

## 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

- Sales Rank: #344580 in eBooks
- Published on: 2010-06-28
- Released on: 2012-06-18
- Format: Kindle eBook

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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 Padmini. Suri 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 country--the oppressive heat, the mixture of

superstitions and religious fanaticism, the social cruelty permeate 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 dying as neighbors argue about paying for the ambulance. Expect big promotion.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Billy Reynolds:**

Reading can be called a head hangout, why? Because when you find yourself reading a book mainly a book entitled *The Death of Vishnu: A Novel* your brain will drift away through every dimension, wandering in most aspects that maybe mysterious for but surely will become your mind friends. Imagining each and every word written in an e-book then become one type conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get previous to. *The Death of Vishnu: A Novel* giving you yet another experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful details for your better life on this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind is going to be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

#### **Myrtie Hammond:**

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#### **William Culley:**

That guide can make you to feel relax. This particular book *The Death of Vishnu: A Novel* was colorful and of course has pictures around. As we know that book *The Death of Vishnu: A Novel* has many kinds or style. Start from kids until teens. For example *Naruto* or *Private investigator Conan* you can read and believe that you are the character on there. Therefore, not at all of books tend to be make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and rest. Try to choose the best book in your case and try to like reading which.

**Michael Santiago:**

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