

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Memory of Lost Home: A Diasporic Reading of
Manil Suri's *the Death of Vishnu***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Prakash Tiwari has completed his thesis “**Memory of Lost Home: A Diasporic Reading Manil Suri’s *The Death of Vishnu***” under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from August 2009 to May 2010. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled **Memory of Lost Home: “A Diasporic Reading of Manil Suri’s *The Death of Vishnu*”** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Prakash Tiwari has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Manil Suri in his novel *The Death of Vishnu* presents the vivid picture of Indian society through imagination. He recalls the events of past which he has experienced when he used to live in the Bumbay apartment. Although Suri is far from his native land, he presents the imaginary home through his writing in which religious tension is rampant between Hindu and Muslim family. It is all because of diasporic setting of the writer, when he presents the picture of Indian society, he presents more than the real India, in which he sees the death of god Vishnu who is supposed to be eternal according to Hindu mythology. Suri translates Indian culture into English through the use of English language.

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Introduction

Suri was born in Bombay, India. He attended the University of Bombay before moving to the United States. He received a Ph.D, in mathematic on 1983, and became mathematics professor in University of Maryland, Baltimore Country. He still continues to hold this job even though he is more notable as a writer, and has risen through the academic ranks of the University. Suri began writing short stories in the 1980s during his spare time, but none was published. In 1995 he began writing *The Death of Vishnu*, a novel about social and religious tension in India taking an apartment building in contemporary Mumbai. An Excerpt “The Seven Circle” appeared in *The New York* and the novel was published on 2001, becoming an international bestseller. Suri received a six-figure advance because of a bidding war between publishing houses.

According to the interview on the audio book version of the novel, Suri is planning to write a trilogy of novels with titles featuring the three Hindu gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. *The Age of Shiva* was published in 2008, with *The Birth of Brahma*. His work contains many allusions to issue of poets and writers Magazine, which expends on his biography and details his struggles in getting his work published.

This book begins with an amusing conflict between two homemakers who must share a kitchen. Several classes of people are featured from very poor to the middle classes, their interactions and influences upon each other. Very well written, tragedy is inevitable, particularly with the young lovers of different religions and of course, the dying Krishna, the lowest of servants’ who sleeps under the stairs.

Vishnu lies dying on the staircase, which has been his home, and his neighbors’ families. Pathak and Arsni, argue, who should pay for ambulance (35). This is the beginning of the chain, which transports the reader to the higher and higher floor of the building in Bombay and reveals the drama behind the close dwellers. Mr Jalal through his

obsessive search for the sense of life, the widow Vinod Taneja, who is missing his wife so much he renounces life altogether, and young Kavita Asrani, who imagines herself as a heroine of a Bollywood romance movie and runs away from home.

The story, infused with Indian mythology, is a metaphor of a social and political division in the contemporary Indian society, shown where as a building, inhabited by people of different social status and religious belief. The Pathaks and the Asrani are very similar Hindu families, who lives constant competition and jealousy, uniting only against those who are much different, like the Jalals, who are respectful Muslims (and whose son elopes with Kavita Asrani), or like Vishnu, a poor drunk who is allowed to live on the stairs of the building in exchange for favors. The stairs provide shelter for many people, nearly as many, as those who live in the flats, and equally diverse. There is Ganga, who is assigned the task of bringing the milk to the flats, and the radiowalla, whose only pride is his small transistor radio. The building sparks with life, everyone is going about their business, and in the middle of the staircase, there lies Bishnu in a coma.

The story of the few days before Vishnu dies is interrupted by Vishnu's visions of his past and afterlife, his prostitute lover, Padmini, his dreams of a better life and his misery and happiness in life. These fragments bring spiritual depth into the witty novel, giving its perspective and rounding it up as a thoroughly Indian story. The author, Manil Suri, is a mathematician and maybe because of this he managed to give his debut novel exceptionally good structure. The ending is open and leaves room for imagination (at the same time, it was a bit unclear and blurred, the only flaw could find in this amazing debut). The language is light and clear. The book reads fast and absorbs the reader. The other two of the Indian divine trinity, Shiva (the novel appeared at the beginning of 2008) and Brahma, with a lot of anticipation-with a lot of anticipation with *The Death of Vishnu*.

Through characterization, Suri captures the culture of Indian society. On the other hand, on the one apartment of a building people are motivated by social status to spiritual transcendence on the other hand Vishnu like alcoholic boy is dying on the staircase. This shows difference of modern Indian life style. 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. Asran, Vishnu is a recipient of grudging charity and casual calumny; each justifies her refusal to pay for his hospitalization.

Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu* has elicited much responses and criticisms from critics positioning their interpretation of the novel in relation to Indian life. Leslie E Garber reads the novel and opines:

The Death of Vishnu provides spectacular confrontation of their theory. With this first novel, Suri places himself in the company of Salman Rudhdie, Vikram Sth, Anita Desai, Bapsi Shidhwa, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Ruth Praver Jhabavala, and other post-independent Indian and Pakistani literary flowing. In a beautifully structured effort (Suri is professional mathematician) he permits his readers to experience the explosive fullness of contemporary Indian life-its sensuality and asceticism, passion for food, scents, music and the film: love for gods, holidays and ceremony: the viciousness of Hindu-Muslim enmity: and intellectuality and devotion. (15)

Therefore, with vivid imagery Suri creates the real picture of contemporary Indian society. His every word speaks the story of Indian society. About the text Haywood Helen says:

Even listener unfamiliar with India's religious and Hindu Trinity of Brahma the creator, the Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer will marvel at Suri's ability to reveal the tapestry and nuances of Indian culture through the

activity contained in one small apparent building, to which Lee's rich and myriad Indian accents add atmosphere and humor. (25)

An aging alcoholic Vishnu is on the brink of death, splayed across the steps of Bombay apartment house: yet he has never been more alive to himself and to the annoyed tenants. With compassion and stark beauty, first novelist Suri reveals his protagonist's twilight memories and the mad bickering of the earthly. Readers will feel as if they, too, have entered Vishnu's golden realm. In like manner, Cathleen Towey comments as:

Visualizing a village, a hotel or an apartment as microcosm of society is not a new concept to writers, but few have invested their fiction with such luminous language, insight into characters and grasp of cultural construct as Suri does in the debt. The inhabitants of 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. (57)

Suri's depiction of the apartment block as a bubbling cauldron of resentment, pettiness and suspicion is both acute and touching. We see the bickering between the family of Asrani and Pathak, the religious mania of the Muslim Mr. Jalal and the plans of his son Salim to elope with Kavita, the daughter of the Hindu Asranis. The undercurrents of tension erupt when transcendent Shiva ascends the steps of the building and rumors begin that he is a reincarnation of the god Vishnu.

Suri's work has not been noticed from the angle of Diaspora through the vivid picture of Modern India, becomes the field of my study. Diaspora refers to the voluntary or forcible movements of people from their homelands into new regions. When a person comes in contact with new culture or language, he has to imitate or follow the language and culture of this new land to exist there. Nevertheless, at the same time, the migrated people could not forget their homeland, which remains far from them. He only lives with the memories of the

homelands. At that time, creative people have only option to create their homelands through revoking the mother terms and experiences through writing. Therefore, they could create their imaginary homelands on their writing. Sure is haunted by Indian land and his people who remain far from him. He is willing to be feeling Indianness in America. Which is impossible in real life situation but he could feel the lack of homelessness through his novel *The Death of Vishnu*. Here he brings typical Indian characters that could perform Indian culture.

