

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Year 2023

Edition 15

04/06/2023, 3:00 PM

इंतज़ार करते हैं आदमी

कोई पढ़े उनको!

लिखते हैं किताबें आदमी।

करती हैं किताबें इंतज़ार

पढ़े जाने का।

पुस्तक: अधूरी चीज़ें तमाम

रचनाकार: प्रयाग शुक्ल



These lines were going through my mind when I was looking at that lonely bookshelf, full of books which are waiting to be read by some more, to be understood some more, in that white light of that single room, filled with the fragrance of some new books, fingers etching, reeking of recently smoked cigarettes and fifteen people waiting to end the wait of some books. (I must tell the advocate among us that the word 'आदमी' is gender neutral in the above-mentioned poem. The word is used for mankind.)

In the beginning, Priya and Nirali, egged on by Chirag created Pocket Diary Book Club. It was beautiful and nice and free spirits roamed along the walls of the room that housed this creation. The gods were happy, the trees were happy, the pages of books fluttered and butterflies made of words flew from the pages of books and surrounded the creators of this new world. And then Priya said –



'Let there be rules' and there were rules.

So, the session began with the reiteration of rules which almost sound like a prayer after attending 15 editions of PDBC¹.

¹ shortform

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mr54nqD1URA> (please play this music while reading this journey)

The first reader is **Prince**. He has brought the book “**Paddington Goes to Town**” by **Michael Bond**.

After introductions of the talking bear, he starts reading from the first story in the book which is “**A Day to Remember**” where Paddington acts as an usher at a friend's wedding. After a lot of names and witty conversation that took place in the chapter, Prince gave it a rest. Since we were confused what an Usher is, we called light and **Ankit** threw it on the meaning of the word Usher and it came to be known that the word usher means a person who shows people to their seats in a theatre, church, etc.

This was the moment when I visualize a bear showing me seats in a theater and me asking the bear ‘*Could u paws the movie till I find my seat?*’

Manisha ji told us about “PB Bear” which was lost to Rajesh (me) and there was this line ‘Ohh there is something **you** don’t know!’²

I later found out that PB bear is also a character of a children’s book written by **Lee Davis** just like **Winnie-the-Pooh**. It makes me wonder about *the fascination of British writers with bears*. There was an armored bear in the series “**His Dark Materials**” by Philip Pullman by the name “**Lorek Byrnison**” who is a warrior bear, then there is Baloo (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BH-Rxd-NBo>)

After thinking that we can call bears in Ahmedabad ‘solar bears’, a sunny joke, we moved on to the next writer.

Asad brought “**The Rivals**” by **Richard Brinsley Sheridan**. It’s a play described as a comedy of manners. He briefed us about the characters and read the part where Sir Anthony arrives to visit Mrs. Malaprop, and together they chide Lydia for her interest in Beverley. Sir Anthony blames such disobedience in a girl on reading. *He argues that girls should be illiterate*, while Mrs. Malaprop makes a garbled case for the areas of study appropriate for young ladies, attempting to use sophisticated language and instead sounding ridiculous.

² I am a know-it-all.

The origin of the word **malapropism** is discussed as the word is named after Mrs. Malaprop. A **malapropism** (also called a **malaprop**, **acyrologia**, or **Dogberryism**) is the mistaken use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound, resulting in a nonsensical, sometimes humorous utterance.

A look at Mrs. Malaprop's humble-jumble English include: "*illiterate* him quite from your memory" (instead of "*obliterate*"), "he is the very *pineapple* of politeness" (instead of *pinnacle*) and "she's as headstrong as an *allegory* on the banks of the Nile" (instead of *alligator*)

I tried my best, as the moderator, to promote the cause of creating a library and requested readers to read and donate for all to enjoy the book. I feel like an accomplice.³

We moved on to **Smit** who brought us "**Across the Universe: The Beatles in India**" written by **Ajoy Bose**.

The book details the journey of Beatles to Rishikesh to their meditation teacher Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. While he was reading, the famous song "Within me without you" was playing and the whole room teleported to the banks of river Ganga in Rishikesh where we sat, listening to a story that must be told like a tradition.

