

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Year 2023

Edition 13

13/05/2023, 5:00 PM

We started it with a bit of a twist. As the readers slowly started filling up the studio, **me and Sandeep** were propped up in the middle on bean bags facing each other. Everyone was intrigued with the new setup and the calming warm yellow lights which washed over us all. We started off edition 13th with buddy reading from **Vidhu Vinod Chopra's** book **Unscripted**.

The autobiography of filmmaker **Vidhu Vinod Chopra**, which includes his journey in film-making, his conversations with **Abhijat Joshi** and moments which made his life a memorable one. एक किस्सा from the book was dramatized by us. एक किस्सा where VVC received his winning money of 4,000 rupees in bonds instead of cash as he had anticipated. What he did next would never be believed by anyone. He requested that the then-minister L.K. Advani gave him cash instead, and he also suggested the president give him the cash if Advani won't do it. Everyone chuckled at this.

<https://youtu.be/u9lkg3s3hVQ> (Rehearsal Day: Dramatic Reading)

I read a paragraph in which they discuss going to see Charlie Chaplin, meeting Peter O'Toole, visiting Ghalib's mazar, and many **dolphin moments**. At the mention of Ghalib, Sandeep reminiscence his visit to Ghalib's mazar:

It was a sunny day, but the floor of his grave was cold, so he sat there and recited Diwan-e-Ghalib and also showed it to the readers as it was conveniently there on the new bookshelf.

न था कुछ तो खुदा था, कुछ न होता तो खुदा होता
डुबोया मुझ को होने ने, न होता मैं तो क्या होता

This couplet is engraved on Ghalib's mazaar.

<https://indianvagabond.com/2018/03/31/mazar-e-ghalib-grave-of-mirza-ghalib/>

...

Yogesh. New Look. Stark bald. Concerned, Rajesh bent on one knee and talked in a hushed voice. Yogesh dismissed him. It was Yogesh's personal fight (call it a feat) with the heat.

After the regular round of rules which now many readers speak/mutter/sing along, this time around we introduced **Yogesh as the activity curator of our book club**. Yogesh then went on to tell us that he required 6 members to volunteer for the next edition's activity and that the **volunteers would get what they have always wanted** (Well now we have your attention!). The volunteers were to select a profession they had always dreamed of and act like it, rest of the information will be given by Yogesh later on.

...

Keeping in lieu with the premises that we started on, the first reader today had brought something that the theatre and Bollywood buffs amongst us would be pretty interested in.

Bhavita came with this fun book, **In a Cult of Their Own: Bollywood Beyond Box Office** by **Ambarish Roychoudhary**.

The way she chirped “Aila” and the entire movie was projected upon everyone’s mind.

Bhavita had earlier in the week thrown two book titles at Nirali, and looking at the quirkiness and the sheer curiosity, Nirali said ‘let’s gamble’ in her mind and said why don't you bring this Bollywood wala book, it looks interesting. Well curiosity didn't kill Nirali this time around and boy oh boy what a start to the edition.

Countless undiscovered ‘gems’ exist in Bollywood’s cinematic universe, which churn thousands of films every year. And this book explores that very firmament of lost celestial bodies which have, for one reason or the other, **failed at the quintessential “box office” but figured out a way to survive** and created their niche in our hearts. This book had all those movies which were not for the masses but for the classes. (Cheeky 😊)

Bhavita selected **Mad Misadventures**; Andaz Apna Apna, a movie which flopped back then (one cannot fathom why). All with the iconic crime master Gogo, Mr. Bajaj and Teja “पिलान के मुताबिक...” this was a classic cocktail of success. Well, well... as all good art forms are classified, it too was Avant-garde.

Everyone was chanting the dialogues with Bhavita:

“Teja main hu, mark idhar hai.”

“Crime master Gogo. Aaya hu to kuch leke jaaunga.”

“Wo commissioner hoga to apne ghar ka hoga.”

“Sotey samay awaz to nahin karte ho na.” “Pass mein kabristan hai wahan se ccomplain nahi ani chahiye.”

“Suraj dhalne ke baad batti nahi jalana.” By order Sevaram

Almost wishing we could actually put in every funny punny thing said over the conversations that followed.

...