He brings the characters that are locked in perpetual bickering; the women are united in their prejudice against their upstairs neighbors, the Jalals, who are Muslims. While Mr. Jalal seeks to test his intellectual agnosticism by seeking spiritual enlightenment, his son, Salem, and the Arsines' spoiled, willful daughter, Kavita, prepare to defy their families by running away together. Through the love affair of Kavita and Salem Sure tries to show racial harmony between two opposing religions. He wants to establish peace in his homeland on his imagination. 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. 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 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.

Spiritualism is the main gist of Hinduism so he brings the references from Hinduism on the ground of Christianity. The spiritualism as one would expect from this book is on many levels rather ambiguous and unclear. In the sense that while the author tries to portray the elements of reincarnation and giving up on worldly pleasures like Mr Jalal often tries doing - it all is actually a mockery of the same. One of the redeeming features of the book is that it is not written from an outsider's perspective. It is carved by an Indian living in India and breathing the air, which was what Vishnu did. An ordinary man elevated to something extraordinary to satisfy the superstitions and religious notions of the upper notch of society.

Suri writes with obvious affection about a Bombay perhaps already lost, evoking easily its moods and attitudes, its light and smells. One can almost feel the heavy evening sea breeze, taste the roasted peanuts sold in paper cones along the sea wall, or see the Maharaja looking down from the Air India hoarding. A Bombay that rings true with its Irani Cafe, *cigarette walla*, and *radiowalla*. Manil Suri's sharp eye for detail and natural ability to create a strong sense of place and time define his considerable talent, and one can look forward with a certain assuredness to its maturing in his promised books on the other two Gods of the Hindu trinity, Brahma and Shiva.

II. Diaspora

Diaspora studies is an academic field established in the late twentieth century to study dispersed ethnic populations, which are often termed diaspora peoples. At first, the term diaspora was connected narrowly to the migration of the people. But in the present, an area of research in the field of Cultural studies has been the study of diasopras. Although the concept of diaspora has been epistemologically and semantically derived from that of dispersal experiences of those ancient Jewish people of the distant past, in the present context it has come to merge into the issues raised in postcolonial theory. The term diaspora has been extended to cover a range of different cultural or religious commitment that gives the sense of exile from a place or state of origin or belonging. Ashcroft et. al. define as:

Diaspora the voluntary or forcible movement or peoples from their homelands into new regions are a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlements of millions of European over the entire world. (*Key Concept 68-69*)

The colonized people return back to the metropolitan centers are the most recent and most significant diasporic movement. So European colonization gives birth to diaspora. At first during the colonization, Europeans are dispersed throughout the world. Wherever they went, they have to adjust with new culture at the same time they could not forget their own culture. Then they begin to write their experiences bring the issue and characters of new land. At that time, they produce mixed experience. But in this post colonial situation people from non-west go to European metropolitans centers due to racial conflicts on their homelands or to get higher education as well as for the job. When the people became far from their homelands they feel something lack within them. To fulfill this lack creative people try to recreate their homelands through their writing. This writing becomes diasporic in which a writer brings the

issue of homelands using the language of new land. They are forced to use English language to challenge to communicate their homelands issue with colonizers.

Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world. Due to the wide spread effects of these migrations, continued on a global scale, many such 'settled' regions were developed historically as plantations or agricultural colonies to grow foodstuffs for the metropolitan populations. A large numbers of slaves were shipped to the plantation colonies to supply the labor where the local population could not supply the need.

After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European powers in the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labor in colonial plantation economics was met by the development of a system of indentured labor. This involved transporting, under indenture agreements, large population of poor agricultural laborer from population rich areas, such as China and India, to the areas where they were needed to service plantations. The practices of slavery and indenture thus resulted in worldwide colonial diasporas. Analyzing the history of colonial diasporas Ashcroft argues, "Indian population formed (and form) substantial minorities or majorities in colonies as diverse as the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Mauritius and colonies of Eastern and Southern Africa" (46). Indian people begin to migrate from their land after Britishers invade them. Wherever they went, they develop their culture from this new land. It is all because of their love to the nation. During the Second World War, because of heavy casualties and disturbances in the normal lives of people, many of them fled helplessly as war victims and refugees to foreign countries, later most of them settle down there in foreign land permanently- even second-class citizens- after the wars were over.

After Second World War, formerly colonized nations such as India, Ghana, Kenya and others became politically independent from the colonial power and regime. In many

countries, the national movement began with the strategies of reforming their countries after the political independence. As the nationalist movement failed in their mission, people began to get disillusioned and the rapid succession of capitalism and the globalization pushed them westward. For higher income and better education, people begin to migrate to the West leaving their non-western location. So the migration in this global scenario becomes indispensable issue. The most recent and socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized people back to the metropolitan centers of Europe, and Western countries like Britain and France have substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples by now.

The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures, which both preserve and often extend and develop their original cultures. The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist model to interrogate the ideology of unified natural cultural norm; an approach that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse.

Both of the models of migration, either the migration led by the imperial European or British in terms of cheap labourers and slaves, or migration that occurred in the periods of late capitalism and globalization in the post colonial phases, has created a significant number of diasporas. All these migrants are displaced from their homelands. The displacement from homelands not only refers to the spatial location but also signifies the displacement from their origin, their roots and their culture as well. Therefore in this diasporic state their sense of exile, their nostalgia for homelands, their feeling of 'in-between-ness', especially sensed by the descendants of diasporas become extremely intense and irrepressible. Some diasporic writers have recreated their very dispersal sensibility in their fabulous literary writing

Diasporic writers are moved by ancestral consciousness. Therefore, they try to recreate their far land through memory. In this new land, they have to face identity crisis, which they want to resist using new world's language. In migrated country or in their

homeland they are migrated people became the outsider. Therefore, the diasporic writings capture both the problems and experiences of the migrants. The writers in such texts try to recollect their past through the help of memories, nostalgia and familiar myth. The writers not only re-visualize their history of origin, offer the reader all exotics and fantasies of their homelands, and compel us to re-examine about its authenticity. They also reaffirm their own distinct identity as subjects constructed by diaspora. Therefore, on the account of immigrants people both as recreating their history and making an appeal for their marginalized identity, the diasporal writing hold the significant position in the literary genre.

In the English literature, 'diaspora' became to be very cultural-specific term. The new concept of diaspora insists the idea that it details the complexity, diversity and fluidity of migrant identities and experiences in a more realistic way than does the older concept of the term. It, therefore, relates the ideas of uprooting of migrants from their societies and cultural of origin, and thereby filling into them a sense of alienation resulted into alienation and displacement as well as exile.

Originally applied to the condition of the Jewish people living outside Palestine, 'diaspora', with the development of postcolonial theory, has been extended to cover a range of different cultural and ethnic groups held together by shared cultural or religious commitments and having some sense of 'exile' from a place or state of origin and belonging. Within cultural studies, the term is used to describe a dynamic network of communities without the stabilizing allusion to an original homeland or essential identity. Diaspora has been used in the studies of race and ethnicity to describe a range of cultural affiliations connecting the groups dispersed voluntarily or involuntarily- across national borders. To live in diaspora is to experience the trauma of exile, migration, displacement, rootlessness and the life in minority group haunted by some sense of loss. Some argue to reclaim, to look back. Rushdie in this regard argues, "I've been in minority all my life- a member of an Indian

Muslim family in Bombay Asian” (4). Creating an ‘imaginary homeland’ and willing to admit, though imaginatively, that he/she belongs to it. People in diaspora have been forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths and their identities are not at once plural and partial. People in diaspora feel torn apart between two cultures and though the ground is ambiguous and shifting, it is not an infertile territory to occupy. According to Radhakrishnan:

In the diaspora immigrants suppress their ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism, initially then assimilate actively hiding their distant ethnicity to be successful in the New World and lately seeks the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity with national identity- such as Asian American- under conditions that do not privilege the ‘national’ at the expense of the ethnic.
(208)

The people who are migrated from their homelands have to assimilate with the culture and ethnicity of a new land. Although these people have bore hyphenated identity, they are living with the consciousness of their homelands. Their identities do not privilege the nation due to their double identity. Stuart Hall argues:

The diasporic experience[. . .] is defined, not by essences or purity, but by the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘Identity’ which and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and differences. (119-20)

The concept of diaspora helps to analyze the essentialist notion of identity in the name of innovation and change by promoting ethnic sameness and differences-‘a changing same’. Moreover, it is used to describe a dispersed intellectual formation and interlamination of ideas. Because of this the global development and variety of forms of cultural studies itself

has been described as ‘diaspora story’ and cultural identities are represented as hybrid or diaspora identities.