I commented, India i.e., **भारत आये बिना किसी को ज्ञान प्राप्त नहीं होता।** and all bobbed their heads in covert agreement.

Mitesh brought **मारे गये गुलफाम**⁴ urf **तीसरी कसम** by **फणीश्वर नाथ 'रेणु'**

The story takes us on a bullock cart, driven by Hiranman and his oaths:

1. Never to carry bamboo in his bullock cart.
2. Never to carry chorbazari maal.

Enters a girl, Heerabai.

³ Duty

⁴ <https://www.hindisamay.com/kahani/fanishwar-nath-renu/mare-gave-gulfam.htm>

Mitesh asked us to imagine the movie, Highway, modify it to the roads of a rural village in 60s.

“... ‘भैया, तुम्हारा नाम क्या है?’

हू-ब-हू फेनूगिलास!

हिरामन के रोम-रोम बज उठे। मुँह से बोली नहीं निकली।

उसके दोनों बैल भी कान खड़े करके इस बोली को परखते हैं।

‘मेरा नाम! ... नाम मेरा है हिरामन!’

उसकी सवारी मुस्कराती है। मुस्कराहट में खुशबू है।

‘तब तो मीता कहूंगी, भैया नहीं। मेरा नाम भी हीरा है।’

‘इस्स!’ हिरामन को परतीत नहीं, ‘मर्द और औरत के नाम में फर्क होता है।’

‘हाँ जी, मेरा नाम भी हीराबाई है।’

‘कहाँ हिरामन और कहाँ हीराबाई, बहुत फर्क है!’ ...”

From Rishikesh in February 1968 to a Bihari village in the same era, we travelled India in one afternoon, ending on Raj Kapoor’s [सजन रे झूट मत बोलो, खुदा के पास जाना है ना हाथी हैं, ना घोडा हैं, वहाँ पैदल ही जाना है](#)... we traveled to the next world, the next reader.

The next reader is **Hitesh** who is not yet a reader. He is here to explore the discussions of book lovers and see if he enjoys reading by experimentation. I was the scientist who provided him a selected book, I and the audience were also his test subjects, with him on quest to read “**बार्ते बेमतलब**” by अनुज खरे।

“... घणी खूबसूरत लड़की की फोटो देखते ही खटाक से उसे फ्रेंड रिक्वेस्ट भेज दी जाती है।

आँखों के शटर खोले उसके जवाब के इंतज़ार में बैठ जाते हैं।

बीच में 40 बार चेक किया जाता है।

इसी बीच लड़की की फ्रेंड लिस्ट में 40 लड़के जुड़ चुके होते हैं।

बस, वह एक अदद हमें लाइक नहीं कर रही होती है। ...”

‘काफी बेमतलब की बातें करते हैं आप’, anonymous commented from somewhere.

The chapter was “लेटेस्ट राष्ट्रीय समस्या”

I was surprised, I thought it must be about the ever-increasing population or the consequent poverty, the evergreen, will not go out of fashion national samsya’s but Anuj rejected our theories. He wrote about his dear youthful citizens living⁵ their life on social media. Hitesh was confident in his declaration of being comfortable with Hindi. His narration gave him away. That might be another राष्ट्रीय समस्या, reading silently vs reading aloud.

कोच नंबर एस-10। बर्थ नंबर-35। भोपाल से दिल्ली।

“... सीट के नीचे बैग घुसेड़कर बालों पर हाथ मार ही रहा था अपना हीरो की नज़र सामने चली गयी। एक खूबसूरत लड़की बैठी थी। उमर कोई 25-26 साल के बीच। जींस-टी शर्ट। एक हाथ में चौड़ा सा बैंड। दूसरे में रुद्राक्ष के मनकों की माला लपेटे थी। सीट की पीठ से टिकी बैठी थी। गोद में कामू! मतलब अल्बेयर कामू का द स्ट्रेंजर धरे। वर्ल्ड फेमस लेखक। वर्ल्ड फेमस नाँवेल। ऊपर की बर्थों पर दो बुड़्डे। औंधे लेटे हुए। रास्ता साफ़। कोई डिस्टर्बेंस नहीं। जन्म-जन्मांतर के सपने कुलांचे भरने लगे। एक पल में कई फ़िल्मी सीन आंखों के सामने चलने लगे। ...”