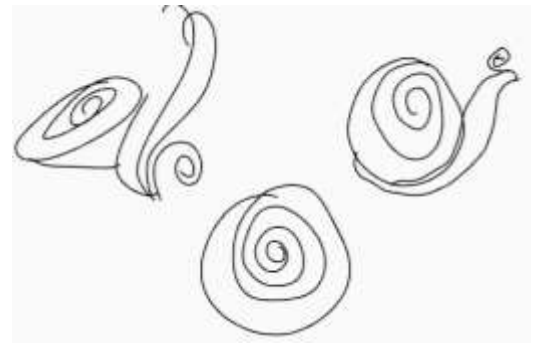
After toe dipping in the tinsel town, we had one more genre being introduced to the book club meeting and albeit for the first time. **Bharat** read from **Uzumaki** by **Junji Ito**

Manga, Anime, Uzumaki, Naruto....



To be frank we started from scratch, i.e., how to pronounce these terms. In Bharat's words when it comes to graphic novel, he has a banger locked and loaded and he brought it. How to go about it? He had it all structured.

Spirals are what the word 'Uzumaki' denotes. We too started finding patterns and spirals around us. Bharat and Nirali both spotted **the Warli painting** hanging on the wall below the Hogwarts lamp with spiral pattern and pointed it out to others.



Nirali claimed that while she had never watched an anime, she was shocked to learn that Naruto and Pokémon were in fact from the anime series. Uzumaki follows a high-school teenager, Kirie Goshima; her boyfriend, Shuichi Saito; and the citizens of the small, quiet Japanese town of Kurouzu-cho, which is cursed by supernatural events involving spirals.

It was new for most members. An art form from Japan, many of us did not know about. **Also, the Japanese write from right to left and the novels are also to be read from right to left.**

After spiraling a bit into Japanese cult-literature, we came to know about Najabai and Tehmina. It is a story of their livelihood.

...

Ankit read us this story from **Tales from Firozsha Baag by Rohinton Mistry**, a collection of short stories. Ankit wanted us to retrospect on the story and everyone was reminded of how their childhood and the arrival of gadgets always brought a lot of mayhem and galores of memories.

Kusangi read **Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell**. The author defines a tipping point as "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point." The book seeks to explain and describe the "mysterious" sociological changes that mark everyday life. *"Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread like viruses do."*

For the first time, **Shreevidya** attended the Pocket Diary Book Club. She and Harshvardhan are the first Pocket Diary Book Club (a.k.a. PDBC) members under the age of 18.

She sat there confident and yet with eager bright eyes near the bookshelf. She selected **Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl** for her debut edition. She read us the passage from the book's final chapter in which Anne Frank describes her journey. The voice commanded interest, awe and adoration from us all. The way she read and the way she felt right at home amongst us varied bunch of readers was simply filling us with a sense of pride. The youth has arrived.

She had selected the last entry in the diary, dated August 1, 1944, discussing Anne's feelings of loneliness and longing for freedom. She expresses her desire to make something of her life and her hope to become a writer and journalist after the war.

"Actually, I'm what a romantic movie is to a profound thinker—a mere diversion, a comic interlude, something that is soon forgotten: not bad, but not particularly good either."

Isn't it surprising that there has been a book about World War II in practically every edition. Shreevidya made a diary based on the book and named it Anne. It was such a wholesome feeling to see young adults tuned in to the books and how.

Nirali – ‘You can still read. You have 15 seconds.’

To lighten up the atmosphere Rajesh said – ‘बहुत वक़्त दे दिया आपने तो साहब I’ (with a slight chuckle) Following that, Ankit, Kusangi, and Priya started admonishing one another to keep discussion short because we were running short of time. And Rajesh was stunned and said – ‘ये सारे टेढ़े लोग एक दूसरे को चुप होने को क्यों बोल रहे हैं?’

...

We were all asked a question when we had all settled down.

‘Can you name any famous woman who has worked on the ground during World War II?’

She had a code name, **Nightingale**. Ruchi introduced us to the book **Nightingale by Kristin Hannah**. The book tells the story of two sisters in France during World War II and their struggle to survive and resist the German occupation of France. The book was inspired by the story of a Belgian woman, **Andrée de Jongh**, who helped downed Allied pilots escape Nazi territory.