Identity is much debated when it is in crisis. The home country and adapted country could become merely ‘ghostly’ locations, and the result can only be a double depoliticization. So diasporas’ people have to face miserable condition outside their homeland. This hyphenated identity becomes problematic to them. According to James Clifford, “Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (4). Actually in transitional moment every man’s identity becomes volatile. In this period one could neither forget the past identity nor s/he could adopt new change. He further says:

The term that once described Jewish , Greek and American dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expertise, refugee, guest workers, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community. (5)

At first, the term diaspora is used to refer Jewish, Greek and American people who are dispersed from their land but now it refers to each people who are migrated from their homeland to the new land. So it covers larger semantic domain.

Diaspora is the movement of people from known location (homeland) to unknown location (new land). Here diaspora creates a sense of dislocation and alienation because they could not adjust themselves in new location and culture. Ashcroft et. al. further write:

After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European power in the decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labour in colonial plantation economics was met by the development of a system of indentured labour. This involved transporting under indentured agreements, large population of poor agricultural areas such as India and China to area where they were needed to service plantations. (69)

Therefore, the word diaspora, which has initiated in the beginning from an easily identification with Jewish communities is elaborated including the experience of people marked by forced migration and enslavement (the African Diaspora in the U.S., Latin American and the Caribbean), the system of indentured labour (the Indian Diaspora in Caribbean or in U.S.), and as shifting condition of colonial and postcolonial period (Asian and Caribbean in England).

A Diaspora study is an academic field established in the late twentieth century to study dispersed ethnic populations, which are often termed diaspora peoples. Initially, diaspora was concerned narrowly to the migration of the people. The new idea of diaspora insists the idea that it explains the complexity, diversity and fixity of migrant identities and experience. It relates the idea of uprooting of migrant from their societies and cultures of origin, and given the sense of alienation, displacement, exile and dislocation.

Migration, being the subject of postcolonial discourse, is not a new phenomenon. It widens its area that it had even in the past has become a significant issue of political studies. It also has problematized more because many people are uprooted and forced to leave their homes. Behind that invites humanitarian challenges to the neighboring countries and to the developed nations to the West. The voluntary and unwanted migration accelerates to challenge the cultural and demographic stability of the western world and the other regional areas globe as well. Migration breeds the state of cultural and geographical rootlessness, leading to the feeling of alienation and estrangement, which are three adverse diaspora effects. Diaspora refers to the lack of fitness when one moves from a familiar to unfamiliar location. Heidegger's term 'unheimlich' or 'unheimlichkeit' –literally 'unhousedness' or 'not-at-houseness'-which is something translated as 'uncanny' or 'uncanniness' is often depicted unpleasant experience of dislocation. So dislocation is a socio-cultural phenomenon, which is

the result of transportation by slavery or imprisonment by invasion or settlement, a consequent of willing or unwilling movement from known location to unknown.

In the past dislocation was developed physically, socially and individually in the intuition of slavery and the system of indenture labour. Ashcroft et. al. say, “The practices of slavery and indenture labour resulted in world-wide colonial diaspora” (69). In this way, diaspora communities formed by the slavery, indentured labour and forced or voluntary migration are dislocated and alienated in new social cultural milieu. The face of the society is that ruptured place where there is instability of the identities. It happens so that dislocation and displacement can be created with the social structure. The reason behind is that of the decline of old identities, which stabilizes the social structure for long time. That is why it gives rise to new identities and fragments modern subject. It indicates the identity crisis. Dislocation can also be defined to describe both displacements that occur as a result of imperial occupation and the experience related with it. Place and displacements are crucial features. Place means not simply physical landscape. Moreover Ashcroft et. al define:

[. . .] place in postcolonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment. It is characterized firstly by sense of displacement in those who have moved to the colonies or more widespread language of a gap between the ‘experienced’ environment and descriptions by a sense of immense investment of culture is construction of place. (391)

The descendents of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own kind of distinctive cultures, which both preserve and often extend and develop their origin cultures. When they begin to practice the indigenous culture in non-western setting due to which this culture encounters world culture. The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models by interrogating the ideology of a unified, ‘natural’ cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse. It also

questions the simpler kinds of theories of nativism, which suggest that decolonization can be effected by a recovery or reconstruction of pre-colonial societies. The most recent and most socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized peoples back to the metropolitan centers. In countries such as Britain and France, the population now has substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples. In recent times many writers Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Manil Suri etc have adopted the notion of 'diasporic identity' as an affirmative of their hybridity.

This is an increasingly important term in post-colonial theory because it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonizers and colonized. Colonial discourse encourages the people to 'mimic'. The colonizer tries to depict colonizer's cultural habit, assumptions, institution, values and norms in the day-to-day activities. The mockery can be mockery because it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. It therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its central of the behavior of the colonized.

Sometimes mimicry has been depicted as goal of imperial policy. Macaulay's minute regarding Indian education system mocked oriental learning and advocated the reproduction of English art and learning in India through the teaching of English literature. Through English education in India, he wants to create the Indian with British consciousness. By using these intermediate types of people he wants to rule over the India. But at the same time Macaulay forgets that the English language can be a tool to oppose the colonial regime. Many Indian intellectuals who are living in Britain or America are using English language to challenge English language and their colonial regime in India. The people either Indian or African who are living in Europe or US are forced to use English language. They try to recreate their imaginary homelands through symbols.

Salman Rushdie has a photograph of his Bombay house in Britain. He tries to visualize his history through this photo. He argues, “But the photograph tells me to invent this idea; it reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (*Imaginary Homelands* 9). Looking at this photograph, he is recreating Indian history through writing. It is the pain of diasporic that are forced to create their lost home or city only on their imagination. When people become far from their home, they only feel the importance of home. When home remains in the mist at that time one has only option of remembering home which they could not get. Rushdie further says:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants of expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some argue to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we look back, we must also do so in the knowledge which gives rise to profound uncertainties. (10)

The people who are far from their homelands like Rushdie are haunted by the sense of loss home. The diasporic people could not reclaim about their home. Neither in their new home, they could see their future nor could they return their homelands. Diasporic people are haunted by their lost home as:

I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honorable and suspect, and I knew that my India may only have been one to which I (who am no longer what I was, and who by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I was meant to be) was, let us say, willing to admit I belonged. (10)

Diasporic people have deep love with their homeland, and its language which are far from them. Diasporic people look for their home or they try to be near with their root so they are Lacanian. Rushdie also highlights, “Who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world,

he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably” (10). When one tries to recreate the history going back to the past, at that time reality maybe presented in twisted form So diasporic writers could only picture out the long back history of their homeland through imagination which may or may not match with the present reality of their homeland because within this long gap many changes could occur in the land. This change could not be presented by these diasporic writers.

