

A colourful collage

The book deals in part with what it is to be a Bangalorean grappling with the vague dictates of tradition.

Finally, an ode to *namma Bengaluru!* One which is bound to make a pucca Bangalorean go misty-eyed over why the place will always remain close to his heart whichever part of the world he might find himself in.

The *saaru-soru-rasam*, filter kaapi "by-two," stainless steel kadais, "ondu-tharah" and "chill maadi" all come flooding to you as you realise that these tiny fragments are what make the city, apart from UK brands of wrinkle-free apparel, dazzling multiplexes and exotic flavours of ice-cream too exorbitantly priced to turn into anything more than eye-candy for the average public.

Lavanya Sankaran is the writer who brings you Bangalore stories in the form of 'The Red Carpet'—her debut book of short stories. Eight fast-moving tales (at least most of them) that speak of scenes so familiar; nagging mothers bent on attending a wedding—(yours!); old fathers, all lonely from being abandoned by their NRI offspring, peeping into neigh-

bours' windows and fascinating existences; not so well-to-do chauffeurs anxious to impress their French parfum-donning "may-dums," and foreign-returned students who simply can't stop 'California Dreaming'!

The stories follow a distinct pattern... they begin in an engaging way, build up to a crescendo, and then conclude in the most insignificant way possible.

Disappointing for a reader expecting an exciting finish, but expected for one who realises that life on most occasions drops a faded plastic ball of non-glamorous reality in your lap, and you have no choice but to play with it for a while!

The writing itself is interesting to read... the use of creative phrases and sensitive reflections of everyday living that you notice have gone past you rather easily. It amuses you that you hadn't chewed on these finer nuances before this book happened!

You find yourself waking up and smelling the *Bisi Bele Bhath*.



The Red Carpet; Lavanya Sankaran; Review, 2005, pp 215, Rs 295

'Bombay This' is about the issue of arranged marriage, the bane of many a carefree soul; 'Closed Curtains' is about do-gooders unfortunately misunderstood; 'Two Four Six Eight' is a chilling tale of sexual harassment; 'The Red Carpet' is about caste and class conflicts and resolutions; 'Alphabet Soup'-Once-East meets East, 'Mysore Coffee'. When a bad hair day becomes worse, 'Birdie Num Num'. on the soul-selling process of "fitting in," and 'Apple Pie, One By Two'-a bad case of homesickness, except home is not "home".

'The Red Carpet' won Lavanya Sankaran an impressive position in the nation's top ten best-selling fiction list hardly three days after its release and a fair share of international acclaim to top that. Read the book and it'll be no wonder why!