“Code-named Nightingale, Isabelle led the injured soldiers alone through the rugged mountainous terrain on foot. Instead of applauding her for saving lives when she arrived at the embassy, they were stunned. The Embassy is more surprised that a lady is capable of doing this than it is that the soldiers were saved. She was an active member of the resistance against Nazi Germany.”

...

“Today I begin a new life.” said **Yogesh**.

He was reading from the book **The Greatest Salesman in the World by OG Mandino**. It serves as a philosophy of salesmanship and success, telling the story of Hafid, a poor camel boy who achieves a life of abundance. It encourages a positive mindset, personal growth, and the pursuit of success through the cultivation of positive habits and adherence to guiding principles.

Principle 8 of the book – *I will laugh at the world.*

Rajesh wanted to hear the backdrop of the book citing, Yogesh always left him curious about background of the stories and he said – ‘आज बताओ आप योगेश जी। इस कहानी में क्या है? दिक्कत क्या है? परेशानी क्या है? मुद्दा क्या है?’

...

Our next reader **Prita**, a first-time visitor, sat patiently, listening to conversations and taking in the ongoing. She gave us a gist of the book she is currently reading, **Everyman's war by Raghu Raman**.

Even as outrage over safety of women and rising terror take center stage, there continues to be limited access to information on the subjects of national defense and security, especially in language that a layman can

understand. He recalibrates the great 'India rising' story with its real and present dangers and the role of a regular citizen in this everyman's war.

We also talked about Salman Rushdie's work that she had read recently and how his magical realism works for some and not for all.

...

Rajarshi took us to the stories of Ramayan. **Sita's Sister by Kavita Kane.**

"Re-vision:

the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction is for women more than a chapter in cultural history. It is an act of survival.

- Adrienne Rich

Mythology has always been a part of our collective unconsciousness. It has and will always rule our values and belief system. As Roland Barthes says in his Mythologies, myth is a special form of the myth told with an intention. The famous epics of India, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat are always used to present the quintessential woman so that the patriarchal norms are maintained. However, rewriting the mythology has been an effective tool of feminists to subvert the ideas of the ideal woman.

Urmila, is the most unheard character of the Ramayana. She is always accused of not accompanying her husband, unlike Sita. Sita's Sister presents the Ramayana from Urmila's perspective. The rewriting gives voice to the unheard and marginalised Urmila and present her in a very different perspective."¹

...

Prince continued reading **The Da Vinci code by Dan Brown.** He started with the first chapter. Robert Langdon, the expert on Symbolology is on an adventure of uncovering the truth about Holy Grail following a murder. Prince kept reading after 3 bells. Finish the sentence. He went till the last sentence of the pages long conversation. Rajesh had to say, 'You are a good sentence.'

Abhishek – 'I am gonna read **तुम्हारी औकात क्या है?** by Piyush Mishra'

Priya – 'तुम ही बता दो।'

"यह आत्मकथा जितनी बाहर की कहानी बताती है — ग्वालियर, दिल्ली, एनएसडी, मुम्बई, साथी कलाकारों आदि की—उस से ज़्यादा भीतर की कहानी बताती है, जिसे ऐसी गोचर दृश्यावली में पिरोया गया जो कभी-कभी ही हो पाता है।"

Rajesh has read this book and he told us a few excerpts from the book about Piyush Mishra.

"जहाँ ध्यान से नहीं पहुँचा जा सकता, वहाँ अभिनय से पहुँचा जा सकता है।"

While ringing the bell, it fell from Nirali's hands and broke in two parts. Which gave Rajesh so much happiness he said 'Yes, गयी ये मुसीबत की जड़।'

¹ https://www.academia.edu/37781245/HEARING_THE_UNHEARD_A_STUDY_OF_SITAS_SISTER

It was around 7 PM and **Disha** read the book **Call me by your name by Andre Aciman**, and even though she was running over schedule, she read it with such love and patience. PDBC won't let you leave without listening to the book you brought to us!

Oliver and Olio's tale. She began reading the passage in which Oliver is leaving for the United States and Olio is heartbroken because it was his first love and first heartbreak. Hearing this Ruchi went outside for a few minutes. She did not want any spoilers since she was reading the same book.

So, Olio tried to talk to his father about his heartbreak only to know that his father knew about his relationship already.

