

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

YEAR 2022

18/12/2022 3:56 PM

“What do you expect from Pocket Diary Book Club?”

I'm an introvert and I've never been to any social thing since school by my own so this is kinda my first step to calm down my social anxiety and to get to know amazing people around me. From the club i would expect a good, calm environment and some amazing books.”

- **Monica** was reading from her phone.

I was just happy that she came, credit: Nirali.

From the inception of this book club, a lot of girls have filled up forms, and with beautiful answers but they backtrack from actually attending the gathering.

When I first came to Ahmedabad, I was an excited 17 point something, all set for wonderful things to happen to me. Then I became what I really was, an introvert. And my parents would worry about any new thing I attended alone. “Who are you going with?” ... “10 pm return is too late for a classmate’s birthday party supervised by her parents” ... Never discussing boys, or any topic that a teen is seen discussing in English cinema with her parents.

From just an introvert, I began growing up a recluse. The fear of bad experiences kept me from really doing things that may have made me happy.

This book club reminded me of those days. I wish someone had just pulled me out and put me in a book club or a safe space where people met and were just nice to each other, having some form of popular art (books, movies) to talk about.

I am feeling nervous, sitting 1 seat away from her. She should have a good experience. We are her first!

So, I ordered tea. It always breaks the ice, while people are still coming and a new round of hello, small talk and silence ensues every few minutes.

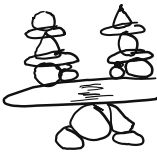
...

Reader: Ankit (The Fountainhead) & **Jay** (Atlas Shrugged)

In a group of 15 people, we had a few writers who are famous, loved and hated. **Ayn Rand** is one of them, she had love and support from her readers here.

One of the answers in registration form question, “What do you expect from Pocket Diary Book Club?” said: “I expect the club to hold high regards for scientific temper and the club promotes scientific temper as a skill.”

Doing what this response justly expects, I wrote on google, Ayn Rand critique. Found a few interesting links:



- <https://popula.com/2019/10/11/the-failures-of-ayn-rand/>
 (“...Stalin was probably about the greatest **Objectivist** who ever lived...”)
- I also found out a comic conspiracy theory (maybe, I am not a fact checker):
<https://www.salon.com/2016/12/14/fountainhead-of-bad-ideas-ayn-rands-fanboys-take-the-reins-of-power/>
- A complicated, layered article which I am still reading but adding here after not wanting to: <https://www.rotman.uwo.ca/the-system-that-wasnt-there-ayn-rands-failed-philosophy-and-why-it-matters/>

It reminded me of **Mary Curie** story from childhood, (chose not to patent radium or any of its medical applications) and **Byju’s** threatening the parents, **Facebook’s** trespass on privacy, and **MyGate** lying about not tracking and refusing to delete visitor data...

- Another [piece](#) contained some good real-life anecdotes by **Denis Cummins**.

We who feel that creativity must be kept alive, agree with her here – “... **productive achievement as his noblest activity...**” because this is what keeps the feeling of individuality alive.

I choose individual freedom and fundamental rights but with reasonable restrictions. My happiness cannot allow me to murder, unless I am a fiction writer.

Also, English was her second language, probably the suitable reason behind her writing style. It is important to understand the time period and the political economic climate in which her first book was written.

She was angry and afraid that the US would walk on the path of communism, and would be left in tatters of blood and destruction like Russia, her home country, as she had witnessed.

Found a book My Years with Ayn Rand:

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1979.My_Years_with_Ayn_Rand by Nathaniel Branden ("Atlas Shrugged" was dedicated to Branden and he became her intellectual heir).