Imagine a guy and a girl in a train, sitting opposite each other. Haven’t we all lived it?

There was background music playing in my head, his, his head.

Reader: **Bhavesh**, brother of Hitesh, the two wandering brothers...

⁵ wasting

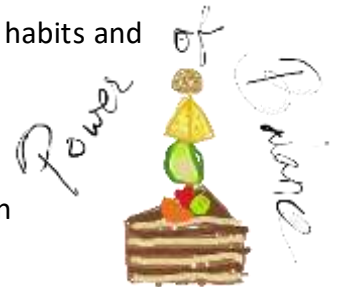
On being asked whether they enjoyed this reading, both H&B gave thumbs in upper direction. We will ask the same question at the end of the session.

Bhavin read from “**Glucose Revolution: The Life-Changing Power of Balancing Your Blood Sugar**” by **Jessie Inchauspe**. The conversation quickly turned to diets, fruits, sugar, fructose, glucose and I was reminded again of the beauty of a book. The comparison of mitochondria with a stoker (stoker is a guy who throws coal in steam engine ...please remember Sholay... yep that guy... not Veeru, the guy with the bottle... suddenly thinking why is he drinking when his train is being robbed? ... or maybe just that is why...)



Bhavin made a strong argument regarding following a good food pattern and habits and we all agreed.

After each of us had dwelled and perhaps worried of the state of our health, many made a mental note of resolving to take good care of diet. We moved on to the next reader.



Dhairya brought “**BioShock: Rapture** by **John Shirley**”, a prequel to the first BioShock game, the novel tells the story of how Andrew Ryan found the underwater city of Rapture.

He gave us a brief that **Rapture** is a fictional underwater city build by business tycoon Andrew Ryan in the mid-1940s as a means to create a utopia for mankind's greatest artists and thinkers to prosper in a laissez-faire environment outside of increasing oppression by the world's governments and religion. He started by reading the foundational quote of Rapture which is –

“... ‘I am Andrew Ryan, and I'm here to ask you a question.

Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow?’

'No!' says the man in Washington, 'It belongs to the poor.'

'No!' says the man in the Vatican, 'It belongs to God.'

'No!' says the man in Moscow, 'It belongs to everyone.'

I rejected those answers; instead, I chose something different. I chose the impossible.

I chose... Rapture, a city where the artist would not fear the censor, where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality, where the great would not be constrained by the small! And with the sweat of your brow, Rapture can become your city as well ...”

— **Andrew Ryan**”

While listening to him reading the passage, it felt like Dhairya had a deep desire to create a Rapture of his own.

‘Should I read this passage? It is gory in nature.’

‘We love details’ we confirmed our interest with our wicked smiles and the day went on.

...

Navsheen brought **The Forty Rules of Love** by **Elif Shafak** which has appeared often enough for all of us to know them by heart, the rules, courtesy: Ankit.

Navsheen read with such profound emotional intensity that her voice was shaking, looking directly in her eyes, Priya thought she is nervous and became concerned for her and she said ‘aaram se’ ... Rajesh (I) interrupted her, ‘this is the right way of reading.’ To which Navsheen later clarified that she was feeling the heat of the day and not the nerves. **Her passion was so... real. Look at the words:**

“... So don’t judge the way other people connect to God. To each his own way and his own prayer. God does not take us at our word but looks deep into our hearts. It is not the ceremonies or rituals that make a difference, but whether our hearts are sufficiently pure or not ...”

...

Ankit brought **Tuesdays with Morrie** by **Mitch Albom**.

Tuesdays with Morrie, is a memoir by Mitch Albom about a series of visits Albom made to his former sociology professor, Morrie Schwartz, as Schwartz was dying from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

After being diagnosed with ALS, Morrie's final days are spent giving his former student Mitch his final lesson of life. The memoir is divided into 14 different "days" that Mitch Albom spent with his professor Morrie. Throughout these days, Mitch and Morrie discuss various topics important to life and living. The memoir also recounts Mitch's memories of Morrie as a professor.

