

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

'Phase II began with Edition 11, a lot of new readers, we were excited! But, with new members, there were new roles created, places that old members who became a part of the team, are now filling in.

Congratulations Raxil, Sandeep! It is rules, books, tea and some more books.'

- Nirali & Priya

Year 2023

Edition – 12

06/05/2023

4:55 PM

I watched the readers settle in, unknown faces, some shy, some excited, looking for an opening to form friendship, exchange their notes on the book they are reading, or simply, like every reader on planet Earth, looking to discover hidden paper bound gems.

My co-moderator Sandeep is a synonym of the word theatre. He once did not remember going home for a week in his college days, his father had to bring him clothes and tell him, 'Eat food.'

Expect that man to come through, recalling his teacher in his distant memories and more, because he met his student, who he had taught, sitting here today as a reader, carrying a book with him, I peeked at the cover, it said '**Theatre Kala Sanskar Yatra**'.

One of our rituals here is that we begin on time. The clock completed its hourly round to 5, and I began giving formal instructions, our second ritual.

The onus of formal instruction was one of my many duties as a moderator today, to discharge. I was nervous.

Rajesh calls them, '**the 40 rules of Priya**', I'll share a few:

- ✓ Phone on silent.
- ✓ Listening to the reader.
- ✓ Agree to disagree.
- ✓ Deliberately Offensive, Propaganda, hurting religious or political sentiments, disrespectful to women (any gender rather) books to be kept away, hidden in the bag, and let the lesser-known authors be brought in, like **Ishq Tilism**, by Pooja Upadhyay.

and 36 more!

Sorely missed today: old readers.

Welcoming and excited: new members.

The first reader, **Abhishek** (he is semi-new), read **The Bet by Anton Chekhov**. Written in 1889, a short story by Anton Chekhov about a banker and a young lawyer who make a bet with each other following a conversation about whether the death penalty is better or worse than life in prison.

Abhishek: 'If I was in his position, I would have taken the bet.'

Priya: 'depends on the prison you get.'

"...The majority of the guests, among whom were many journalists and intellectual men, disapproved of the death penalty..."

All the intellectuals discussing which is better. None of them is a victim.

Raped, burned by acid, or watched his child thrown down a building while he is held captive.

In India, all of these crimes, on their own, do not constitute for death penalty. They are so common we see them on T.V. crime/thriller shows. It must be something really shocking, it must be a 'rarest of the rare case', it should shake up the entire nation's conscience to be deserving of death penalty. I wonder, what more can surprise us?

"... 'I bet you two million you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years.'

'If you mean it seriously,' replied the lawyer, 'then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen.'

'Agreed. You stake two million, my freedom,' said the lawyer. He is allowed books, food, wine and music, but no human interaction.' ..."

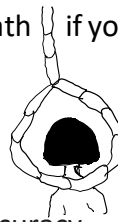


In a regular average Joe prison, in solitary confinement, is wine, heck even music, 'legally' allowed? Having alcohol for support vs nothing for mental survival?

https://blog.ipleaders.in/landmark-cases-on-death-penalty-in-india/#Background_of_death_sentence

After **Vinay Singh v. Union of India**, where a rod was inserted in a vagina, multiple such cases came on TV channels, an increase in frequency, a trend, but the shock was over, how many were awarded death penalty?

An **aggravating circumstance** (why death penalty should be awarded) is planned murder of a public servant. Article 14 (gist) is life of all human beings hold equal importance. But a public servant is given higher protection, there is a fear of death if you plan to murder a public servant. So plan accordingly.



Now I do not vouch for this article's accuracy, I just found it interesting: <https://aeon.co/essays/this-is-what-solitary-confinement-does-to-the-brain> (Shaurya will (shall) like this).

This story is a flowing river of clever words and writer's unique thinking. But romanticizing fiction, reading any story/book and taking it at its literal word, without adding questions of reflection and assuming that the bet winner is a hero, consider variables:

What is the tax burden system of the country? Imposing solitary cost philosophy on a hardworking tax payer? Victimology? Having a small bed near toilet in whatever condition? No windows, filth (no maid, sorry)? Books not available on beck and call? Mental & Physical constitution of the prisoner?

My friend, if you take that bet, do let me know.

"...For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men, but in your books I have drunk fragrant wine, I have sung songs, I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests, have loved women ... Beauties as ethereal as clouds, created by the magic of your poets and geniuses, have visited me at night, and have whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl. In your books I have climbed to the peaks of Elburz and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood the sky, the ocean, and the mountain-tops with gold and crimson..."

"...And I despise your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory, and deceptive, like a mirage. You may be proud, wise, and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor, and your posterity, your history, your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe..."

...

