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The Leaving Of Things



Synopsis

Winner of the 2014 International Book Award for Multicultural Fiction 2014 Kindle Book Award
Winner Vikram is not your model Indian-American teenager. Rebellious and adrift in late 1980s Wisconsin, he is resentful of his Indian roots and has no clue what he wants from his future—other than to escape his family’s life of endless moving and financial woes. But after a drunken weekend turns disastrous, Vikram’s outraged parents decide to pack up the family and return to India—permanently. So begins a profound journey of self-discovery as Vikram, struggling with loneliness, culture shock, and the chaos of daily Indian life, finds his creativity awakened by a new romance and an old camera. His artistic gifts bring him closer to a place and family he barely knew. But a devastating family crisis challenges Vikram’s sense of his destiny, hurtling him toward a crossroads where he must make the fateful choice between India, the land of his soul, and America, the land of his heart. Revised edition: This edition of *The Leaving of Things* includes editorial revisions.

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Customer Reviews

I read *THE LEAVING OF THINGS* over the course of what turned out to be a very enjoyable

weekend. At 360 pages, the story was rich and deep enough to lose myself in, and its teenaged hero, Vikram, spoke with an authentic, intimate voice that immediately drew me in and kept me hooked until the end. "India wasted no time with me," Vik confides on page one, and the story takes off. Vik's predicament is uniquely compelling: he is an Indian-American teenager who spent most of his childhood in Wisconsin, USA, and now must move to India for college. The story recalls other great depictions of the immigrant experience--as I read, the work of Jhumpa Lahiri and Junot Diaz came to mind--yet *THE LEAVING OF THINGS* cleverly turns this familiar story on its head. The book asks, What is it like to be an "other" in the Old World? How does it feel to move from the land of McDonald's and Madonna to that of khari puri and Bollywood? Throughout the novel, writer Jay Antani explores complex questions of racial, cultural, and national identity with thoughtfulness and grace. As Americans, we may be accustomed to visiting other countries as tourists, viewing foreign cultures and customs through the lens of orientalist exoticism or simple curiosity. And other works of literature have shown us India as experienced by its natives. In *THE LEAVING OF THINGS*, however, we see India through the eyes of an American kid who is neither a tourist nor a local, an Indian kid who should belong but doesn't. An Indian who is not Indian, an American who is not American, Vik struggles to find his place in this strange and fluid universe, and the stakes are high.

This book is about two brothers who grew up in the U.S. (it focuses on the older brother, Vik) but are not American citizens. They had to move around the U.S. a lot because of their father's job. Vik finally settles down in Wisconsin, as his family stays there for an extended period of time. He has real friends and a girlfriend. It is right before college that he learns that his father wants to move back to India with the family. As the two children are not citizens, they have no choice but to follow, despite the fact that Vik is now an adult. Once in India, Vik finds he loses touch with his friends, his girlfriend breaks up with him, and he doesn't think he can pursue art school like he once wanted to. However, when his father realizes Vik's heart is in America, Vik and his father find a way to get him back to Wisconsin. I gave the book three stars for a few reasons. First off, there were a lot of typos, which drive me crazy. Secondly, by the end of the first week, beginning of the second week there, Vik was navigating his own way around India. His dad even got him a scooter to get around. Vik enrolled in college in India and all was well despite his desire to return to the US. This is the part of the book that I thought was unrealistic. Vik's younger brother easily adapted to India and its educational system and eccentricities. However, kids have a greater capacity to adapt. I remember visiting India as a kid. I also remember visiting as an adult. Despite speaking the local language, I could not get around on my own without getting lost. I could not adapt to non-bottled water and

street food. Vik did get sick at one point, but they portrayed him as fitting right in as soon as he got over his illness. There are a lot of challenges to living in India.

* Contains spoilers!! I was wholeheartedly looking forward to reading Jay Antani's *The Leaving of Things*, with the premise of the story being very similar to what I had experienced as a young girl myself. The main character, Vikram Mistry is the Americanized son of Indian immigrants, and after spending much of his life in the States, his family is uprooted and they return back to India. But in the first chapter alone, I was thoroughly disappointed to find an unlikable and whiny teenager narrating this promising story with a pretty book cover. The novel opens up with Vikram and his family in Bombay's airport, patiently waiting to go through customs and ultimately boarding their final flight to Ahmadabad where they were to permanently reside. I wanted to like Vikram, especially since his experience of returning to his parents' homeland was so similar to what I had experienced as a young girl when my parents took us back to Pakistan. I felt his fear, his isolation from the familiar world left behind in the States. But the truth was Vikram established himself as a selfish and over-dramatic teenager from the start and it never quite changed until the end of the book. Another aspect that bothered me about Vikram was his obsession with his friends and girlfriend back home. Every thought, every revelation came back to thoughts of them, and after a while became annoying. His relationship with his girlfriend Shannon did not seem genuine either, and lacked any sense of true feeling. Whenever he longed for her or missed her, I didn't believe him. And so, when they inevitably breakup because of the distance, I felt no remorse or sadness for him either.

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