not turn my face from the goal, though my tombstone barricades my path. Neither the white-capped waves, nor fire-spitting clouds – no, not even volcanoes shall stop me on my way.⁵⁹

55. Adivar 2014, 24.

56. Adivar 2002, 6.

57. In *Inside India*, Halide Edib refers to him as Abdul-Hak-Hamid, whereas in *Hindistan’a Dair* she refers to him as Abdülhak Hamid. For the remainder of the essay I will refer to him as Abdülhak Hamid.

58. Adivar 2002, 6.

59. Adivar 2002, 7.

Abdülhak Hamid's "coolie," an unskilled laborer, is a dramatically different source than Edib's governess/teacher and the "unseen" forces of Kipling. In the play, the Indian servant is "not suited to the India we imagined."⁶⁰ But who is "we"? Those educated in the British system? In the Turkish version, Edib cites the same lines and tells the reader that she interpreted them as the imaginary lines of a romantic poet that were not true to life.⁶¹ She concludes, "Was it possible to imagine an Indian who could rip the dark curtain of the night and face the morning?"⁶² Is Halide Edib suggesting that the British should be aware, especially after a traumatic moment like the Mutiny that they have already experienced, that perhaps they needed to adjust "how they saw, what they saw." Perhaps the weak coolie of their gaze from a different angle would turn into an Indian who could take charge of his own destiny. Again with a twenty-first-century gaze it is easy to fault her for not questioning the use of the British upper-class lady as the object of desire or the stated need to protect her from such a coolie as an impetus for harshly imposed colonial rule. Abdülhak Hamid is tapping into a deep-seated imperial fear that is replicated in many such situations of power and domination, including a seminal narrative about the American south in the waning years of slavery, *Gone with the Wind* (1936).

The Indians Halide Edib Met Before Traveling to India

In this section, which describes her encounters with people from India before her trip there, we have the most convergence in the presentation of characters to her two audiences. In both texts, she warns her readers that one must not judge a country by its citizens that one meets abroad. In the English text, "A person without his background is like a floating plant, difficult to identify. Further, what is personal may appear national; and what is national, personal."⁶³ In the Turkish text, "A man living abroad resembles leaves that have been torn from their roots, floating on currents. His personal characteristics may appear national to you. A national virtue or fault may appear personal."⁶⁴ Curiously, Halide Edib seems pre-occupied with making a case for Indian masculinity.

First, she describes the Indians traveling on the ship she took to London in 1909, telling her readers in the Turkish version that she did not pay attention to her fellow first-class Indian travelers and, in the English version, that she simply did not pay attention to the other travelers. Rather, she writes,

60. Adivar 2002, 7; Adivar 2014, 25.

61. Adivar 2014, 25.

62. Adivar 2014, 25.

63. Adivar 2002, 7.

64. Adivar 2014, 26.

she is more interested in the working-class Indians, the stewards, and the sailors. Apparently, the first-class travelers are a community on the vessel. They may be of different ethnic, national, religious or language backgrounds but they are all united in their class designation. In both texts, she tells her readers that, in contrast to the English who were ordinary waiters, the Indians looked refined and sensitive. In both texts, she says that their faces could not have been a reflection of who they were, but rather “ancestral masks.” In the Turkish version, she adds some complimentary lines describing the Indian waiters as having calm and brave eyes, as men who went about their duties with the look of men who worked with their minds and imaginations, rather than their muscles. They are serving, but they are dignified.

It is the Indian sailors who get the more peculiar descriptions. They are described almost like monkeys in the English text, where she tells us that she would not be surprised if they could embroider with their toes. In the Turkish version, they are described as being examples of the ugliest possible Indians, as strange creatures who appeared beside you at the most unexpected moments.⁶⁵ Furthermore, she writes, they carried the mark of those who had been stepped on for an eternity.⁶⁶ It is this that she seems to find most objectionable. Masculinity and servility cannot coexist for Halide Edib. Just as the lead man in Abdülhak Hamid’s play is “un-Indian” because he is goal-oriented, a fighter and powerful, these men are ugly because they are servile. The “other” for her on the boat is the working class, the servile laborer who works with his muscles rather than intelligence. The “other” is not the British, the Indians, or the other first-class travelers.

In 1912 in Istanbul Halide Edib meets Dr. Ansari, who led the Indian Red Crescent delegation to aid in the aftermath of the Balkan disasters. In both texts, Halide Edib describes Dr. Ansari as “the most representative Indian Muslem.”⁶⁷ In both texts, she focuses on his eyes: “They were purposeful eyes, very kind in spite of the unwavering determination of their depth.”⁶⁸ However, while in the Turkish version she writes about their friendship and describes him as being similar to Turkish doctors, in the English text she makes an effort to describe him as masculine. She appears to be compensating for the English descriptions she has come across of Indian men. She writes that his clothes “had that masculine elegance associated with London,” and that the younger members of the mission were like “our own young people.”⁶⁹ It is not clear who the “our” refers to in this text, but it is

65. Adivar 2014, 27.

66. Adivar 2002, 8; Adivar 2014, 26–27.

67. Adivar 2002, 8. This is how she spells Muslim.

68. Adivar 2002, 8; Adivar 2014, 27.

69. Adivar 2002, 8.

missing in the Turkish version.

