

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, August 25, 2014

## Reliving the angst of a woman

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Rethy Devi was moved by books that spoke for the colonised and the oppressed.

Five years experience working as a human rights lawyer was ample time for Rethy Devi to observe first-hand and understand how sharply the world was tilted against a woman. Even growing up, she was especially moved by feminist philosophies and books that spoke for the colonised and oppressed the world over – which prompted her to pursue a career in law.

She moved to Chicago a decade ago and spending time in an entirely different place helped her organise her thoughts and experiences, the result of which is a book she has titled, 'The Gospel of Mary Magdalene and Me.'

### Ten years' toil

She says this book was waiting to be written for it represents all the theories and beliefs she holds dear. Ten years was spent writing, researching and revisiting chapters of this piece of fiction.

She says she referred to nearly 500 books. Ms. Devi describes it as a work of historical fiction for it explores the story of Mary Magdalene in the first part. The second section is 'semi-autobiographical' and is set in the present.

The character in this part, she says, relates to the isolation faced by Magdalene.

### Appalling state

“As a lawyer, I used to speak frequently to women prisoners and victims and the extent of atrocities was appalling. It was frustrating how rampant such cases were and there was little anyone could do to improve the situation,” said Ms. Devi.

### **Exploring feminism**

She says she chose to write about two different characters set in different time-frames and places for it helps underline how relevant the concept of feminism was and still is.

Her anguish with the current state of the world, of religious warfare and a diminishing sense of humanity is also explored in this novel.

Ms. Devi was born and brought up in Thamarakulam near Alappuzha. She had, in 1996, published another novel called ‘Adimavamsham’, which is an anthology of short stories. Before moving to the United States, she said she was a member of the Indian People’s Theatre Association and the International Women’s Federation.