Anton Chekov wrote *The Bet*. Then, Nimesh, the student reads from **Theatre Kala Sanskar Yatra** as Sandeep, the teacher, listens. I searched for this book on internet but its absence frustrated me, it is not available and google does not know what this book is. It is a book on theatre in Gujarati talking about Anton, Stanislavski.

After he finished reading:

‘Literature and Theatre go hand in hand. The plant of theatre has literature as oxygen, reading is the act of photosynthesis’ said Sandeep.



In this photograph Anton Chekhov (seated, center) is reading **The Seagull** to the original members of the **Moscow Art Theatre Group**. Seated to the left of Chekhov is Konstantin Stanislavski, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre Group and director of *The Seagull*.¹

Titbits on Theatre: Sandeep treated us to anecdotes of Chekhov and Stanislavski, the contemporaries. ‘Later Chekhov concluded that Stanislavsky’s method unnecessary. And in his later life Stanislavski also abandoned his methods. These methods were emotional memory methods still being used by actors.’

¹ <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/photograph-of-chekhov-stanislavski-and-the-moscow-art-theatre-group-1900#:~:text=Seated%20to%20the%20left%20of,1901%20she%20became%20Chekov's%20wife.>

Summary of the book: This book recounts the events in the life of an Indian artist who was touring Russia at the time and attended numerous plays and performances by legendary actors of the era.



A man called Ove by Fredrik Backman



Everyone has met a man like Ove, called him abusive words (in their hearts (maybe)). This story takes you in Ove's life. Who is he? Why is he the way he is? Will someday, we be Ove? If nothing, this book is humbling for me, for people of my age or confident in the immortality of youth and its energetic view of the world.

We came to know of **A man called Ove** by a new reader. He will bring Champak in his next edition. Can't wait for the days to go by before the next edition!

From the book: *"Even men at train station ticket desks have been in love."*

<https://offtheshelf.com/2016/11/13-books-to-read-after-a-man-called-ove/>

From this link, Nirali & Priya's personal recommendation: **The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry**. Priya wishes to be him, a reluctant loner running his bookstore on an island housed in a purple Victorian cottage, hating everyone and anyone who talks to him, until he finds a child and doesn't know how, but is running a few book clubs in his store, one run by the local sheriff for the policemen and women reading crime and detective novels.

"... 'Now you listen to me,' says Ove calmly while he carefully closes the door. 'You've given birth to two children and quite soon will be squeezing out a third. You've come here from a land far away and most likely you fled war and persecution and all sorts of other nonsense. You've learned a new language and got yourself an education and you're holding together a family of obvious incompetents. And I'll be damned if I've seen you afraid of a single bloody thing in this world before now.... I am not asking for brain surgery. I'm asking you to drive a car. It's got an accelerator, a brake and a clutch. Some of the greatest twits in world history have sorted out how it works. And you will as well.' And then he utters seven words, which Parvaneh will always remember as the loveliest compliment he'll ever give her. 'Because you are not a complete twit.' ..."

The reader had expected a different ending. He had read the book before Covid.²

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² It's weird how we refer to a period of our life like a landmark, before Hitler, before Christ, before World War I, before Independence, before memory...

Nirali is sitting as a reader, her shoulders free of the burden, carry a smiling face and her excited, eager eyes twinkle with expectation and a buzzing, happy bee energy.

As a moderator, another duty is to jot down notes, for the readers who read minutes of the meeting. I am writing from memory and feeling. And what I recall may be fact, or a trick of my mind on me. Forgive, entertain my thoughts and read on, dear, gentle reader³.

“What would you do if a few rats entered this room?”

Alisha read I am the mind book by Deep Trivedi.

I read Goodreads on every self-help book I come across that is not a research paper. I hope there is a similar website for papers as well, a one umbrella for all, out there. Need that info.

Some said I will leave the room. Others predicted that I would shoo the rats out of the room. Sandeep laughed. I was preoccupied with checking the reader's list and managing the timer to ring the bell. Nirali and Priya were sitting in corners, holding forte in their conversations. They were also excited, to be readers where they used to be on duty, to sit and just read.

I announced the fourth reader, **Navshin Kapadia**. She read **Kite runner by Khalid Hosseini**.

“There is only one sin. and that is theft... when you tell a lie, you steal someone’s right to the truth.”

Life seems to dance along like the brilliant kites the boys flew in his hometown of Kabul before the Soviet invasion, before the Taliban, and before the boy at the heart of the story loses his homeland, much like Khaled Hosseini had himself.

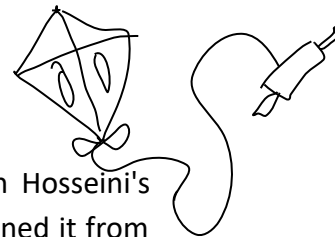
<https://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=3986138&page=1>

From the article above about the film made on the novel: “Those who reside in Hosseini's hometown will not be able to see the film. The government of Afghanistan has banned it from theaters and will not allow the DVD to be sold.”