The partial nature of memories and their fragmentations made diasporic writers more evocative. So the shred of memory has acquired greater status because they seem like symbols. Rushdie further says, “The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of most quotidian objects” (12). So past could provisionally be reconstructed. This past becomes the precious thing for the diasporic people. The people who are far from their home or language have to exercise the lost history and language in intensified form. For the diasporic people, the fragments of past become the tool to revisit the history. They are forced to accept the provisional nature of all truths, al certainties. Diasporic writers are forced to use English language to write about their homelands. Rushdie further says:

Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can’t simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps we can find on that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggle-taking place in the real world struggle between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at the work upon our societies. (17)

In this, postcolonial situation people of non-west use the language of colonizer by distorting the grammar of English. On the one and it is a type of challenge to the colonizer on the other

hand they could communicate to the colonizer. So by using English format contains could be used rest of English. He further says:

But the British Indian writer imply does not have the option of rejecting English, anyway. His children will grow up speaking it, probably as a first language, and in the forging of a British Indian identity, the English language is of central importance. It must, inspire of everything, be embraced. (The word 'translation' comes etymologically, from the Latin for 'being across'. Having been bore across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation, I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained). (17)

Diasporic people who are living in Britain are forced to use English language to communicate with native people. Their children also learn English from their school level. Due to that language, the new generation becomes the hybrid. On the hand people like Rushdie becomes the translated man who translates Indian culture into English and vice versa. Every translation loses something from the original. Therefore, when a diasporic writer try to reflect the homeland there something misses. It is all because of their distance with their homelands.

Rushdie highlights as:

But whatever technical solutions we may find. Indian writers in these Islands, like others who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society. (19)

Therefore diasporic are living with double consciousness. That becomes virtuous which condition made them translated men. These people only could express one culture into another.

The Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora today constitutes an important, and in some respects unique, force in world culture. The origins of the modern Indian diaspora lie mainly in the subjugation of India by the British and its incorporation into the British empire. Indians were taken over as indentured labor to far-flung parts of the empire in the nineteenth-century, a circumstance to which the modern Indian populations of Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and other places attest in their own peculiar ways. Over two million Indian men fought on behalf of the empire in numerous wars, including the Boer War and the two World Wars, and some remained behind to claim the land on which they had fought as their own. As if in emulation of their ancestors, many Gujarati traders once again left for East Africa in large numbers in the early part of the twentieth century. Finally, in the post-World War II period, the dispersal of Indian labor and professionals has been a nearly worldwide phenomenon. Indians, and other South Asians, provided the labor that helped in the reconstruction of war-torn Europe, particularly the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and in more recent years unskilled labor from South Asia has been the main force in the transformation of the physical landscape of much of the Middle East. Meanwhile, in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, Indians have made their presence visibly felt in the professions.

How we are to characterize the Indian diasporic community as 'Indian' given that it is constituted of such diverse elements as South Asian Hong Kong Muslims, Canadian Sikhs, Punjabi Mexican Californians, Gujarati East Africans now settled in the U.S. by way of England, South African Hindus, and so forth? In the United States, at least, the Indian community has occupied a place of considerable privilege, and many Indians could deflect the moment of recognition that 'Indianness' and being 'American' do not always happily coincide. In recent years, with a declining economy on the one hand, and the congregation of

Indians in clusters that visibly put them apart on the other hand, Indians have for the first time become the targets of racial attacks. The Indian woman in her 'native dress', with the vermillion dot on her forehead, is easily seen as an embodiment of sheer otherness, and so she has been perceived by the so-called "dot-busters", a gang of white teenagers operating in New Jersey who have already been responsible for several violent crimes against Indians. In North America and the U.K., the native Indian costume has come up for public scrutiny and discussion in an altogether different respect: Sikhs have insisted that they be exempt from the law that compels bicyclists and motorcyclists to wear helmets, for such helmets cannot be worn over turbans, and their religious faith requires Sikhs to wear turbans. The kirpan has been an issue of contention in California schools. The 'corner shop', a hallowed symbol of English life, is now mainly in the hands of Indians. The obvious question is not only, 'What do the English think of that', but also: 'If the English landscape has been so altered, what is English about England'? The diaspora, in short, affects the center as well.

However unlike Indian communities across the world might be, they all maintain some sort of tenuous link with the motherland. The most likely candidate for a force of bonding would be, of all things, the Hindi feature film, a phenomenon unique to the Indian diaspora: what Hollywood is to Western Europe, the Bombay Hollywood (Bollywood) is to the Middle East and East Africa. The modesty, not to mention puritanism, of the the Hindi film is said to explain its appeal to the Islamic world; and though we may well contest that interpretation, it is worthy of note that Hindi films found in grocery and video stores across the U.S. often carry subtitles in Arabic, one language which is indubitably not spoken by any Indian community in the U.S! The Indian 'arranged marriage' might furnish another such facet of a 'common culture'. Newspapers published by Indian communities flourish everywhere, and they invariably carry a section with matrimonial ads. Though these very ads help Indians to 'locate' one another, they pose difficult questions about 'otherness', both the

otherness' of Indians in relation to 'Americans', and the internal 'otherness' of certain Indians in relation to other Indians. David Christel says, "It was their clear cultural separation that helped them maintain their distinctive financial and commercial role in the host societies and negotiate effectively with local rules" (qtd. In James 1). In new land, the Indians practice their culture and rituals. Indians commercially became success in the new land.

The religious practices of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in the U.S. and other overseas communities might be assisting in transforming the nature of religious faiths in India itself. Hindus all over the world are showing alarming signs of susceptibility to a resurgent and militant Hinduism; indeed, it is even arguable that they seem to know the meaning of Hinduism better than do Hindus in the 'motherland'. Why do overseas Hindus, particularly in the North American diaspora, appear always to out-Hindu the Hindu? In thinking of the Indian diaspora, other questions that come to the fore include: relations between parents and children; race relations between Indians, blacks, and whites; the place of Indian food and music in the preservation of Indian communities; the responsibility, if any, of the Indian Government to overseas Indians; and the future prospects of the Indian community in the U.S.

However, Indians are not reputed to be a very mobile people, and despite the strictures against traveling overseas that are said to be found in the ancient *shastras*, the presence of Indians abroad can be attested to from the days of remote antiquity. Early Indian migration, such as to Ceylon and South-east Asia, owed its origins to the impulse of Buddhist missionaries, and the well-known Hindu kingdoms of South-east Asia in the medieval period continued to attract labor and craftsmen from India. Long before the Mediterranean trading routes were established in the early modern period, the Indian Ocean trading system facilitated the migration of Indians to the east coast of Africa, South-east Asia, and the area that is now encompassed under the term Middle East. In the nineteenth century, a large

number of Indians were taken, under conditions of savage exploitation, to various British colonies as indentured labor to work on sugar, tea, and rubber plantations, and the Indian populations of Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, Mauritius, Malaysia, Trinidad, South Africa and numerous other places owe their presence in these countries to this particular circumstance. Diverse streams of the Indian population have fed into the Indian diaspora in the twentieth century: while a professional elite found its way to the United States, Australia, and other nations of the 'developed' West, the laboring poor were recruited to build the shattered economies of Britain, Holland and Germany in the aftermath of World War II, and another strand of this working class has been providing for some years its muscle power and much more to the Sheikdoms of the middle East.

