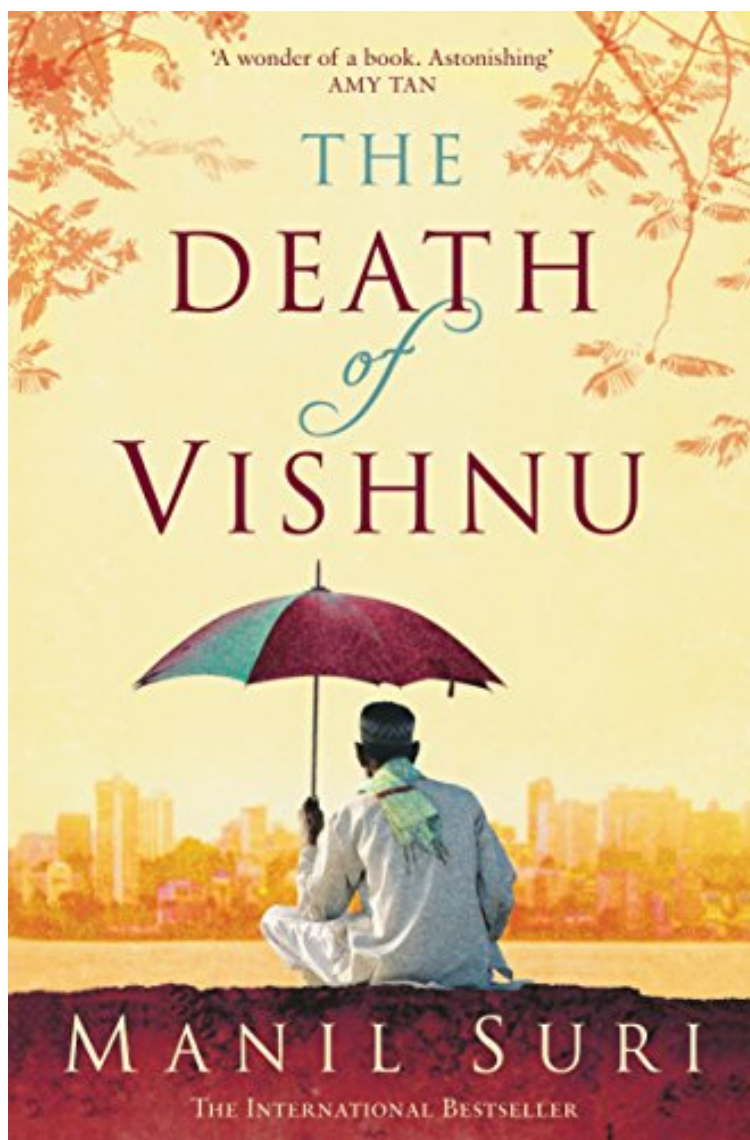


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# The Death of Vishnu



*Par Manil Suri*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Vishnu, the odd-job man in a Bombay apartment block, lies dying on the staircase landing. Around him the lives of the apartment dwellers unfold - the warring housewives on the first floor, the lovesick teenagers on the second, and the widower, alone and quietly grieving at the top of the building.

In a fevered state Vishnu looks back on his love affair with the seductive Padmini and comedy becomes tragedy as his life draws to a close. .co.uk Not wanting to arouse Vishnu, in case he hadn't died yet, Mrs. Ashrani tiptoed down to the third step above the landing on which he lived, teakettle in hand. So begins Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu*, a comically trenchant depiction of the inhabitants of a slum building in Bombay. This is a world of small things, of truculent housewives engaged in a war of mutual suspicion, of selfishness and ignorance and of the poverty of existence, both spiritual and material. With dexterity and

acuity, Suri plunges the reader into the bounded world that his characters inhabit, with each story existing as a separate unit, occasionally interacting with another, reflecting the invidiously withdrawn way they share the house. The inhabitants include dreamer Mr Jalal and his frustrated wife; Mrs Ashrani and her political intrigues; teenagers Kavrita and Sumil's sexual attraction and elopement; and Vinod's solitary existence, mourning the loss of his one love. Existing in displacement, outside these residents' lives, is the eponymous Vishnu, who, as the novel opens, lies dying on the landing of the stairs. He has lived there for many years, earning his leftover stale chapattis, tea and place to sleep through running errands (badly). The residents argue over who is responsible for calling an ambulance, for saving his life, and manoeuvre to absolve themselves from responsibility. As Vishnu slides closer to death, the reader travels with him along the road to death, and the actions and thoughts of those who live in the house are revealed to Vishnu and the reader with a god-like omniscience. As his spirit journeys further and further away from his body, Vishnu begins to believe he is transcending to godhead. Fellow resident Mr Jalal believes so too; an implacable searcher for a meaning, a reason for life, he believes that he has finally found truth when he dreams of Vishnu's transformation. His despairing wife, however, tries with increasing desperation to hide her husband's apparent slide into madness from the neighbours. Gradually, the intensity and heat of their emotions becomes magnified and the turmoil and conflict within the house heats up and boils over, turning stifled neighbourly relations into outright aggression, intolerance and abuse. Suri keeps this remarkable novel moving with alacrity, conveying the smallness of their lives through his often hilarious characterisations, which illuminate the absurdities of human nature divided by prejudice, moral hypocrisy and greed. --Alison Jardine *Revue de presse* A delightful and rich first novel lyrical. (Wall Street Journal) "Deft and confident." (New York Times Book Review) "The reader is swept away by Suri's fresh, witty observations and tender comic moments." (Seattle Times) "[A] literary accomplishment eloquent, refined and tasteful. (Washington Post Book World) "[THE DEATH OF VISHNU] reads like the work of a highly skilled and experienced practitioner of the writer's craft." (The Los Angeles Times Book Review) "Suri, at his best, reveals not only a collision of modern and mythic India but a commingling of them." (San Francisco Chronicle) "Marvelously life-embracing THE DEATH OF VISHNU is a seamlessly constructed, quietly eloquent work of art." (Newsday) Enchanting Masterfully created No telling detail or private vanity escapes the author's comic yet infinitely compassionate scrutiny. (Boston Globe)