However, it was fear of aging that mesmerized Ankit and that's what he read... no doubt one of the best things I have heard him reading.

"... As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed as ignorant as you were at twenty-two, you'd always be twenty-two. Aging is not just decay, you know. It's growth. It's more than the negative that you're going to die, it's the positive that you understand you're going to die, and that you live a better life because of it ..."

— **Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie**

To my surprise I was transported to when I was twenty-two and how ignorant I was... well not that ignorant may be because I loved books. But still, quite ignorant.

I kept telling everyone 'You are still 22' and Nirali went "awe..." Priya was pleasantly surprised with Ankit's selection of passage and equally beautiful elocution.

Finding answers is less important than finding meaning. *Aur hamesha ki tarah*, I was reminded of a dialogue from a movie, this time, it was voiced by the great Maximus in the movie **Gladiator**

"Death smiles at us all. All a man can do is smile back."

...

And what better way to take the edition forward, to the man who did smile back at death... many times in his lifetime.

Manisha brought "**Bipin: The Man Behind the Uniform**" by **Rachna Bisht Rawat**.

The book details the life of General Bipin Rawat.

Manisha read from the chapter where we see the general after another chopper crash which happened back in 2015. She also read us how he still flew to do his duty 2 hours after surviving the plane crash. The man instead of taking it easy on himself, just after surviving a helicopter



crash, chose to enquire about his officers first, then changed in his uniform and went on for the event all because people were waiting for him and they had prepared for his arrival.

The same man who once said *"We know that in conflict, there is only outcome, that is a victory. Jung ka ek hi usool hai, woh hai jeet. May I assure you that we shall accomplish the same at all costs."*

Respect for the man behind the uniform and the man in the uniform.

...

I have pageflutters⁶!

Next up, we had **Robert Browning's Porphyria's Lover** read by **Gautam**.

While he was reading, I recalled my days of learning about this piece of poetic literature.

I had the opportunity to study under a teacher who informed me of how Euthanasia plays a part, not widely known. My co-moderator, Nirali and I had had a wonderful discussion before the edition, while collecting and discussing the books selected by our readers prior to the edition.

The poem is **written in the heartbeat rhythm**, has been edited multiple times, words changed to suit the poet's changing thought process, how he wishes the man and the woman to be perceived.

I wish I could quote this article here, word for word, not because I agree or disagree but because it is so well written, here:

[https://www.academia.edu/12350460/Euthanasia the Recurring theme in Porphyrias Lover](https://www.academia.edu/12350460/Euthanasia_the_Recurring_theme_in_Porphyras_Lover)

Is he a psychopath? Is he a true lover? Is he giving her mercy death? Has Porphyria accepted death as she came to him? Is he keeping her with him forever seeing that she is ill, in a delusional form of possessiveness? Or he is lying on her shoulder, in pain, listening to a

⁶ A whimsical term for the feeling of excitement when turning a page and discovering something unexpected or delightful.

heartbeat no longer there? Is this a simple case of non-layered sexual violence? Your perception, you decide:

These are just a few examples of big questions that we are left wondering. But it is very likely that the answers to some of these large questions can be found through a close examination of just four little pages and fading ink.

<https://blogs.baylor.edu/19crs/2019/07/19/four-little-pages-and-fading-ink-robert-brownings-1863-fair-copy-manuscript-of-porphyrias-lover/>

It is certainly a piece to disturb us in our comfort zones.

Priya's notes: Seeing Prince enthusiastically discuss the Victorian era, the system in place, I realized that our information is becoming heavily influenced not by books on history⁷ but by the fictional series and movies, the cinema we see and absorb not as entertainment but as truth. The disclaimer in the beginning, matters little. I saw how colonizing a culture in its past affects the present.

A powerful work of art always inspires more.