There remain questions about whether there is an Indian diaspora. It is with respect to the Jewish people that the word 'diaspora' was first employed, as it suggests the idea of dispersal and fragmentation; and in much of the literature there is a presumed relationship between the diasporic community and the land which they left and to which the possibility of return always subsists, or what people are apt to term 'motherland' or 'home'. The conditions that make for a diasporic community are admittedly complex, but this presumed link between the diasporic community and the motherland is easily questioned, nor is there any reason why we must be held hostage to any form of linguistic and epistemological tyranny. No substantive issue can be decided on the issue of 'origins'. It thus appears perfectly reasonable to speak of an Indian Diaspora, as it does of the Chinese Diaspora, the African Diaspora, the Palestinian Diaspora, and of course the Jewish Diaspora.

If there is, then, an Indian Diaspora, we must logically inquire what makes it 'Indian'. What is common to Hong Kong South Asian Muslims, Indo-Trinidadians, Punjabi Mexican Americans, Canadian Sikhs (or Sikh Canadians), Hindi-speaking Mauritians, Tamilian Guadeloupeans, and the twice- or thrice-migrants, such as Indians from East Africa who

moved to Britain, then from there making their way to Canada, Australia, or the U.S.? This question can reasonably be asked of the myriad number of people residing in India itself, but the question of the 'Indianness' of Indians acquires a particular poignancy overseas, as Indians abroad are presumed to shed their regional, linguistic, and ethnic identities in deference to the more general identity of being an Indian. It is arguable that one is more easily an Indian abroad than in India; the category of 'Indian' is not contested abroad as it is in India. This is perhaps all the more remarkable, when one considers that the 'Indianness' of the Indian diaspora is not as evidently conceptualizable, or even visible, as the distinctly Chinese characteristics of the Chinese diaspora or the Islamic features of the Arab diaspora. Hindi does not bind together diasporic Indians in the manner in which Chinese holds together the Chinese diaspora; nor does Hinduism play in the Indian diaspora a role comparable to that of Islam within, if one could speak of such a thing, the Islamic Diaspora. Thus, in Mauritius, the national language remains a French creole, though Hindi is the language of the preponderant portion of the numerically dominant Indian community.

Nevertheless, if one unequivocally speaks of an Indian Diaspora, it is because other forces have emerged to cement the widely disparate elements from the Indian sub-continent into an 'Indian' community. One can point, for example, to Indian cinema, Hinduism, and food. The popular Hindi film provides a considerable element of commonalty to Indian communities, even among those where Hindi is not spoken, a profound homage to the Hindi film's rootedness in the deep mythic structures of Indian civilization. Across the globe, the popular Hindi film commands an extraordinary allegiance from Indians. Indian communities everywhere are also showing evidence of an alarming susceptibility to a resurgent Hinduism; and if Hindus in India are willing to accept the idea of a pluralistic Hinduism, diasporic Hindus appear to know the meaning and contours of Hinduism better than Hindus in India. Likewise, Indians overseas routinely invoke Indian civilization with a self-assurance that in

India. Finally, in the matter of food, one beholds with amazement how Mughlai food has become the cuisine of India, synonymous with Indian food. The same surely cannot be said of the cuisines of Gujarat, Andhra, and Kerala, or even of the popular snack food, idlis and *dosas*, of South India. In the Indian diaspora, the plurality of India is condemned to disappear, even as the most esoteric traditions are given a fresh burst of life, and a unitary vision of 'Indianness', of Indian civilization and of Hinduism, appears poised to dominate.

So diaspora is forceful or voluntary migration from the homeland to the new land. In new land, one has to live with double identity. They create their homeland through imagination. But at that time to communicate their ideas with the colonizer they have to use English language as tool.

III. Memory of Lost Home : A Diasporic Reading

The Death of Vishnu by Manil Suri is not for everyone. The people who will appreciate it most are Westerners who have spent time living in India. The book contains many references to everyday life that uninitiated will miss, such as the tradition of touching someone's feet to show respect, the *Sunday Times* of India with its huge section of arranged marriage solicitations, Bollywood with such Indian movie stars as Amitabh Bachchan, the servants and attendants that surround even ordinary middle class Indian families, the antagonisms between Hindus and Muslims, and the splendor of an Indian wedding with the groom entering on horseback. Such individuals will wonder what in the world is a "paanwalla", Suri recalls by explaining these circumstances, but it is still not the same as having experienced them for you. Even Westerners with some understanding of India will have a hard time fathoming the various gods and goddesses and religious references of the Hindu religion that permeate the book.

All this is not to say that people who have little knowledge of India cannot enjoy this book. Suri infuses the book with universal values and themes such as romantic and familial

love, the search for meaning in life and one's relationship with God. The basic story is simple enough. It concerns the coming and goings of several families in one apartment building in Bombay (now Mumbai). On the first floor are two middle class Hindu couples who share a common kitchen. The Asranis have a teenage daughter, Kavita, and a wise-cracking son, Shyamu. The Pathaks also have a young son, Rajan. On the second floor is a Muslim family, Mr. and Mrs. Jalal and their teenage son, Salim. On the top floor lives a widower, Mr. Taneja, who lost his wife many years ago and still mourns her. The title character, Vishnu, is an odd job operator who lives on the landing between the first and second floors. A variety of other characters interact with them including various trades persons and Pran, a shy young man with whom Mrs. Asrani tries to arrange a marriage to her daughter.

While the story centers on the idea that Vishnu, who has led a generally dissipated life, is dying (or may already be dead), the plot really swirls around the lives of the three families and that of Vishnu before he came to his present state. We see Vishnu's life in a series of flashbacks to when he was a small boy and his mother promised great things for him, likening him to the Hindu god, Vishnu. We see him as a young man, in love with Padmini, a prostitute that he loves deeply and hopes to have a future with, but who in the end deserts him. The best flashback, in my opinion, is the story of Mr. Taneja. A bank manager by profession, he engages in an arranged marriage with Sheetal. At first, the marriage is difficult as Sheetal and her mother-in-law do not get along. Then the couple moves to their own apartment and their love for each other blooms. But tragically, Sheetal dies of cancer and Mr. Taneja is plunged into despair. He rallies at one point by joining a social service organization, but soon falters and retires to the third floor apartment to live out his life alone.

But the book is full of humor as well as sadness. The kitty party that the socially ambitious Mrs. Asrani gives is one example. Then there are the on-going disputes between her and Mrs. Pathak, mediated at times by the long-suffering husbands. The cast of

characters, which include tall and short Ganga, contribute to the humor in the book.

Ultimately, this is a book about tragedy –the tragedy of misunderstandings, the tragedy of religious intolerance, the tragedy of unequal love. Both of these aspects, the humor and the sadness, have a universal appeal and thus the book can be perceived by anyone regardless of their knowledge and experience with India. In fact, it might be kind of tourist guide to anyone planning a visit to this strange, wonderful, complex and sad country. Read it, but be prepared for the need to understand the many cultures and religious references.

The title of Manil Suri's first novel gets light 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 Bishnu a rew dried chapattis, 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 Novella, 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, and 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 twp 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 Indian's religious conflicts.

The Death of Vishnu a microcosm for the ethno political map of India. The novel chronicles several relationships within the building: a pair of feuding housewives, a bereaved widower who lives in his own past, lovesick teenagers and a Muslim couple and their failing fast. By forcing the chapters of his novel on how these different characters interest with one another and with Vishnu Suri is able to show how religion, death, faith, and unexpected changes all work together to define each person's individuality.

