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BOOKS

PD
SPG
HC

Cells, selves & seals

**Best reads for
November**

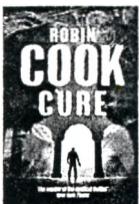
CURE

By Robin Cook
Published by Pan
Macmillan

Price ₹299; pages 459

Robin Cook's favourite characters, Jack Stapleton and Laurie Montgomery, are back.

This time, they are dealing with pluri-potent stem cells, the Japanese mafia and their son's kidnapping. Laurie, who returns to work as a forensic examiner, takes precedence and her husband plays second fiddle in the plot. Jack is still biking through New York—perhaps a little less sarcastic than before—while Laurie has overcome hormones to return to her never-say-die self. After sending Jack and Laurie to India to investigate medical tourism (Foreign Body) and the Virgin Mary's remains (Intervention), Cook thankfully returns them to the good old medical thriller genre. Every page is engrossing, but one wishes Cook had written a bit more at the ending, which came too abruptly.



VISHNU:
HINDUISM'S BLUE-SKINNED SAVIOR

By Joan Cummins (Ed.)
Published by Mapin

Price ₹3,765; pages 296

What appears like a coffee table book is actually a catalogue of art, literature, rituals and temples representing the many faces of Lord Vishnu. The research and photographs cover the 'protector' god's forms from Chola-age Yoga-Narasimhas to 11th century



Sudarshana Purusha bronzes belonging to private collectors. The book's version of the legend of Vamana and king Bali differs from the version prevailing in south India. The book includes Balarama—listed as the seventh—and the Buddha as incarnations.

**UNCOMMON GROUND:
DIALOGUES BETWEEN BUSINESS AND SOCIAL LEADERS**

By Rohini Nilekani
Published by Penguin/Viking

Price ₹499; pages 251

Corporate leaders are pitted against social activists to debate issues such as health, food, transportation, land, energy and employment. The duellers are Sunil Mittal and Aruna Roy, Habil Khorakiwala and Mirai Chatterjee, Suman Sahai and M.S. Banga, Rahul Bajaj and Dinesh Mohan, Anand Mahindra and Medha Patkar, Mukesh Ambani and R.K. Pachauri, Uday Kotak and Vijay Mahajan, and Y.C. Deveshwar and Sunita Narain.



THE SEALED LETTER
By Emma Donoghue
Published by Picador

Price ₹499; pages 397

In 1857, the divorce rate in England rose from an average two a year to hundreds. Booker nominee Donoghue's fictionalisation of the 1864 Codrington divorce brings in real-life women's movement leader, but rather annoyingly naive, Emily Faithfull (Fido), who, called as a witness by Helen Codrington, fled and testified on vice-admiral Codrington's behalf. The reason is conjectured by poet Robert Browning to be an explosive charge in a "sealed letter". Donoghue draws on the case reports published in the Times, Daily Telegraph and other newspapers. For a woman branded as homosexual, perverse and mannish, Fido's portrayal is surprising in its poignance. To sum up the novel in one word: brilliant.



**THE 3RD ALTERNATIVE:
SOLVING LIFE'S MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS**

By Stephen R. Covey
Published by Simon and Schuster

Price ₹799; pages 456

The first alternative, writes the author, "is my way" and the



second, "your way". There is a third, better and higher way, he says, to resolve conflicts. The concept is ancient, and may involve synergy, going beyond preconceived ideas. For instance, a typical boss may hear a complaint, while a "synergistic" boss may hear an idea in the same sentence. Introducing the third alternative culture at home, he says, may save many a relationship and turn people from crime.

By Nelson Mandela;
Foreword by Barack Obama

Published by Pan Macmillan

Price ₹499; pages 454

A collection of letters, speeches, doodles, calendar entries and notes, including jottings of his unpublished sequel to Mandela's autobiography, this book is dedicated to his great-granddaughter Zenani who died at age 13, in a car accident in 2010. Of particular interest are the 1969 letters he wrote to Winnie and his daughters, in a neat, consistent hand, and his notes on his meetings with Graca Machel, who would later become his third wife. 'Madiba' is at his best in his prison writings, from reflecting the assassination of "insensitive" prime minister H.F. Verwoerd to his thoughts on non-violence. This, perhaps, is the true sequel to Long Walk to Freedom.



By Thakazhi
Sivasankara Pillai
Translated by Anita Nair

Published by HarperCollins

Price ₹299; pages 276

The English translation of Thakazhi's magnum opus tells the tale of forbidden love, longing and loss. The novel is set against the backdrop of the fisherfolk community in Kerala and was first published in 1956. "Thakazhi wrote Chemmeen in eight days," says Nair. "It took me two years and at least four rewrites before I was satisfied to let it go." This is the second time the novel has been translated to English. Nair says the biggest challenge while translating was "to hold back the writer in her"—she had to keep telling herself, "Hey, this is somebody else's work. You are not supposed to make any changes in it."