<https://blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2017/08/how-did-stephen-king-to-the-dark-tower-come-through-robert-brownings-childe-roland/>

Robert Browning's poem is the basis of one of Rajesh's (my) favorite books, "**The Dark Tower**" by **Stephen King**. Browning's 34-stanza narrative poem takes its title from part of a song by **Edgar** in **Shakespeare's King Lear (Act III, Scene 4)**. In the poem, the narrator, presumably Childe Roland himself (a "childe" is an untested knight), approaches the end of a years-long quest in search of the Dark Tower. Traversing a grotesque, nightmarish landscape, and remembering knights who had gone before him and failed in their quest,

Rajesh⁸ also recited the last line of the poem, wherein the narrator finally arrives at the "round, squat turret" that is the Dark Tower and blows his horn, encountering the dead bodies of all the knights before him, bringing the poem to a close on an ambiguous note:

⁷ They may never give the truth but a clearer picture can be formed with different perceptions and anecdotes of a time period.

⁸ |

*"... There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.'"*

— Robert Browning, Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came

The mesmerizing thing is that something written in 1836 almost 200 years old is being discussed in a place to which it has no relevance other than love of words.

Surprisingly even Hitesh and Bhavesh loved the discussion. Maybe it is their passion to listen to debates. I hope they taste the blood and be part of one in their next edition.

After this heavy death and decay and interpretation war we moved on to Priya who read from her new obsession **"Teen Roz Ishq"**. Both she and her book soulmate, Nirali with a childlike excitement **told everyone how they cried when they read the book**, how they connected with certain characters, as if it was them in the story and they were reading their own pain...

Priya randomly opened the pages, her fingers stopped to read **"स्मोकिंग । इश्क"**

"... ब्लैक सी... सियाह सागर... लिक्विड आंखें थी उसकी, गहरी सियाह।... उन आंखों को देख कर उसका ब्लैक इंक से लिखने को जी चाहता। ..."

Priya read with a passion... this book touched her somewhere... it was almost like she became small and went inside the book, walked on the pages and treaded the words with her feet. When she was done, there was a silence.

"... गहरे जख्म थे, खुले हुए ..."

Next came the warrior, reader. I had brought today, **"खुशियों के गुप्तचर"** by Geet Chaturvedi.

I chose "सबसे प्रसिद्ध प्रश्न 'मैं क्या हूँ' के कुछ निजी उत्तर"-

“... रोटी बेलकर उसने तवे पर बिछाई
 और जिस समय उसे पलट देना था रोटी को
 ठीक उसी समय एक लड़की का फ़ोन आ गया
 वह देर तक भूले रहा रोटी पलटना
 मैं वही रोटी हूँ
 एक तरफ़ से कच्ची, दूसरी तरफ़ से जली हुई। ...”

My timer was quite so I read another, “हृदय एक खोया हुआ महाद्वीप है”

...

Today, Nirali too joined Priya and Pooja. Although she had brought a bag full of books, she read from **Teen Roz Ishq: gum hoti kahaniyaan**

Her voice reached our hearts from “आत्मदाह के दिन”

और इतना सब करते हुए भी जानना कि इश्क़ पर तुम्हारे आत्मदाह का कोई असर न होगा। वो चिरकाल तक इतना ही क्रूर रहेगा कि उसकी हुकूमत में किसी को इन्किलाबी झंडा उठाने का हक नहीं है। वो जब चाहे किसी को भी देश निकाला दे सकता है और उस देश से कहीं दूर बाहर जाने के बावजूद तुम्हारे खून के हर कतरे पर उसकी हुकूमत रहेगी। वो जब चाहेगा तुम्हें खून के आंसू रुलाएगा। जिस्म के पहरेदार में कुछ भी मौजूद न होगा। तुम खाली हो जाओगे। अंदर से रीत जाओगे।
 तब उस एक आत्मदाह से लोगों को आत्मबल मिलेगा और वो काला झंडा लिए निकल पड़ेंगे..
 जलना क्या...जीना क्या...मिटना क्या...इश्क़ क्या..

इन्कलाब! इन्कलाब! इन्कलाब!



With this इन्कलाब, we reached the end of Pocket Diary Book Club Edition 15 and went for tea post the session.

P.S. Nirali & Priya were not done, neither was I. We were left wanting more, so Nirali read March, Priya read Bachpan Ki Kahani and I played the guitar as they voiced the stories of birds...

