

Kerala sitting judge pens novel

[Kerala](#) civil judge A M Basheer was a trifle hesitant to pen his debut novel on a sensitive topic like communal violence fearing he would be too even handed but ultimately chose to go ahead with it as he wanted it to throw light on the plights of the underprivileged.

The result was "Riot Widows", a book which is described by Union minister [Shashi Tharoor](#) as "heart-wrenching in its simplicity" and "a movingly crafted tale about growing up amidst adversity, suffering and pain".

"I was hesitant to begin with. I toyed with the idea and then gave up, and again, the story came back to me. At one point I knew I would have to write it down. There was no escape from it. Being a judge was an additional burden. My fear was not that I would overstep the limits. My fear was I would be too even handed," Basheer told PTI.

"This book shows how humanism, empathy with fellow human beings and love triumph over hatred and hostility. So, there is really no contradiction between my role in delivering judgements in court and writing a true account of contemporary life," he says.

According to the author, his novel, published by Palimpsest, has no resemblance to any incident anywhere but the characters are typical of any underprivileged quarters in a city everywhere.

"I was very particular that it should throw light on the plights of the underprivileged."

He had to take permission of the Kerala High Court for writing the book.

"I do not think there is any other instance of a sitting judge taking up his pen to write a work of fiction. Though I was not inhibited by my responsibility as a judge, I was all the time acutely aware that my work must be as fair as possible in giving every side its due," he says.
