

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

YEAR 2022

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That is when I remembered my job, to write.

A lot of new faces, books and readers today. Some came after seeing the event in Ahmedabad Mirror, a few from Allevants.

Where were the introverts!

A member who saw the post on Reddit, began reading **'The Old Man and The Sea'**. What a title, I thought. Both aging, people look at both and find peace in their age, pity them for their absorbing the world's pain and garbage.

This was his favourite paragraph: *"He always thought of the sea as la mar which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as el mar which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought."*

His name was Rakshil.

When I googled the book, (I love googling books and movies), I found this:

<https://sites.williams.edu/engl-209-fall16/uncategorized/show-him-what-a-man-can-do-language-of-gender-and-attempted-re-masculinization-in-the-old-man-and-the-sea/>

I wish this person was sitting, in the book club and giving his opinion, just for the sake of, you know, listening to an opinion. I long to sit quietly and watch two people engaging in a passionate debate, sometimes.



I did not know the meaning of several concepts given in the linked article, like 'anti-essentialism'. Sometimes, while trying to physically impose our opinion on someone in the form of a discussion, we lose our thread because we are thrown off by new words and our need to pretend that we know everything.

"Call me Ishmael." Sandeep drew parallels with **Moby Dick**, and **the Old Testament**. God tells Ibrahim, an 80-year old man, to go for an adventure.

The spelling maybe wrong but, I miss half the conversation too! In law, we have an unfaithful source, called 'Hearsay'. So, read on dear readers, I am your second-hand source of evidence.

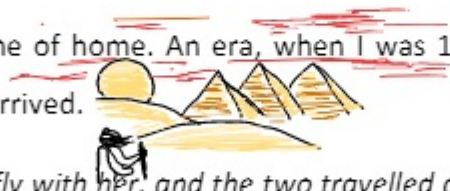
"Your job is to swim. My job is to catch you." The old man apologized to the fish it caught.

Eleven Minutes

Asmi Alok Chaturvedi was innocent, hence brave, "... about a girl who goes abroad to fulfil her dreams, it's about love", she said and I was sure that the pain she described, the crisis was her broken heart. My assumption and her story maybe two different truths.

She read a few passages. I/we have a love-abandon-hate/indifference-love relationship with Paulo Coelho, like the little bride abandoned in search of something new, lost in the big lights and markets, hoping for magic to occur and give us what we want, and as the early 20s fade away, missing the innocence of home, he goes back in the arms of the first wife.

This reader reminded me of home. An era, when I was 19, entered college in a new city, thinking, my Egypt has arrived.



"She invited the bird to fly with her, and the two travelled across the sky in perfect harmony. She admired and venerated and celebrated that bird.

But then she thought: He might want to visit far-off mountains! And she was afraid that she would never feel the same way about the other bird. And she felt envy, envy for the bird's ability to fly.

And she felt alone."

Age 13: I recalled 2009, when I first got my hands on **The Alchemist**. I had found my talisman. Slowly and surely, the book will give me magical moments, like it gave to that shepherd boy. I had the found 'THE BOOK'. And then someone borrowed it, and when I asked for it, they didn't remember borrowing it.



We all have a friend, 'The Book Thief'.

There is a stone you rub on the edge of your palm and it produces bliss, (not drugs) but it gets stolen from you and you search and you search, but never find another. You travel, you find potions and stars in worldwide stories, but not magic. I found other books, over time, but never my friend, again.

Paulo Coelho will come again to our book club, I am sure.

...

Mitesh: Shoulders straight, पूँस की रात print out ready, confident, because he was bullied enough last time. We all had tea. जो नहीं पी रहे थे, एक एक करके उन्होंने भी ले ली। चायवाला जाते जाते वापस आता रहा। इसलिए फिर वो यही खड़ा हो गया।



Why read 'Shantaram'?

To get career advice, "because he has done everything, you name it." Aditya's words, not mine.

"मैं क्या कर रहा हूँ? और जो मुझे नहीं करना है। कहानी में वो सब करता है। You name it."

Who needs a self-help book when Shantaram gives you different career options like drugs or living in an Indian jail. Not just sound financial advice, he tells you the consequences too. He is a complete package. No need to do a similar unpaid job/internship.

"He should open a college next", we joked. "How did he do it? A full fledged course, with day-to-day routine and contacts, title: from Drug lord to Writer to Spiritual guru. Follow my course. I give leads too, not just quotable advice."

