

BOOK TASTINGS



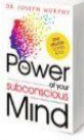
The Growth Delusion
By: David Pilling
Publisher: Bloomsbury India
Pages: 352; Price: ₹499

Pilling argues that we need to measure our successes and failures using different criteria. He says that our steadfast loyalty to growth is aiding misguided policies and contributing to a rising mistrust of experts.



The Aryabhata Clan
By: Sudipto Das
Publisher: Nyogi Books
Pages: 476; Price: ₹595

The Islamic State has spread its tentacles in India, penetrating stealthily into all areas. The mastermind is Shamsur Ali. To destabilize India, he wants to create a sort of apocalypse, which Kubha must prevent at any cost, come what may.



Power of Your Subconscious Mind
By: Joseph Murphy
Publisher: PRH
Pages: 280; Price: ₹150

Unlock the life that you were always meant to lead. It is possible to bring more wealth and love into your life. All you have to do is start believing in your potential and set your subconscious in motion. Your subconscious is miraculous.



The Woman in the Window
By: AJ Finn
Publisher: Harper Collins
Pages: 448; Price: ₹399

It's been 10 long months since Anna Fox last left her home. Ten months during which she has haunted the rooms of her old New York house like a ghost. Anna's lifeline to the real world is her window, where she sits day after day, watching her neighbours.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT WOMEN

In this blend of research with a chatty style, the dos and don'ts do their own talking



By SHINIE ANTONY

Liches and couture are an audio-visual documentation of trends and ideologies down the ages. Two of Mineke Schipper's books look at sayings about women from around the globe and their clothing: *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet* and *Naked or Covered: A History of Dressing and Undressing Around the World*. Both address the gender imbalance by pointing out drolly how it was and how it is.

The first book is filled with proverbs on women from 245 languages, and go from baby girls to old women, from marriage to death, while taking in love, childbirth and occult along the way. The aphorisms relate to limbs, eyes, nose, hands, feet and morals. Countering the sexism of 'a woman without a veil is like food without salt' (Pash-to) and 'a curly-haired woman is amorous' (Japanese) is 'I got married in order to dye my eyebrows, not to sew patches on worn clothes' (Persian). Schipper harks back to when

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small feet were a sign of beauty, of submissiveness, of femininity, dating back to the tenth century CE in China when foot binding was all the rage. 'The smaller the foot, the more erotic the woman, it was thought. Bound feet were on a par with sex organs—women would reveal them to their husbands only... For admirers, a tiny foot was an erotic plaything, being viewed as a special sexual organ and possibly the most forbidden zone,' the author quotes Alison Dakota Gee.

On widows comes the surprisingly empathic: 'Cold rice is still rice, a widow is still a woman' (Khmer). 'The daughter of a good mother will be the mother of a good daughter' (English, USA) lays it a little psychologically. 'Look at the mother rather than (at) her daughter' (Japanese) is more bald while 'lascivious mothers, strumpet daughters' (Dutch) is plain insulting.

'You do not how to cry until your mother dies' (Ovambo) eulogises moms, as do 'A fatherless child is half an orphan, a motherless one a whole orphan' (Finnish/Bulgarian/



Title: Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet
Price: ₹599; Pages: 456

Naked or Covered
Price: ₹499; Pages: 296

By: Mineke Schipper
Publisher: Speaking Tiger

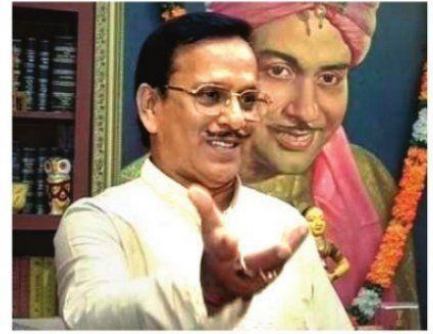
Estonian) and 'If the mother dies, the father becomes an uncle' (Tamil). Truisms like 'Friendship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law only goes as deep as the teeth (of the smile)' (Portuguese, Brazil) are balanced out with respect for ageing women: 'Wives and pots and kettles are better when old'; 'In love, a mature (older) woman is best' (both Japanese).

The marital bond brings us to 'Husband and wife are like tongue and teeth' (Burmesse) and 'What the yam feels, the knife understands' (Yoruba). If lesbian love is taboo—'Butter with butter is no sauce' (Scottish)—so is the extramarital—'Don't place your spoon where your bowl is not' (Abkhaz) and 'Don't place your foot in someone else's shoe' (Karachay-Balkar).

All these folk observations bring us back to attire, what women wear and what men

think about that. From the African tribesman who only has to wrap a string around his hips and tuck his genitalia out of sight to the devout woman whose uncovered head renders her practically naked, covering up has different fig leaves for either sex.

Bikinis and burkinis, suits, khadi, knitwear, a cowboy hat—all bare the whims of the wearer. The dress is not just a dress and Schipper picks it all apart in *Naked or Covered*, going under layers, from silk to cotton to bark. Drapes reveal much: morals, caste, politics, status.... Scanty dress or a state of undress in themselves are more than just dishabile; it's a stand, a rebellion. Schipper blends research with a chatty style, letting the dos and don'ts do their own talking. What is said about them and what they wear tell us where women are placed on the planet.