We have another interesting historical silence next. In the Turkish version, she skips to 1925, but in the English version she discusses the Indians she met in 1918, the Indian regiments of the occupying forces – the colonial representatives. Then, in 1919, she met the Indians, who were trying to help Turkey and the Khilafat movement (1919–24), a pan-Islamic political movement launched in India to influence the British and to support the Ottoman-held title of Caliph.⁷⁰ This movement, which for her Turkish audience evoked the past, had a different significance for India and her English-speaking audience.⁷¹

In both texts, 1925 is described as the period when India takes on a confusing picture and when Indian Muslims face difficulties living in India amid scenes of disorder and misery. Halide Edib writes,

“India is a prison, and we all are prisoners and slaves,” said a Muslim. A Hindu painted a terrible picture of dire poverty against a background of shameless luxury. “There are a few hundred languages, and a few thousand castes at loggerheads—can there ever be an Indian nation under such conditions,” wrote a journalist.

Above these blurred scenes of disorder and misery gradually rose the figure of Mahatma Gandhi.⁷²

The same passage as rendered in the Turkish version:

In 1925 India appeared as very confusing place to me. In London an Indian Muslim I had known since the Balkan War said to me, “India is a big dungeon, all the Indians are prisoners.” Every Hindu intellectual that I met told me about his country’s misery, the people’s poverty, and hunger. A journalist who had inspected India in those days explained to me that India would not be able to be an independent, single nation. “How can it be?” He was saying, “There are a few hundred languages, a few thousand castes!”⁷³

After a few lines, Gandhi is mentioned:

Mahatma Gandhi slowly emerged after 1919 from what appeared to us to be India’s dark and confusing condition.⁷⁴

India’s multiplicity is described as a liability in the modern world that

70. See Minault 1982 for further information.

71. Adivar 2002, 8.

72. Adivar 2002, 8–9.

73. Adivar 2014, 27.

74. Adivar 2014, 27.

emphasized homogenized nation-states. This comes through clearly in both texts. Halide Edib knows what happened in Turkey, what had already happened to the Armenians before the collapse of the Empire, to the Greeks with the population exchanges after the establishment of the Republic, and to the Kurds who rebelled against the Turkish Republic. In all cases, poverty and misery are present. In both cases Gandhi represents a potential beacon of light.

Both texts proceed to a paragraph that is almost identical, about how, at the point of arrival in India, she had listened to many Indians of different persuasions, but that together they lacked “coherence,” or *ahenk* as she writes in Turkish. After this, she arrives in India, ready to discover and present a more coherent version, or a version that she presents as a coherent subject.

A comparison and analysis of two texts, one in English and one self-translated into Turkish about a trip Halide Edib Adivar took to a third country, India, reveal much about the multi-faceted nature of identity, the acts of seeing and representing oneself or others. Adivar’s complex positionality, her linguistic background, class affiliations, education, and religion all surface in different ways in different times and situations, as she seeks to get the same point across depending on whom she is addressing. She is unlike the male or female travelers described by Bassnett. As someone whose culture was an object of curiosity and study, she is an author who has first-hand knowledge of how faulty or limited one’s vision can be if one has only one point of access to a culture or its people. She is one of the few men or women who has not only read what has been written about the Ottoman Empire and Turkey but also has the power and authority to participate in the conversation. In writing about India, whether in English or Turkish, with the frame she provides in the Preface and Introductory, Edib is self-reflexive and honest about what is shaping how she sees, and at the same time successful in her effort to convince her readers that she is a trustworthy, first-person narrator who has the authority to take us with her on her voyage.

Bibliography

- Adivar, Halide Edib. 2002. *Inside India*. First edition 1937. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Adivar, Halide Edib. 2014. *Hindistan'a Dair*. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları.
- Adivar, Halide Edib. 1928. *The Turkish Ordeal*. New York: The Century.
- Anderson, Clare. 2007. *The Indian Uprising of 1857-1858 Prisons, Prisoners and Rebellion*. New York, London, Delhi: Anthem Press.
- Bassnett, Susan. 2002. "Travel Writing and Gender." In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, 225–42. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzard, James. 2005. "What Isn't Travel?" In *Unravelling Civilization: European Travel and Travel Writing*, edited by Hagen Schultz-Forbert, 43–69. Berlin, New York: Peter Lang.
- Hasan, Mushirul. 2002. "Introduction" In *Inside India* ix–lxi. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Herzog, Christoph, and Raoul Motika. 2000. "Orientalism 'alla turca': Late 19th / Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim 'Out-back'." *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 40, Issue 2. *Ottoman Travels and Travel Accounts from an Earlier Age of Globalization*: 139–95.
- Hulme, Peter, and Tim Youngs, eds. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Micallef, Roberta. 2013. "From the House with Wisteria to Inside India: Halide Edib's Journey to the Symbolic." In *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing*, edited by Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma, 151–70. Boston: Ilex Foundation.
- Minault, Gail. 1982. *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. 2010. *Reading Autobiography: Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd edition. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Youngs, Tim. 2014. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.