

THE DANCE OF DESTINY

Reviews

BookReview.com:

Raja Ratnams ‘The Dance of Destiny’ can be read in a number of ways. The most approachable for a Westerner is as memoir and history. ... Australia (very like the USA) is a land of immigrants and ‘The Dance of Destiny’ is as much a coming-of-age story for Australia as it is Ratnam’s. We follow the nation from political and cultural adolescence after WWII as reflected in its unconscious assumption that White is, quite naturally, the superior skin colour and Christianity, quite supernaturally, the only way to God. Ratnam’s social and professional experiences are one long litany of injustices, but by the end of his career in government he records major advances in immigration and ethnic policies and develops a true affection for his chosen country. “Thus” he writes, “In terms of humanity, and a very necessary ethnic diversity, I saw the beginnings of a new Australia.”

So, this a very interesting and thought provoking book and made even more so where the narrative is interspersed with the author’s metaphysical meditations. Ratnam has read deeply and written at length about religion and spirituality. Such contemplation has made him more able to accept what he calls his wheels-falling-off experiences as mere “manifestations of human will-power and folly, in a universe whose external and internal trajectories are symbolically signified by the flight of dragons,” ... Believing as he does in reincarnation and the role of Destiny in his life, there is no closure to his story. One thinks, rightly so.’

Part 1 - THE WHEELS FELL OFF

” ... an extraordinary piece of work. ... it is unique because not only does it evoke in a rich fashion a life that has been extraordinary ... but is also deeply reflective about what it means to be human. ... an account of a journey of a soul, an account that enriches us as we continue on our individual pilgrimages through life.” - Dr. Greg Melleuish, Associate Professor, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, Australia, and author

“As one might expect from a Tamil-Malayan-Australian, Raja Ratnam offers cross-grained reflections on his early life. Here is anecdote and analysis from an author who resorts to quotation despite sharpening epigrams of his own. Whether grieving or jocular, he is, by turn, percipient and puzzled, sceptical yet superstitious. The wheels have not fallen off his humanity.” - Humphrey McQueen, historian and author, Canberra

” The witty, bittersweet reminiscences of a man travelling between cultures, observing and questioning systems and beliefs around him ... This intriguing saga, packed with information on Tamil-Indian-Malay customs, offers a cosmic worldview with a twist.” - Dr. Anne-Marie Smith, President, Multicultural Writers’ Association of Australia

Part 2 – OF HOLES WHICH WERE NOT THERE

“Here is a unique picture of Australia over the past 60 years by one who is both an outsider and an insider. It provides a picture of this country that may be uncomfortable to the reader at times because it tells truths that they would rather not hear. It is written by a man who not only has a

soul but is willing to share his spiritual insights with us. If you wish to understand Australia as it really is, you must read Raj!" - **Associate Prof. Dr Greg Melleuish, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, Australia**

"Thought provoking! Reflections based in sixty years at the heart of Australia's post 1945-immigration process raise disturbing but necessary questions. Optimism tinged with realism prevails. Most strongly recommended." - **Dr. John Atchison, Honorary Fellow, School of Humanities, University of New England, Australia.**

"A gross understatement of the author's achievements. A coloured immigrant, having been denied equal opportunity and fair treatment, in spite of proven managerial skills, became a prominent leader and an agent of desirable changes in civil society. With his insights, he offers hope for a racially diverse Australia." - **Danny Ronis, retired Commercial Manager (treated as a 'wog', in spite of being born in Australia, because my father was a European.)**

The US Review of Books – ‘Recommended’

"...my personal river of Destiny took me to where I had to go, no matter how hard I paddled to change directions."

"What path does a man's life take, and why? This nonfiction narrative is the author's personal account of his journey. Born into a Ceylon Tamil family living in British-colonized Malaya, he was used to a multi-cultural environment. ... After the war, he was accepted to school in Australia and later had a distinguished career working with refugees and immigrants in the midst of racism.

This 411-page work does not get bogged down. Ratnam gives enough explanation to keep his story flowing without belabouring the issue. ... It is not only the author's life that is interesting, but it is how his background mixed with the larger significance of events happening around him that makes this book stand out. Ratnam discusses both harmony and prejudice based on race, religion, language, and customs, providing insight for any college student of sociology, race relations (including job discrimination), history of Malaya and Australia, Hinduism, or migrant settlement policies."

Kirkus Discoveries

"A detailed exploration of a personal journey through varying cultures and countries. ... Ratnam has a rare view of spiritual destiny, colonial politics and cultural identity. This memoir traces his childhood ... to his move to Australia ... creating a diverse array of cross-cultural situations. From the arrogance of British colonials disparaging the Asian cultures in '40s-era Malaysia, to the fight for immigrant equality in present-day Australia, the author examines racial and cultural divisions. He also speculates on the role that destiny places on life's journey.

... his difficult time in Australia enabled the author to write three books related to migrant settlement and sociological issues, fulfilling his destiny in bridging Eastern and Western cultures. Ratnam writes with convincing authority, and his details of Malaysian and Australian society reveal a sharp eye for cultural nuances."