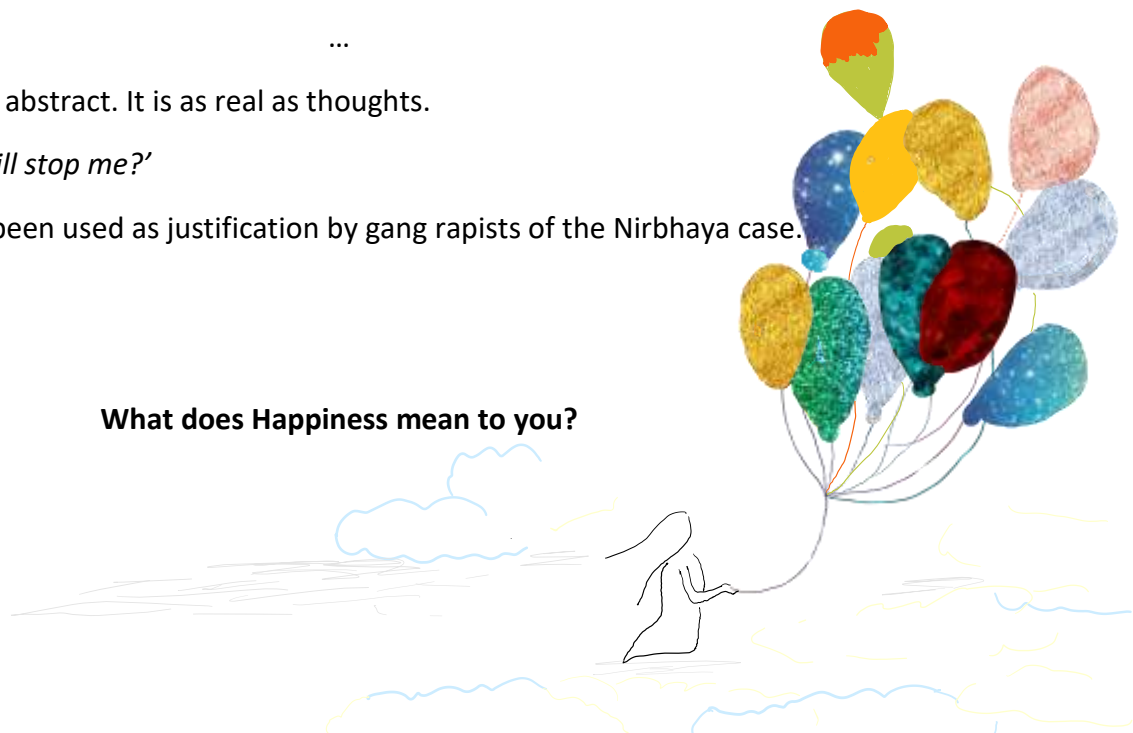
...

Philosophy is not an abstract. It is as real as thoughts.

‘The point is, who will stop me?’

Imagine if that had been used as justification by gang rapists of the Nirbhaya case.

What does Happiness mean to you?



“...his highest moral purpose is the achievement of his own **happiness** [...] that each man must live as an end in himself, and follow his own rational self-interest...”

- Ayn Rand

“He who is overly attached to his family members, experiences fear and sorrow, for the root of all grief is attachment. Thus, one should discard attachment **to be happy.**”

– Chanakya

तूँतूँ करता तूँ भया, मुझ मैं रही न हूँ।

वारी फेरी बलि गई, जित देखौं तित तूँ ॥

- कबीर

“...Shower upon him every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of **happiness**...give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then, out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick...simply in order to prove to himself—as though that were so necessary—that men still are men and not the keys of a piano...

...You will scream at me (that is, if you condescend to do so) that no one is touching my free will, that all they are concerned with is that **my will should of itself, of its own free will, coincide with my own normal interests**, with the laws of nature and arithmetic.

- Fyodor Dostoevsky ([Notes from the Underground](#))

...

A lot of readers this time had some part of their life in **Mumbai**. And many wore blue.

A sweet man, well combed grey and white hair, specs safely hanging from his neck, wearing a sky-blue half sleeved shirt. He had done his graduation from Mumbai. With the most insightful things to say, Yogesh read from Page 74 of “**There Are No Secrets**” by Peter Brook (club library).

Everybody had a serious expression. I wondered; what magic does this book have? It comes to the table every time.

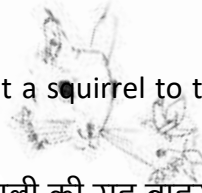
I asked Sandeep, “Why did you gift this book?” He said, “Our style of teaching and practising simplicity in our professions are similar.”

“He started with decorations. Othello on TV, slowly created bare minimum artistic creations... showing less, meaning more... the norm in India, Ahmedabad right now is creating spectacle.”

Tarun told us about Robin Das, training under Peter Brook, snapping his fingers to ‘break the silence’, and The Empty Space in Mumbai.



गिल्लू



Mahadevi Verma came with Mitesh. And she brought a squirrel to the book club. He loves cashews. And is a picky eater.

