

# 'Different rules appear for different strata'

*Bottom Of The Heap* by REETI GADEKAR is about criminal Delhi and miscarriages of justice, says SHANA MARIA VERGHIS, talking to the writer

Reeti Gadekar got lucky with her first manuscript. The book, *Families At Home*, got a Man Asian Literary Prize in 2007. In it, she introduced the character of additional commissioner Juneja, who features in *Bottom of the Heap* (Harper Collins), and is among a handful of crime-fiction books by Indian authors, most of the better known ones being women. It is a crime-thriller with rapes, bad policemen, road scams and more no-good happenings. Gadekar is Germany-based. She went in '99, to do her PhD on travel literature. Her focus was on German travel guide called the *Baedekar*.

Reeti nearly wrote a book located there. She said that most books published in Germany are in the local language. And so her own two aren't available there. They won't be unless they are translated.

Reeti grew up in New Delhi. She draws on her experiences of the place and also creates fictional villages in her second book which appropriate some



events that have appeared in our papers. Such as the rape of the Swedish diplomat at Siri Fort by two policemen.

In her version, the victim is German. And the language the police use to describe her is very crude. The other rape involves a woman from the so-called lower strata of society. The author who has a sort

of uptight toughness that may have trailed into her writing style. It is savagely ironic in places. She went by her impressions of being a Delhiite rather than from hanging around police stations drinking cuppas with coppers. Her Delhi is not pleasant. The guardians of the law exchange Gold Flakes and lewd comments about women's body parts. Delhi also inspires her to list facts on scams and the seamier side of things. She created imaginary villages with names like Arse, and. The last two, "drawn from Paul Scott's 'Jewel in the Crown'." She mentioned that her theme was, "how different rules apply for different strata, with many miscarriages of justice." And that using a policeman like Juneja, "allows one to write about crimes like custodial rape." Personally, she related, "I was here when the Jessica Lal and Nitish Katara cases had become high profile. And that was because families were better posed to pursue them. While victims in other families, would have fared worse."

Reeti cited writers like John Le Carre, James Hadley Chase and Peter O' Donnell as her inspiration.

