

Daydreaming on a Train to Canada: (On My Way)

R. R. Pravin

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Daydreaming on a Train to Canada is a high-concept poetry collection whose mellow, reflective poems capture the once-in-a-lifetime experience of finding a new home at the end of a long journey.

R. R. Pravin's *Daydreaming on a Train to Canada* is an elegiac free verse collection with impressions and memories of immigration, race, and identity.

Organized as a multisided LP or mix tape, the book includes a "track list" of poems. Its prelude, hidden tracks, and A, B, and C sides are each dedicated to a theme or concept that underlies their chronological relations of an "exodus" from Asia to North America. Their narrator departs India for Canada, describing his inner and outer worlds alongside fantasies, daydreams, and commentary on modern culture.

Most of the book's poems are free verse, built from short phrases and morphemes. The pieces' line breaks are predictable and based around natural speech patterns, giving the poems a conversational feel. "The lanterns flicker / As my thoughts wander," one muses. Arranged in spindly columns, the poems are reminiscent of a social media feed or the movement of a train, scrolling and rolling through a landscape that becomes increasingly alien over time.

The book's tone alternates between hope for the future and overwhelming cynicism. Polemics about millennials and the failure of democracy are folded into reminiscences about India, family, and childhood. "Trust no one, trust no machine. / Welcome to 2019," warns the prologue poem for a section titled "Democracy At A Human Zoo: Year 8102." Although Canada is the "future" and the narrator's destiny, doubt and dismay at disintegrating human connections is palpable. Many of the poems yearn for the simplicity of the past and shared warmth, which is depicted as being supplanted by "cold" technology, rather than supported by new tools and ideas.

The entries evoke song lyrics and liner notes of an earlier era; like an album, they hint at deeper ideas but do not interrogate their subjects. Several pieces allude to immigration and race, but racism and colonialism are not explored in a meaningful way; such ideas take a back seat to broad-brush inclusion. "Born colour-blind / I never saw any one / For their shades of / Blue, purple, red or pink," says "Broken Rainbow." The perspective of a modern immigrant choosing to relocate to a near-alien culture on the other side of the world is buried, while recurring illustrations of teddy bears, the Eiffel Tower, and other whimsical images are not made to connect to the text.

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