"He came. He left. Nothing else had changed. I had not changed. The world had not changed. Yet nothing would be the same. All that remains is dream-making and strange remembrance."

Many readers had watched the movie but had not read the book. I strongly suggest reading the book.



...

Yatvi read **The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho**. She too was attending the edition for the first time. The Alchemist has been everyone's favorite at a given point of time. Yatvi, like a magician, pulled out a masterpiece of a passage from the book and boy! Were we shook. She read the part where the boy meets Fatima on his path to find the elixir of life.



"When he looked into her dark eyes, and saw that her lips were poised between a laugh and silence, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke -- the language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love. Something older than humanity, more ancient than the desert. Something that exerted the same force whenever two pairs of eyes met, as had theirs here at the well. She smiled, and that was certainly an omen -- the omen he had been awaiting, without even knowing he was, for all his life. The omen

he had sought to find with his sheep and in his books, in the crystals and in the silence of the desert."

Anjesh read from **Split by Chris Voss**. He advocated that the skills of negotiations are the only ones that are going to get you going. Many claimed to be non-negotiators which were swiftly proven to be the real negotiators in life. What we think we are and what we are...!!

Priya: 'If you have ever bought vegetables in a vegetable market, you are a negotiator.'

Rajesh read **V for Vendetta** by Alan Moore

He started with 'Main niyam nahi todunga.' (He denies but he actually comes to the club for the rules that we recite in the beginning of the edition.) He gave us a brief background of the story. He had brought a beautiful graphic novel version. Discussions swayed to **Guy Fawkes**, the last man to enter the parliament house with honest intentions. A stickler for rules, with "Mai passage pe aa raha hoon seedha baki toh cheezein chalti rehti hai filmon ki tarah" he started off with the iconic letter from the book.

"I shall die here. Every inch of me shall perish. Every inch but one.

An inch.

It is the very last inch of us.

And within that inch, we are free.

It is small and it is fragile, and it is the only thing in the world worth having.

We must never lose it or give it away. We must never let them take it from us.

I don't know who you are. Or whether you're a man or a woman. I may never see you or cry with you or get drunk with you.

But I love you.

I hope that you escape this place. I hope that the world turns and that things get better, and that one-day people have roses again. I wish I could kiss you.

With all my heart.

I love you."



- Excerpts from **Valerie's Letter**

When he was done reading, we were all silent, a moment for which time stopped. He broke it himself. More discussions about this almost cult-like book ensued before we moved on to the next reader.

...

Vin is his favorite character from the book. **Harshvardhan** is another green member of the book club. Vin likes solitude, he said, reading from **The Final Empire by Brandon Sanderson**.

"Ash fell from the sky", he started reading from the first page.

For a thousand years the ash fell and no flowers bloomed. For a thousand years the Skaa slaved in misery and lived in fear. For a thousand years the Lord Ruler, the "Sliver of Infinity," reigned with absolute power and ultimate terror, divinely invincible. Then, when hope was so long lost that not even its memory remained, a terribly scarred, heart-broken half-Skaa rediscovered it in the depths of the Lord Ruler's most hellish prison.

Kelsier "snapped" and found in himself the powers of a Mistborn. A brilliant thief and natural leader, he turned his talents to the ultimate caper, with the Lord Ruler himself as the mark.

For a while we were all lost in discussing fictional books. Six of crows, Lord of the rings, Hobbit etc. There is something about magical realism giving words and form to the unspeakable with no rules; is that what appeals to us?

...

Last book was read by **Shaurya, Justice by Michael Sandel.**

“Everyone is looking at it but no one wants to understand it.”

The book intended to ask some very brutal and crucial questions looming on the precipice of ethics, justice and the laws. It was a book which needed a deliberate slow sink in and simmer way of reading. Priya and Shaurya both agreed to this and it was decided that the book will be coming back and would be read with deliberation. Everyone will hear and everyone will understand.

Disha donated some really lovely books; **Poetry collection of Kalidas, Plays by Bernard Shaw and The Perfumer** and she very sweetly put up a condition that she will be the first one to issue them which was fair enough. Yogesh had brought an entire collection of books on Yoga and its various form to donate. He brought one of them to the retreat and we need to get him to read it from the book.

With silly smiles, happy hearts and an overflowing ‘to be read’ list we say adieu.

X-x-x