

The Death of Vishnu: A Novel

By Manil Suri

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“Enchanting. . . . Suri’s novel achieves an eerie and memorable transcendence.”—*Time*

In Manil Suri’s debut novel, Vishnu, the odd-job man, lies dying on the staircase of an apartment building while around him unfold the lives of its inhabitants: warring housewives, lovesick teenagers, a grieving widower. In a fevered state, Vishnu looks back on his love affair with the seductive Padmini and wonders if he might actually be the god Vishnu, guardian of the entire universe.

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The Death of Vishnu: A Novel By Manil Suri Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
The title of Manil Suri's first novel gets right to the point. His protagonist, having purchased the right to sleep on the ground-floor landing of a Bombay apartment house, slips slowly from a coma into death. As this aging alcoholic takes leave of the earth, his neighbors surround him, arguing over who gave Vishnu a few dried chapatis, who called the doctor for him, and who will pay for the ambulance to cart him away. Meanwhile, the hero of *The Death of Vishnu* is lost in memories. Drifting through increasingly vivid scenes from his past, he recalls his relatively rare snatches of love and joy--and especially his romance with Padmini, a self-involved prostitute. On one particular day, it seems, he stole one of his employer's cars and drove his love interest to the honeymoon town of Lonavala, where he showered her with gifts and finally lifted her veil to kiss her like a bride:

> Then the absurdity of the situation strikes him. The preposterousness of his images, the foolishness of his feelings, the comicality of chasing currents that skim across Padmini's face. He thinks how absurd this whole trip has been, how absurd is the presence of the two of them in Lonavala, how absurd is the scenery itself that stretches before them. He thinks of poor, ridiculous Mr. Jalal, waiting back in Bombay for his Fiat, and of how Padmini will react when he asks her to buy them petrol so they can get back.

Vishnu also recalls his secret passion for Kavita Asrani, the beautiful teenage daughter of one of the families for whom he works. Given the protagonist's focus on his hapless love life, the scope of Suri's dazzling debut may appear narrow. However, the apartment house upon whose floor Vishnu spends his final hours functions as a microcosm of Indian society. It helps to know even a smattering about Hindu mythology or India's religious conflicts. But even if you don't, there is plenty to relish in *The Death of Vishnu*, with its comical, richly drawn characters, loving attention to the details of everyday life, and provocative exploration of destiny and free will. *--Regina Marler*

From Publishers Weekly
Visualizing a village, a hotel or an apartment building as a microcosm of society is not a new concept to writers, but few have invested their fiction with such luminous language, insight into character and grasp of cultural construct as Suri does in his debut. The inhabitants of a small apartment building in Bombay are motivated by concerns ranging from social status to spiritual transcendence while their alcoholic houseboy, Vishnu, lies dying on the staircase landing. During a span of 24 hours, Vishnu's body becomes the fulcrum for a series of crises, some tragic, some farcical, that reflect both the folly and nobility of human conduct. To the perpetually quarreling first-floor tenants, Mrs. Pathak and Mrs. Asrani, Vishnu is a recipient of grudging charity and casual calumny; each justifies her refusal to pay for his hospitalization. Though locked in perpetual bickering, the women are united in their prejudice against their upstairs neighbors, the Jahals, who are Muslims. While Mr. Jahal seeks to test his intellectual agnosticism by seeking spiritual enlightenment, his son, Samil, and the Asranis' spoiled, willful daughter, Kavita, prepare to defy their families by running away together. On the third floor, reclusive widower Vinod Taneja still mourns his young wife, Sheetal; their story of tentative love blossoming into deep devotion and truncated by early death is an exquisite cameo of a marital relationship. Interspersed are Vishnu's lyrically rendered thoughts as his soul leaves his body and begins a slow ascent of the apartment stairs, rising through the stages of existence as he relives memories of his gentle mother and his passion for the prostitute Padmina. Suril has a discerning eye for human foibles, an empathetic knowledge of domestic interaction and an instinctive understanding of the caste-nuanced traditions of Indian society. The excesses of life in that countryDthe oppressive heat, the mixture of

superstitions and religious fanaticism, the social crueltyDpermeate the atmospheric narrative. By turns charming and funny, searing and poignant, dramatic and farcical, this fluid novel is an irresistible blend of realism, mysticism and religious metaphor, a parable of the universal conditions of human life. Agent, Nicole Aragi. (Jan.)
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From Library Journal
In this debut, mathematics professor Suri introduces us to the varied denizens of an apartment building where Vishnu lies dyingAas neighbors argue about paying for the ambulance. Expect big promotion.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Timothy Patrick:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or even read a book titled The Death of Vishnu: A Novel? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have different opinion?

Charles Duda:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be upgrade about what going on or info even knowledge to make them keep up with the era that is always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe can update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know which one you should start with. This The Death of Vishnu: A Novel is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

Pamela Wilson:

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Ralph Pettie:

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