He wrote his autobiography sitting inside prison. Seen by the jailer, torn apart. He rewrote it. Again, the jailer crushed it into bits and pieces of waste. He wrote it again.

Aditya met Shantaram on a road trip to Jaisalmer. We asked him, with happy anticipation, if he just took it from the hotel! No. He found it there, read some then purchased another copy.

We were really disappointed. Because nowadays, soaps and shampoos are nailed to the walls. Randomly picking up hotel books soothe that pain.

"Every day, when you're on the run, is the whole of your life. Every free minute is a short story with a happy ending."

- Aditya's favourite quote from the book, author: Gregory David Roberts.

All the Light We Cannot See, Written by Anthony Doerr

"I wake up and live my life. Don't you do the same?"

Nirali introduced us to two people living in two different countries connect over radio, during World War I, saving each other's lives. But they never meet, physically. Rajesh wanted them to see each other, hold each other's attention, look deep in her eyes and tell her, all that he never told another.



I was happy because I saw him advocate for two people to meet, like a young boy was sitting before me, face so innocent, for a moment, he was just that, an innocent young boy, in love with the magic of a union.

The conversation took different turns, from romance to politics of the Soviet Union and Joseph Stalin. Sandeep described **Alexander Yakovlev's** books (A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia, The Fate of Marxism in Russia), "What he wrote, helped the SU diffuse an eminent war, removing disillusionment caused by the Stalin government."

<https://www.acton.org/publications/transatlantic/2017/11/21/forgotten-champion-liberty-alexander-yakovlev>

I quote from this article, "... **Perestroika** (restructuring), accompanied by **glasnost** (openness), entailed a gradual introduction of freedom into Russian society and economy ..."

*"...previously banned works such as Orwell's **1984**, Nabokov's **Lolita**, and Pasternak's **Doctor Zhivago** became freely available to Russians ..."*



I tread carefully upon some toes here when I like this passage, but it increases intrigue, to learn more or to fight back:

*"... **Marxism** wrongly believed human nature may be altered by changed social relations. It is not capitalism which leads to alienation, as Marx predicted, but Marxism, wrote Yakovlev, since the abolition of private property alienates the workers from the fruits of their labor ..."*

...

There are two types of learners. Readers and Listeners. I like to watch and write and share it with others. I am glad to have met people who I learn from, to jot down the names of new books by seeing the expression on their faces when they are excited and talk about it, only silent and hesitant a moment before. It gives me an honest review of what world I would like to elope to, next.

There are a few more on my map: **Atomic Habits**, put in by Dhaval, he talked about complementary habits, I added consistency for 21 days (from army training days). Someone asked, "What is a self-help book?" We discussed a story about Akbar Birbal and the missing well. An advocate used said story to file a petition for missing toilets, using the proof submitted by the opposite party of the toilet having been born, brought up and existed in the village. We thought, any material that gives an answer to the question we are seeking at that particular point of time, becomes self-help.

Rajesh laughed and smiled while reading us **Stephen King**.

Everybody looked awake. Now, here comes a surprise and a pledge.

Sandeep read us **Tumbling Old Women** by Daniil Kharmis:

"Excessive curiosity made one old woman fall out of a window, plummet to the ground and break into pieces. Another old woman poked her head out of a window to look at the one who had broken into pieces, but excessive curiosity made her too fall out of the window, plummet to the ground and break into pieces. Then a third old woman fell out of a window, then a fourth, then a fifth. When a sixth old woman fell out, I felt I'd had enough of watching them and went off to the Maltsev Market where I heard that a blind man had been given a knitted shawl."



The story ends here. "Where??..." We did not expect this.

"There is a book, called '[The Blue Notebook](#)' wherein the same writer writes nonsense. He goes up to people discussing, and stands with them. No one knows that he is not part of the group. It's always, he must be with him." continued Sandeep.

Nirali is that writer's present reincarnation. She sees people taking a picture, goes and stands with the group, then vanishes. We pledge to follow her example.

While listening to **Man's search for meaning** (Paridhi), I wondered what other worlds exist and what is the procedure to travel.

We just have to open a book's door and enter another world for a few hours, before it makes us, its citizens.



We have Dhaval, Jigar, Paridhi, Asmi, Chirag, Sandeep, Aditya, Rakshil, Mitesh, Priya, Rajesh and Nirali.

Books donated to the library of Pocket Diary Book Club:

Session 2: Tumhaare Baare Me by Manav Kaul (Rajesh)

Session 3: The Old Man and The Sea by Ernest Hemingway (Rakshil)