Religious issues distress several of Saris character including the Hindu Asrani family in the first floor and the Muslim Jalals on the second. Kavita the beautiful, teenage Asrani daughter must choose between the high-class Hindu engineers her parents have selected for her. And her true love, Salim Jalal. Kavita and salim's secret relationship places a huge strain on the entire apartment community. In the novel, religion is taken as a discourse. Different people have different religious beliefs. They are representing Religion and God in their own way. Every utterance is created within so –called power. Vishnu agrees to become their “alerter”, and shares vicariously in the dangerous lust and innocent beauty of first-time love. Meanwhile, Salem's father, Ahmed Jalal, in his deep effort to understand the obstinacy and hysteria of religion, is determined to experience “thing they call faith”. However, food can also be destructive force. The deep-set animosity between Mrs.Asrani and Mrs. Pathak results from petty arguments over miniscule amounts of ghee and guar. The seemingly mundane Bombay metropolis is fused with the beauty and depth of Hindu mythology in this impressive literary accomplishment. This all shows that the text the Death of Vishnu deals

with socio-political context of India of contemporary time in which New Historicist expresses his \her concern.

He reveals Hindu mythology in an accessible manner borrowing from the stories of the *Bhagavad-Gita* –and clearly demonstrates how these stories enable the poor to cope with the burdens of life on the lowest rung of Indian society. The novel juxtaposes small but searing human foibles with the attempt to find higher religious meaning. The religious superstition like two families' quarrel to serve Vishnu and pay the ambulance; exploitation of working class like radiowalla, cigratteewalla; characters' love especially sex etc are the important foibles of the society. The building is a specimen of domestic misery-damp walls, rotten fruit, and insects lining the floorboards. A member of the Hindu trinity the god Vishnu is the sustainer of the universe, the center between Brahma, the creator and Shiva, the destroyer. However in *the Death of Vishnu*, the title character is only an impoverished alcoholic who is dying on the stairwell while the residents of the building squabble over who will pay for ambulance. Yet perhaps there is much more to this Vishnu- just may be, he is indeed he god Vishnu –the one who sustains the entire world. The novel takes place over a short period in the life of a Bombay apartment building. Through this window, we learn the stories of its residents and the forces that have shaped their lives as Manil Suri creates an intimate and intricate portrait of life a great Indian metropolis. The novelist tries to place the common person as God to portray common people's superstitious belief about God. The characters are all ordinary from dying alcoholic Vishnu, to the warring neighbors the Asranis and the pathaks, the teenage “star-crossed” lovers, the reclusive widower upstairs, tall and short Ganga, or the cigarette and radiowallas. This is a domestic story, and the people or familiar ones, with common sins of vanity, religious zeal, covetousness and narrow mindedness.

While analyzing the novel, *The Death of Vishnu* I like to bring an extract from Magdalena Ball's review. There, he says:

The story moves deftly and between the comic and material world of the neighbors and the sensual and dream like world of the dying Vishnu, and the recalled memories and desires under the surface of these ordinary people. The narrator is entirely invisible and the characterization so realistic, that the reader-becomes intimately connected with the story. (10)

From this extract, it is clear that the novel always mingles both comic and material world and sensual and dreamlike world of the dying Vishnu. The actions move to past and present. The ordinary people believe that the person who is dying is God and they are trying to make him happy. The characterizations are realistic. People are superstitious. This also shows contemporary superstitious Indian society where the people practice to make Vishnu, happy by thinking that he is lying as God into different forms:

Not wanting to arouse Vishnu in case he hadn't died yet, Mrs. Asrani Tiptoed down to the third step above the landing on which he lived, tea Kettle in hand. Vishnu sprawled on the stone, his figure aligned with The curve of the stairs [. . .] Vishnu had not only thrown up, but soiled himself. She had warned where neighbor Mrs . Pathak no not feed Vishnu when he was so sick, but did that woman ever listen? (68)

From this extract, it is also clear that Asranis and pathks both families are quarreling for serving single person. If so, the novel does not express how the Indian society is full of superstitions? The lines try to portray the Indian society. Here the new historicist's socio-political context works. The Magdalena Ball's idea of mingling comic, martial, sensual, and dreamlike world in single place to describe the Indian context is a bit ambivalent and unclear. Every event in the novel is related to culture and religion rather than politics.

In one interview taken by Dave in which Manil Suri clarifies that “there was a real person named Vishnu, as I say in front of the book, and it was his death that sparked the novel at least the initial idea. But I didn’t really know the actual person; I would just see him occasionally when I was growing up. He lived on the steps, and he would say hello to me that was it”. (Interview, peoples.com 2). Here Manil Suri uses the common person and gives the place of God for it. Indian common person is used to redicularize the superstition of the society. So the God –like characters used to identify the common person who lives in Bombay apartment. In the same interview, Manil claims:

Originally, I was going to write about a revelation: Vishnu may or may not god .I was going to have a snake appear, perhaps it might have been Mrs. Pathak or Mrs Asrani who noticed. Snakes are holy In India so that would have been the device to pass the question into the book. But then Mr.Jalal took over, and once I’d read the Gait that central scene from the eleventh chapter it deemed the logical thing Mr. Jalal to see. (2)

The title of Manil Suri’s first novel gets right 3to 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 who gave Vishnu a few dried chapattis, who called the doctor for him, and who will pay 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 job and especially his romance with Padmini, a self-involved prostitute. Vishnu also recalls his secret passion for kavita Asrani, the beautiful teenage daughter of one of the families for whom he works. 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 Indias’; religious conflicts Memories of Padmini the vapor still devoid of cardamom or clove, but Smelling of chameli flowers fastened like strings of peals around her Wrists. Mrs. Asrani was sick it was her daughter Kavita who performed the daily ritual. Vishnu would scrape a broken comb through his knotted hair every morning and wait to deliver a toothy salaam.

Asranis and pathaks both try to obey Vishnu and to show their good belief in God and religion .But I think they are trusting as God to the person who has no well qualities of God. Vishnu though thinks him keeper of the universe, but he tries to exploit Padmini sexually. He has only memories of Padmini, he wants to fulfill the sexual desire by Padmini. So, here question can be arisen –Does God sometime lie dying and sometime get the life? Does a God exploit sexually to any girl? So In contemporary time there was deep-rooted superstition in Indian society. The memories, Vishnu’s discourses thinking as powerful and the depiction of the superstition and sexual exploitation of the society also relate the text with New Historical reading.

There is a singular thread running through the book –that of isolation on various levels. The pathaks and Asranis share a kitchen, almost to the point invading each other’s privacy and yet are so distant, cold .Vishnu is dead, and yet no one wants to claim him and take him to the nearest morgue. Her husband and son, seeking refuge in intellectualism and staunch belief leave Mrs. Jalal alone. In the essay “Amazing Mind Boggling: The *Death of Vishnu*” Vivek Tejuja expresses:

Vishnu in another realm altogether believes that he is God (or rather is made To believe that by Mr .Jalal)-Vishnu ,who had ten reincarnations. His love for [. . .]Padmini , his longing for Kavita , and his thoughts on living make the book ‘one delicious course’. (2)

Here, in the above extract, how an apartment of Bombay is represented is shown. The single setting of an apartment has included different aspects of the society. The main character Vishnu lies dying on the landing, other different types of character live in different floors, and they run their activities around Vishnu. So in short, this shows that the single apartment is representing the amalgam of every aspects of Indian society. The apartment setting depicts the nature of the society. Difficult to believe-that is a first novel, Manil Suri has chosen a theme both timeless and extraordinary unique as he sculpts the life of a dying man through the overheard conversations of the folk living in the boarding house on whose steps he lies.

For, the western reader, *The Death of Vishnu* at times presents challenges of interpretation –Is Mr. Jalalsemi accidental search for enlightenment supposed to be comic of not? India is a very strange place to westerners, but Suri deftly brings it closer without greatly westernizing the story. Actually, Mail Suri does not westernize the text. Every context in the novel depicts the Indian society. The context of Hindu relation together with the Hindu religious book Gitat and Hindu- Muslim conflict in India is depicted in novel. Here the non-western especially in is represented surely in non-western especially Indian own context.

