



Age of Shiva

By MANIL SURI

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Following his spectacular debut novel, *The Death of Vishnu*, Manil Suri returns with a mesmerizing story of modern India, richly layered with themes from Hindu mythology. *The Age of Shiva* is at once a powerful story of a country in turmoil and an extraordinary portrait of maternal love. Meera, the narrator, is seventeen years old when she catches her first glimpse of Dev, performing a song so infused with passion that it arouses in her the first flush of erotic longing. She wonders if she can steal him away from Roopa, her older, more beautiful sister, who has brought her along to see him. When Meera's reverie comes true, it does not lead to the fairy-tale marriage she imagined. She escapes her overbearing father only to find herself thrust into the male-dominated landscape of India after independence. Dev's family is orthodox and domineering, his physical demands oppressive. His brother Arya lusts after her with the same intensity that fuels his right-wing politics. Although Meera develops an unexpected affinity with her sister-in-law Sandhya, the tenderness they share is as heartbreakingly fleeting. It is only when her son is born that Meera begins to imagine a life of fulfillment. She engulfs him with a love so deep, so overpowering, that she must fear its consequences. Meera's unforgettable story, embodying Shiva as a symbol of religious upheaval, places *The Age of Shiva* among the most compelling novels to emerge from contemporary India.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The second novel from Suri (*The Death of Vishnu*) follows Meera Sawhney from her unhappy 1950s marriage to aspiring singer Dev Arora through to her own son's coming-of-age. After an impulsive act forces Meera's marriage at 17, her complex, controlling father decries her tying herself (and, by extension, her family) to the provincial, lower-class Aroras. Meera soon finds herself pulled in different directions by her in-laws' religious orthodoxy, her father's progressivism (which doesn't run deep), her husband's self-pitying alcoholism and her own resentment. She finds salvation in the birth of a son, Ashvin; mother love, which Suri describes in intensely physical terms, gives her life passion and purpose, and overwhelms her adult relationships. But as India modernizes, Meera senses that Ashvin, and she herself, must live their own lives. Suri renders Meera's perspective marvelously, especially in small particulars (such as Meera's deliberations around the cutting of Ashvin's hair) and in the perils and conflicts Meera faces in her relationships with men. He also takes a close look at Hindu practices and charts the rise of religious nationalism in the years following Gandhi's death. Suri's vivid portrait of a woman in post-independence India engages timeless themes of self-determination.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Manil Suri's debut novel, *The Death of Vishnu* (PEN/Faulkner Award nominee, 2002), satirized families in a single apartment building in Bombay. *The Age of Shiva*, about women's subjugation, postindependence Indian politics, and Hindu-Muslim conflicts, offers a more panoramic view of Indian society. A few critics compared it to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, but *The Age of Shiva* is a smaller, tighter work, ambitious in scope if not as wholly successful. Written as a letter from Meera to her son, the novel shines with luminous prose, Hindu myths, and mother-child bonds, but bogs down as it chronicles the decades. Most critics agreed, however, that Suri effectively portrays Meera as the embodiment of an India caught between tradition and modernization.

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From [Booklist](#)

Suri follows his exceptional debut, *The Death of Vishnu* (2001), with an unflinchingly honest portrait of Meera, a vibrant young Indian woman who in 1955 marries Dev, an aspiring singer her family views as socially beneath them. Her contentious marriage, an abortion forced on her by Dev and her father, her struggle to get an education, and her eventual fulfillment as a mother are framed by India's political upheavals, increasing tensions between Hindus and Muslims, and the 1971 India-Pakistan war. The two families are in different political camps, one led by Meera's father, who is "enamored of Indira Gandhi," and the other by Dev's brother, who becomes heavily involved with a right-wing group touting the return of Hindu values in a "new age" of Shiva. Dev's family is more traditional in their religious practices, and the narrative is replete with Hindu customs designed to either ward off curses or attract good fortune. An enlightening family saga set in modern India, but intricately interwoven with the ancient rites and myths that are integral to the subcontinent's tumultuous history. --Deborah Donovan

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Russell Love:

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. As we know that book is very important usually. The book Age of Shiva had been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The publication Age of Shiva is not only giving you more new information but also to be your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship together with the book Age of Shiva. You never truly feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

Sandra Earnhardt:

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David Johnston:

On this era which is the greater person or who has ability to do something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple approach to have that. What you should do is just spending your time almost no but quite enough to get a look at some books. Among the books in the top list in your reading list is usually Age of Shiva. This book which is qualified as The Hungry Mountains can get you closer in turning out to be precious person. By looking way up and review this guide you can get many advantages.

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