Summary: “1970s Afghanistan: Twelve-year-old Amir is desperate to win the local kite-fighting tournament and his loyal friend Hassan promises to help him. But neither of the boys can foresee what would happen to Hassan that afternoon...”

When I found these lines on Goodreads, I scrolled down and wow, what names appeared. It said,

³ I am no Lady Whistledown.





"Readers also enjoyed: The Help, To Kill a Mockingbird, Life of Pi, The Book Thief..."

Tolerating injustice is a crime.⁴

Let us go to Russia and join the animals declare: "All animals are equal."⁵

Isn't man a social animal? Shouldn't other animals be equal to a man? Why does the word man include a woman? Aren't they separate varieties of the same specie? stopping my rambling pen, I (imagined) got up, entered the gates of **The Animal Farm** and helped restore (not avenge, I am not an avenger) Article 14.

"...Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.

November 1943-February 1944

The End."

Credit: **Disha**

She reminded us, like a pledge we must heart and remember, the seven commandments. This book is a regular visitor. Titbits⁶

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Shashwat read **Theek Tumhare Peechhe** by **Manav Kaul**. It was his first time in Pocket Diary Book Club and he told us he had never read a Hindi book before. He used to read only Gujarati books, books of Chandrakant Bakshi and Kanaiya M. Munshi, etc.

(Chirag's goal: to promote inclusivity and other languages. Found this audiobook of **Paralysis** by Chandrakant Bakshi:

⁴ Priya's diary.

⁵ The 14 commandments.

⁶ Nirali: G. Orwell was born in India. A new member asked Priya what he should read instead of mass commercialized self-help books. And someone suggested 1984 by George Orwell.



<https://www.storytel.com/in/en/books/paralysis-1347569?appRedirect=true>)

This was the first time he read in front of others and that too in Hindi. Nirali said he should definitely bring classic Gujarati literature provided he bring a translation along with it. Another rule: bring all languages but with a Hindi or English translation of what you are reading so as to enable listeners to enjoy the story.

As we sat listening to Shashwat, we missed Rajesh, the reader who introduced us to **Tumhare Baare Mein**.

...

How to be miserable by Randy J. Paterson was read by **Pruthvi**. And the chapter's title is "Avoid the exercise".

The author outlines 40 specific behaviors and habits, which—if followed—are sure to lead to a lifetime of unhappiness. On the other hand, if you do the opposite, you may yet join the ranks of happy people everywhere! Well, not everywhere, in Finland perhaps.

The chapter's lesson, Avoid the Exercise, was to move as little as possible.



What is the takeaway of the book? The group queried. Priya summarized it as focusing on your health, save money, and make better use of your time. The reader affirmed. We all came to the conclusion that since we, the present members, were of an age, where having experienced a fair share of the struggles of adulthood and living in the 5g internet era, we know what is good and bad for ourselves, self-help books simply explain alternative approaches or attempt to persuade us to act in a certain way.

Hmm..., If only our mothers knew what we were reading instead of listening to them.

A thread I found woven in this edition by many readers: What to read?

<https://www.mensxp.com/culture/arts/36811-15-lesser-known-yet-incredible-indian-authors-you-should-read-instead-of-chetan-bhagat-durjoy-dutta.html>

From Aatish Taseer to Suketu Mehta, I hope to read Monisha Rajesh (**Around India in 80 Trains**) and Arnab Ray sometime. His website looks like an old news gazette, paper decaying and yellow, ish... <https://greatbong.net/>

Rajarshi read from **The Immortals of Meluha**. He was a new reader. Nirali informed us that this book contains sections containing the stories of Mandar Parvat, Somras, and several other things that, if read by someone who does not believe it, might be able to believe due to the elements getting a scientific origin in the book.

Hitesh chose a book to read from **the Pocket Diary Book Club Library**.

It was created to make a collection of books not seen on the front shelves of a commercial bookstore, to create a quality pool for the members to from and I maintain that diary. You know where to find me!

Credit to the reader for opening himself up to new experiences, willing to try recommendations, and being honest about not enjoying what he read and asked, 'are you bored too?' He sportingly chose another two books to choose from and his choice was **Courts and their Judgments by Arun Shourie**.⁷

At 3:09 am, I am reading **Chapter 17: A premise we cannot afford**

1. Imagine a father with two sons. He is a lawyer. Son X defrauds Son Y. Should father/lawyer take fraud son as a client against the innocent son?
General Public: No, be a father. Mediate the dispute.
2. If they are not his sons but people he has known for a long time, X & Y. Should he take up X's case now because X sent him retainer⁸ first?
General Public: Defend the victim.
Lawyers: Keep out of it/Whoever approaches me first.
3. All parties are stranger to each other. From the facts, the lawyer knows that his to be client has committed fraud. Should he take up the case?
General Public: Fraud is universal, we would not examine it under ethics.
Lawyer: If he sent the retainer first, nothing unnatural in doing so.