Mostly images are depicted with the same context. Like in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the novel tries to show that the non-western are also able to create their own images with their own literature. Though the novelist is the professor of American University but he is able to show the pure image of contemporary India. Western writers have made different criticisms and responses about the novel but all they accept that the text is depicting India life without greatly westernizing the story.

In the novel, a young girl struggles against an arranged marriage by imagining herself a film star; an old man meditates on the early death of his wife; a husband abandons his wife's bed to sleep on the staircase next to Vishnu, convinced he is a newly found prophet. But is Vishnu, Vishnu the sun god? (He believes himself to be “keeper of the universe, keeper of the

sun”). The play on this question breathes tremendous life into what could have been a predictable, dismissible yarn about a building full of people who do not like each other very much. Every character has their different aims. A young girl imagines herself a film star and tries to arrange her marriage. An old man abandons wife’s bed and goes near to Vishnu to sleep. He thinks that Vishnu is the god. He sleeps near the dying man Vishnu. This is the superstition of Indian society for God. Vishnu thinks himself God (keeper of the universe, keeper of the sun). How over ambitious is he? Can a man claim himself God? As claimed by F. Nietzsche god is always dead. He questions God that it is the human image only. There is no God instead of it there is superman. Man himself is the God I also believe in this point. A person who is claiming the God is not God. There is no hierarchy of God and man. If man shows good behaviors and behaves humanly, he himself is the God. So here I do not accept Vishnu’ [self-discursive line. All others activities done to satisfy Vishnu is only superstition of Indian society. Here to blur the boundary of so –called God and Man, the text, “I am Vishnu, he says keeper of the universe, keeper of the sun’ there is only darkness without me” (67).

Like claimed by Montrose *The Death of Vishnu* is also shaped by India culture. Different interpretations are shaping it with Indian culture with Hindu Muslim religious situation in India. So we can’t go out from Indian socio-political and religious context while interpreting the text. Sherry L. Morton-Mollo in his essay about *The Death of Vishnu* claims “The characters” lives and reactions to Vishnu comment not only on offering levels of enlightenment but also on the terrible conflict of human’s attachment to material things while hungering for a higher spiritual knowledge (page2) from this we come to know that throughout, *The Death of Vishnu* is constant co-mingling of the physical, material and mundane with the spiritual and divine. Again, in this point, we also can find that creating a

story filled with ambiguity that raises meaningful questions about the nature of reality and human life.

The Muslim Jalals on the second floor are in turmoil because husband Ahmed, after years of proclaiming himself a religious freethinker, has been behaving like a mystic, leading his wife Arifa to worry that he is the victim of an evil eye. And unknown to all the adults in the building is the Asrani daughter Kapitsa's movie-besotted plan to elope with Jalal's son Salim. During the course of the novel, Vishnu's soul disentangles itself from his earthly remains and begins ascending the apartment house stairs. As this spirit looks back on the life just ending on the mother who named him after a Hindu god, on the prostitute whom he truly loved. From this it is also clear that Suri's novel also achieves an eerie and memorable transcendence or in short this is an enchantingly transcendent novel about contemporary life in his native Bombay. Even listeners unfamiliar with India's religions and Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva respectively creator, the preserver and the destroyer will marvel at Suri's ability to marvel the tapestry and nuances of Indian culture through the activity contained in own small apartment building.

Suri permits his readers to experience the explosive fullness of contemporary Indian life-its sensuality and asceticism; passion for food, scent, music, and film; love for the gods, holiday, and ceremony; the viciousness of Hindu-Muslim enmity; and intellectuality and devotion. Vishnu landing is part of a staircase, which Vishnu gradually ascends to meet that great daughter, Lakshmi and be taken up in great cycle of birth and rebirth. Both Mr. Jalal and Vinod Taneja recapitulate the classic Hindu stages of life (Student, householder, ascetic). The staircase, grimy and ancient at the same time. On the first floor, the Pathaks and Asranis move from crisis to crisis in their long rivalry. The wives spar over the use of the four kerosene stoves in the hot common kitchen. A huge dispute erupts over who is to clean up

Vishnu's area, pay for an ambulance and handle medical costs. Neither family really cares for him-emotionally or responsibly-for he is completely beneath them in station.

The Hindu eighteen-year -old daughter has fallen in love with Salim Jalal before he fell ill. Vishnu helped them (for a price) full of their crisis in dark recesses of the building. Disregarding the disaster they will surely cause, the Hindu- Muslim love birds elope. In their absence, the underlying religious hostility breaks out with unimaginable viciousness. The rumor spreads that Kavita has been kidnapped and despoiled. A vicious crowd gathers at the Jalal's door .Though there is a rivalry between Hindu and Muslim in India, but here a Hindu girl is in love with a Muslim boy. I think that this is also a kind of religious tolerance in Indian society. This context especially represents the Hindu Muslim rivalry In India and between Pakistan and India in contemporary time.

Paradoxically, Salim's father, after years as a critical skeptic, has already started an inward journey that would have made conversion to Hinduism inevitable in the book's choicest scene. He speaks fearlessly to the mob; describing a great vision of the deity, he has had while sleeping next to Vishnu on the landing. He believes this to be the first sermon ministry. After 17 years of grieving the death of his wife, Sheetal, he has begun to find some peace. Whereas he once found sterile the basic teachings about the stages of life necessary to prepare one for liberation from desire and attachment, their truth now provides him with a way to continue as:

For a long time after she died, it seemed s if she was still around. As if she had been in the room with him a minute ago, and just gone downstairs to the store [. . .]Sheetal lovedpaa . Not the plain kind , but the sweet ones, with lots of coconut and candied betel nut and all the minty pastes and mixtures that the paanwala kept in silver boxes around boxes around the circumference of his try. (223)

What is the relation of the god Vishnu and the man dying on the landing? The novel's answer to this question is evasive, playful, cosmic, funny and ineffable. As the (illusory?) action spirals around the unconscious squatter, tantalizing flashbacks reveal a few things about the poor man's life. Vishnu was raised in a hut made of cardboard and tin. He recalls his beloved mother making fragrant tea for him –from leaves she would use again. His father, drunk on bhang, put out one of his eyes by dropping an earthen pot on him. In the novel, there are different references of Hindu religion and customs: The fasting for devotion of God, Hindu's funeral ceremony, drinking Vhang etc. are some rituals of Hindu and Indian society. Not only that there are different words and phrases directly taken from Indian culture in society like swamiji, dupatta, etc. These different words also help the text to contextualize as the representation of Indian society and culture. And of course the symbols of red and the sea, the joy of such spectacular holidays as Holi and Diwali—all of these surface as he returns to small incidents in his life with Padmini (Gerber Leslie 3).

A breeze blows down the staircase. Vishnu can suddenly smell the sea. 'I feel so light like I am floating', Padmini says, opening the car window and holding her head out. Vishnu looks at her, her face framed against the yellow of the dupatta billowing up around her. He puts his hand on her thigh, and she does not push it off. Here, we can see how the so-called god is; Vishnu is in love with a prostitute Padmini. He loves her to be satisfied sexually. The girl is also a prostitute; coquettish sexual intercourse is everything for her. She is so proud of thinking that she is fulfilling the desire with god. I think that this scene of the extract describes the contemporary Bombay society. In contemporary time, many women are professionalized to have sex in Bombay. Many women are sexually exploited. So the extract can also represent such society. But one important thing is that Gerber Leslie E. has only seen their love and having sex negatively. In this age, especially postmodern time,

love and sex are becoming necessary parts of life but no doubt, that should be within a limit or digestive for society. So blaming Vishnu and Padmini only sexually is not well analysis.