PC Sorcar, Jr

'There is a Magician in Every Heart'

PC Sorcar, Jr. who recently brought out a biography on his legendary father, talks to Medha Dutta

Having peddled his bag of tricks across the globe and penned 20-odd books, PC Sorcar, Jr has now come out with a book on his illustrious father—the one and only PC Sorcar, Sr. So, what prompted him to write about his father? 'Isn't it natural that I should be writing about him? After all no one knew him like I did,' he smiles. Talking about his fondest memories of his father, he says, 'As a child I always thought I had two fathers—one was the larger-than-life Maharaja-like ever-smiling magician.'

During his Japan tour in 1971, PC Sorcar, Sr had a fatal heart attack. His son, PC Sorcar, Jr, continued to spread the magic. 'I grew up in an environment of magic. I would see my father float above the chair instead of sit on it. I thought that was normal. Later when I went to a friend's place and saw his father actually sit on a chair, I was surprised,' he says.

A consummate performer and a fascinating storyteller, whether it's onstage or off, he tells of how, as a youth, he was banned from his father's office but would peep in from a skylight and learn the tricks. Later he would sneak into the room when his father was not there and perform in front of an imaginary audience. 'We (the Sorcars) breathe, eat, talk and walk magic,' smiles the legend.

But does magic still cast the same spell as before or is it going the way of other forms of entertainment that have been upstaged by TV and the internet? The illusionist claims that his shows have seen a dramatic increase in audience numbers. 'There is a magician in every man's heart,' he adds. 'Magic will remain magic. Though this procession of reality shows will go on, they can't kill the classical forms of entertainment. The art of magic is flourishing. The main thing is presentation. No matter in which manner the food is cooked, it is the way in which it is presented is what captures the interest,' he says.

'Always remember, what is magic today, will be science tomorrow,' says he before signing off.



PC Sorcar: The Maharaja of Magic

By: PC Sorcar, Jr
Publisher: Nyogi Books
Price: ₹1,995; Pages: 252

THE BOOK

PC Sorcar is one of the greatest magicians of the 20th century. He single-handedly revived a languishing Indian art and brought it to the world stage. This book is a pictorial account of his metamorphosis into the Maharaja of Magic from very humble beginnings. Written by his son, who was once his apprentice and now carrying on the proud tradition, this is a deeply personal view of the life and times of a towering figure. Photographs culled from various sources throw light on the magician as well as the man behind the scenes.

NEW BOOK ON THE BLOCK

King of Discord

With extraordinary access to the Trump White House, Michael Wolff tells the inside story of the most controversial presidency of our time. The first nine months of Donald Trump's term were stormy, outrageous—and absolutely mesmerising. Now, thanks to his deep access to the West Wing, bestselling author Michael Wolff tells the riveting story of how Trump launched a tenure as volatile and fiery as the man himself. In this explosive book, Wolff provides a wealth of new details about the chaos in the Oval Office. Never before has a presidency so divided the American people. Brilliantly reported and astoundingly fresh, Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury* shows us how and why Donald Trump has become the king of discord and disunion.

FIRE AND FURY
INSIDE THE TRUMP

Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House

By: Michael Wolff
Publisher: Little, Brown

When the Heart Becomes a Minefield

Right alongside the heady romance, the perks and pitfalls of communal living are highlighted with delicate brushstrokes

By ANUJA CHANDRAMOULI

Abubaker Adam Ibrahim's debut novel, *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, is a tale of forbidden passion between a 50-something widow, Hajiya Binta, and a young Reza who is mixed up with drugs and dirty politics. The narrative simmers with the tension of a slow-burning fuse even with the foreknowledge that multiple orgasms usually translate into unmitigated mayhem.

This story could have easily devolved into a sordid romance between a cougar and a willing young buck but Ibrahim clearly has loftier

ten to cramp her style.

Fa'iza, tormented by the horrors of a blood-spattered past, with Binta becoming inevitably consumed by desire, is left to fend off her fears, exacerbated by the premonition of impending disaster and further violence. Reza too sinks deeper and deeper into the morass of self-destruction, as his baser instincts win out even as Binta tries to save him in lieu of her dead son.

Their fate which despite everything comes as a surprise is a scathing indictment of the supreme selfishness and stupid im-



practicality of great romance which destroys not only the lovers but those innocent lives hopelessly intertwined with them.

On the surface it is a feminist saga which outlines the strictures of living in a repressive society where a wife's sexual desires could not be of less concern to her husband. A society where the brutal subjugation of a woman to broodmare status is scarily normalised. 'When he is done, always put your legs up so his seed will run into your womb.'

However, Ibrahim dares to make the status quo between the sexes more balanced by sneaking in a nuanced perspective that depicts how men and women are equally victimised as both struggle with the expectations of gender bias which forces them unwillingly into the roles of protector and protected respectively.

In Ibrahim's beautifully created fictional world, which is a mirror of the real one, where intolerance, hatred and spite prevail, happiness and peace are but dreams for anybody irrespective of gender or circumstance. There is much to love here from Binta's suffering in the



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