⁷ <https://archive.org/details/courtstheirjudgm0000shou/page/n7/mode/2up>

⁸ Confirmation money

In Abstract: Lawyer's job is to present the best arguments. The judge judges. From here, truth will emerge.

In Practice: We have used a "simple" theory in complex reality to let our selfishness rule.

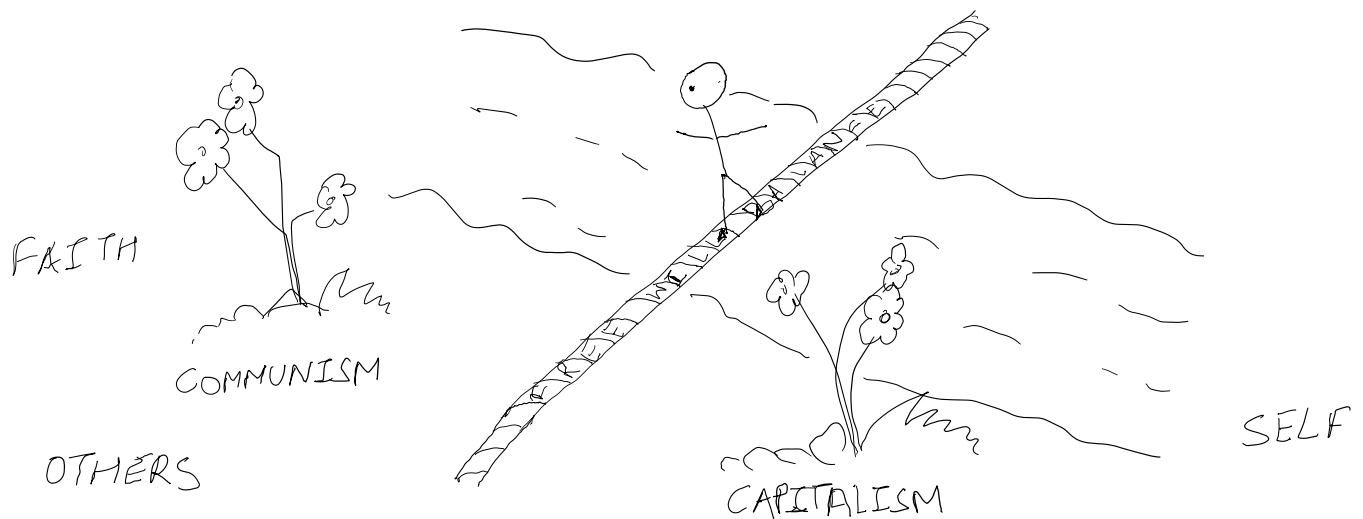
Every non-law student/citizen of India asking, which lawyer should I hire? No, this book does not answer that. But it gives an insight, how a lawyer thinks, how a judge thinks, and what is going on?

I shall have to ask Hitesh to read some more for us.

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Anjesh is a committed man. I mean, he is a man of commitment. He came late, exhausted, out of breath but when I RSVP to a party,

The last reader **Bharat** read **The Virtue of Selfishness by Ayn Rand**.



Overview by Nirali: Since selfishness (as she understands it) is serious, rational, principled concern with one's own well-being, it turns out to be a prerequisite for the attainment of the ultimate moral value. The work has no references and citations apart from the Galt's Speech, which is a non-reference, language at first may seem poetic but does not serve the purpose of clarifying the theory hence can very well be deemed as flowery. Terms have been served without explanation, for a novice this book may be misleading.

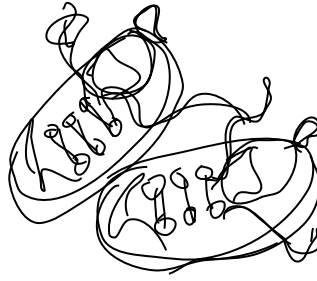
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In weddings or temples, shoes can go missing...

A few readers were browsing books from the newly added collection in the mini library, 4 readers issued books. Anjesh was looking under the water table, behind the shoe rack, he came inside and asked, 'किसी ने मेरे जूते देखे क्या? शायद मेरे जूते चोरी हो गये।

Comments and laughter in footnotes section.⁹

We gave Anjesh, club's bathroom slippers.



⁹ नेग तैयार रखो। ये मंदिर है? मेरा जूता है जापानी...