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Online edition of India's National Newspaper  
Thursday, Mar 31, 2011

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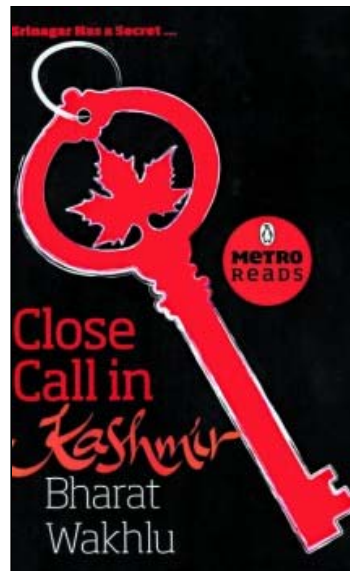
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### Made for the metros

The latest novels from Penguin's Metro Reads keep up their date with breezy, fast-paced tales



**LIGHT, NOT FRIVOLOUS** With these books, publishers say the thrust is on "honest literature"

A series that smacks of the times. Metro Reads from Penguin, launched early last year, spins out quick, breezy reads tailor-made for the fast-paced lives in metros and towns. After the first three books of the series created enough flutter, the publishing house has brought out its second and third part over the past few months.

The five books, "With or Without You", "The Premier Murder League" and "Close Call in Kashmir" along with the two launched in March, "Losing My Virginity and Other Dumb Ideas" and "Love on the Rocks", keep abreast the underlying idea of the series. From chic-lits to whodunit to cricket and corporate boardrooms, they embrace genres while keeping the mood light, though the content would hardly spur an invigorating thought process. A walk down a less trodden path for Penguin.

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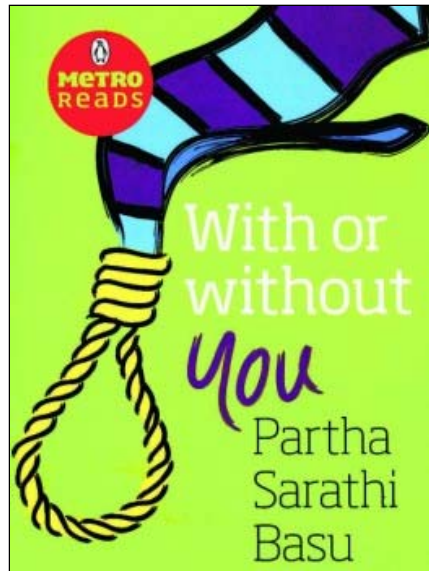
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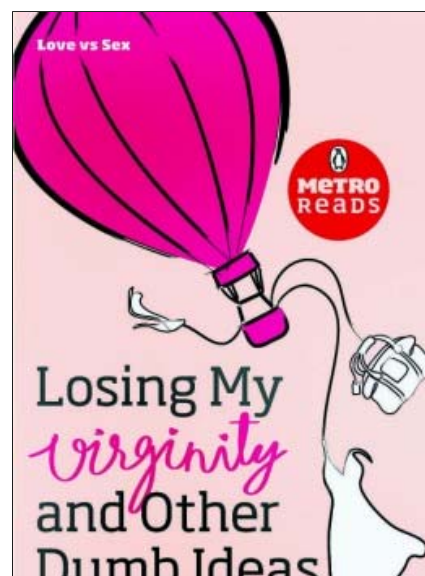
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"It was an untapped market," says senior commissioning editor, Penguin India, Vaishali Mathur. The idea bounced from observing contemporary lives, especially in the cities — friends and family who have moved in from towns and the ensuing change in their lifestyles. "The first thing we lose is the reading habit. It becomes too difficult to sustain with the Internet, iPad, all making it too much to handle," she adds. It is the need of the times these books pay heed to, according to the publishers. Page-turners for the quick-paced, the books are all a little over 200 pages long and uniformly priced at Rs.150.

With the series, Penguin also seems to be walking a fine line. Though never literary, the books are meant to boast a formidable story. "Fast, breezy with a strong storyline. It should not be frivolous or repetitive. It should have a great storyline and is not about being literary or non-literary," asserts Vaishali.

With the series, the accent is on "honest literature", she says, and it is merely a matter of coincidence that most authors are first-timers. For debutante author and media professional Madhuri Banerjee, her novel "Losing My Virginity and Other Dumb Ideas" may fall in the chic-lit slot, but its virtue is superior editing. "I feel a lot of chic-lit is not good writing and that gives a bad name to the genre. At Penguin, there were many editing sessions and of high standards," says the Mumbai-based writer.



Madhuri's protagonist, a la Bridget Jones, is 30 and still a virgin. "I wanted to look at how hypocritical our society is when it comes to matters of sex and virginity and how a modern woman grapples with them. I wanted it to be a breezy, fun read and not a research-based, non-fiction account tracing it from the 'Kamasutra.'"

Corporate guy Partha Sarathi Basu with his debut novel "With Or Without You" gives a ringside view of the world he is familiar with — of cutthroat competition, blind ambition and yardsticks of success in the corporate world. In the novel he wrote across nine months in his spare time and during travel, the author plucks out dialogues and conversations from everyday life. "I wanted to use simple language, the one we use daily. I also wanted it to be an easy read," says the Gurgaon-based writer. According to him, the idea was to get those to read, who never had the habit.

P. ANIMA

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