As the narrative cycles back over and again to scenes of Vishnu's mother caring for him, more stories of the gods and complex mythopoetry of the gods are told. He loves the tale of the yogi-spirit Jeev, "born nine hundred and ninety thousand times" writes Suri: "the lives of wealth and indulgence that await jeep . The feast where each grain of rice is dipped in silver, where the apricots have emeralds as pits. The marriage to the princess of Sonapur, with the procession of the thousands of trumpeting elephants" (Gerber 3).

The Death of Vishnu celebrates movies and is itself paced and structured cinematically. It should come as no surprise (but it does) that the book ends with Padmini and Vishnu going to the Metro cinema to see a much-heralded new film, decades in the making Vishnu buys her a cold drink and a samosa. They love being together. It has a spectacular ending:

Finally here, see it now', the man is saying, 'So many decades in the Making, *The Death of Vishnu*. The man is standing on a chair In front of The ticket booth at Metro Cinema, next to the large 'House Full sign [. . .] Amitabh Bachhan as Vishnu, Reshma as Padmini.(307)

Here he novel juxtaposes with Bollywood film. Vishnu juxtaposes with Amitabh Bachhan, and Reshma with Padmini. From this, we can say that the novel celebrates movies and structured cinematically. Vishnu, climbs down himself from god to become Bollywood hero . He tries to become Bollywood hero to love Padmini and enjoy with her. Not only them the next major character Kavita also has a desire to be an actress. She thinks herself a natural, a born actress. I think this is also her desire to persuade salim and make the love successful. It is his self-devalorization on the one hand. On the other hand this scene also tries to express the condition of Contemporary Indian cinemas and also Indian people's attraction to such

movies. How Hollywood film focuses love story and sexual scenes rather than teaching moral lessons, can be seen in the novel.

This final scene of the novel tries to show the Hindu universe. The scene of the jingle of this part is Vishnu's dreamy world. I think the main character Vishnu, perhaps, like the god Vishnu, is supporting the universe by imagining it. For after death "the darkness fade, and he sees the mist of a forest" hears a flute, its music impossibly sweet, and catches a blue skinned boy in the act of stealing butter. It is Krishna another of Vishnu's avatars. The boy who is described at the final scene may be Krishna, the next avatar of Vishnu. In Hindu religion, the birth, life, death and rebirth are in cycle. The Hindus believe that when a god dies, he again reborn in different avatars. Anyway, I think this scene is nothing more than bringing Hindu context and belief.

Suri himself also calls the Bombay apartment building in the Death of a microcosm for the ethno political map of India. I also think that Suri is able to show how religion, death, and unexpected changes all work together to define each person's individuality. The seemingly mundane Bombay metropolis is fused with the beauty and depth of Hindu mythology in this impressive literary accomplishment. The novel serves as a rich allegory and exploration no through the Hindu and Muslim faiths, through spiritual quests, and the nature of live and longing. A text always should depict the time and place in which the text is written. This makes the text to interpret with related time and place. Like this, the text this, the text is also able to represent the time especially contemporary and place Indian Society.

IV. Conclusion

Manil Suri is living in America, so he could only create the image of India in his imagination. Diasporic people have only option that is they could create the dream image of lost country, which is on the mist. Diasporic writers have grater will to create their home wille living in foreign land. So, through their writing Suri is creating the Indian home. Suri recalls the events of long ago, which he had faced when he used to live in Bumbay. On the one hand, he is guided by Hindu mythology on the other hand he is influenced by Christian mythology. Due to which he creates the topic like The Death of Vishnu. On the on one hand, he questions the Hindu religious belief but on the other hand, he is able to create the image of Hindu society. Any way Suri translates Hindu culture into English. So the diasporic writers and be taken as the translators.

The writer like Suri has two responsibilities: on the one and he has to save his culture on the other hand he has to identify his culture among English readers. In the text, Suri uses Hindi languages due to which he could be able to create Indian taste. For that he brings the issue the working class Indian people who are living one of the rented house of Bombay. The naming of characters in this one building and of those people with whom the principals interact with on a daily basis has a hierarchy. Vishnu, and his lover Padmini, have single first or personal names. The apartment dwellers, i.e. the Asranis, the Pathaks, the Jalals, are usually referred to and distanced throughout the book by last name although we know their first names. The top floor owner, a man respected by all, is the widower, Vinod Taneja. At the servant level are the outside help, Tall Ganga and Short Ganga, who convey goods, service and gossip. In between are the otherwise homeless other landing occupants, Radiowalla and Man who sleeps on the Lower Step. At street level is the commercial class,

the equally nameless Cigarette-wallah, Paan-wallah, Electrician and Tailor, an otherwise neutral group who quickly form a dangerous mob on short notice and slim basis.

So, for Indians and for city-dwellers alike, the book brings back memories in our own lives: the complications of living in a crowded society close to each other, the noise, the smell, the pretenses (upper class, lower class, middle class) , the joys of Sunset Points outside the mean streets, phuljadis or fireworks, delicious bhujias, arranged marriages, punishing the young (deserved or otherwise), the desire for sex and its rejection, the passion to rise above religion and yet the comfort of faith.

All these point to simultaneous experiences of pain and pleasure, horror and amusement, i.e. life in its raw form, unvarnished and natural. If the book and its prime situation produce mixed emotions, that is because we sense a connection us with our own thoughts, actions, fears, desires, successes and failures. Books are supposed to make us get in touch with ourselves and this one truly does.

Vishnu, in the opening chapter of this book, is simply the name of what we might call a homeless person. His residence is a mere landing in a set of stairs in a multistoried residential building in the large coastal city of Mumbai. So it is not God Vishnu. That is a relief! But might he possibly be God Vishnu? How can we tell (his mother certainly encouraged him to think so!) when Hindu philosophy acknowledges potential divinity in each individual? Is this man Vishnu, this half-blind drunkard, a god in disguise, testing His devotees, by any chance? Is He taunting the tenants in the building who give him some presumably stale food (Ref: Mrs. Asrani's comments about Mrs. Pathak's chapattis!), some tea, in return for odd jobs such as standing in line to buy kerosene and other rations.

The theme of the book is universal, and this could be happening in New York City or Hartford. It asks who is responsible for, and how a society deals with, the Vishnus of this world who have arrived at death's door, have nowhere to go, no job, unhealthy, eating scraps

of doled food, clad in second hand clothing. And who yet pulse with all the desire for life including sex, love, entertainment, adventure, dreams much like the rest of us. And there is comedy in the book driven by the lower middle class families, Hindu and Muslim, families competing, pretending, complaining, suspecting, accusing, the common kitchen providing ample opportunity. Vishnu's love for Padmini, the prostitute, is surprisingly unconditional, nonjudgmental; it is touching, and is a final redeeming quality along with the involuntary tear for Vishnu that rolls down teenage Kavita's face when this wannabe pop star tries to enact a moving scene from her childhood memory of him. A particularly fascinating explanation of love is brought out by the author when Mrs. Asrani places the hand of Kavita in Salim's, declaring that she is now his sister. This turns out to be a big mistake, especially when such joining of hands is symbolic of a specific step known as Hasta Milap in a Hindu wedding ceremony! And as Kavita tries to pull her hand away but stops, we are told that "electrons were being blown out of their orbits, atoms and molecules rearrange a perfectly scientific way (an engineer's appreciation of a mathematician's view) of describing this most mysterious phenomenon we all know and have experienced. And Vishnu's sense of adventure is clear when he whisks his lover away to Sunset Point in Mr. Jalal's Fiat stolen for the duration.

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