“मेरे कमरे से बाहर जाने पर गिल्लू भी खिड़की की खुली जाली की राह बाहर चला जाता और दिन भर गिलहरियों के झुंड का नेता बना हर डाल पर उछलता-कूदता रहता और ठीक चार बजे वह खिड़की से भीतर आकर अपने झूले में झूलने लगता. मुझे चौंकाने की इच्छा उसमें न जाने कब और कैसे उत्पन्न हो गई थी. कभी फूलदान के फूलों में छिप जाता, कभी परदे की चुन्नट में और कभी सोनजुही की पत्तियों में.

मेरे पास बहुत से पशु-पक्षी हैं और उनका मुझसे लगाव भी कम नहीं है, परंतु उनमें से किसी को मेरे साथ मेरी थाली में खाने की हिम्मत हुई है, ऐसा मुझे स्मरण नहीं आता. गिल्लू इनमें अपवाद था. मैं जैसे ही खाने के कमरे में पहुंचती, वह खिड़की से निकलकर आंगन की दीवार, बरामदा पार करके मेज़ पर पहुंच जाता और मेरी थाली में बैठ जाना चाहता. बड़ी कठिनाई से मैंने उसे थाली के पास बैठना सिखाया जहां बैठकर वह मेरी थाली में से एक-एक चावल उठाकर बड़ी सफ़ाई से खाता रहता. काजू उसका प्रिय खाद्य था और कई दिन काजू न मिलने पर वह अन्य खाने की चीजें या तो लेना बंद कर देता या झूले से नीचे फेंक देता था.

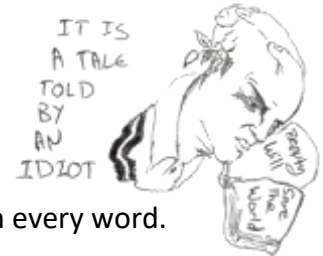
उसी बीच मुझे मोटर दुर्घटना में आहत होकर कुछ दिन अस्पताल में रहना पड़ा. उन दिनों जब मेरे कमरे का दरवाज़ा खोला जाता गिल्लू अपने झूले से उतरकर दौड़ता और फिर किसी दूसरे को देखकर उसी तेज़ी से अपने घोंसले में जा बैठता. सब उसे काजू दे आते, परंतु अस्पताल से लौटकर जब मैंने उसके झूले की सफ़ाई की तो उसमें काजू भरे मिले, जिनसे ज्ञात होता था कि वह उन दिनों अपना प्रिय खाद्य कितना कम खाता रहा. मेरी अस्वस्थता में वह तकिए पर सिरहाने बैठकर अपने नन्हे-नन्हे पंजों से मेरे सिर और बालों को इतने हौले-हौले सहलाता रहता कि उसका हटना एक परिचारिका के हटने के समान लगता.”

...

Sandeep read **Macbeth**. He also drew these pencil sketches.

He gave a summary in Hindi. Thank You.

Readers often forget that not all of us understand fast English or catch every word.



“Lady Macbeth trying to wash the blood from her hands... *Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.*”

Sandeep let the silence after his reading be. Everyone was basking in it...

He regards Akira Kurosawa, the director of **Throne of Blood** (Japanese film) as one of the finest directors. The movie is based on Macbeth.

...

Dangers of reading

It's real. Let's talk about it.

Around 3 in the night, Rajesh woke up, got ready and picked up random titles from his shelf, as he left for work. He reached on location duty and to pass the time he opened a book, 'तुम्हारी पीठ पर लिखा मेरा नाम'.

Awe...what a romantic title. A collection of short love stories.

The hero in his old age often thought about her, 'was he her first love or last?'

Rajesh was reading, "फिर कोई आंधी आई, कोई शोर उठा। एक बवंडर आया और ..."

"Sir क्या कर रहे हो!" his colleague shouted and kept running. Rajesh looked up, threw away the book and ran pell-mell after the suspect. The suspect was ahead in the race.



Nirali wore red and white striped socks with a white shirt, cuffs folded, over all a girl boss with a sore throat. She has a daughter on the other hand, waiting for her, as she balances her dreams on one hand.

Reena read 'My sister's Keeper'. I read 'The storied life of A.J. Fikry', he is a bookstore owner on Alice Island.

Jainal read **Tuesdays with Morrie**

Tuesdays with Morrie, a forgotten sweet dish, melts in your mouth and makes you really happy, Jainal got it for us in a small tiffin.

"My friends, I assume you are all here for the Social Psychology class. I have been teaching this course for twenty years, and this is the first time I can say there is a risk in taking it, because I have a fatal illness. I may not live to finish the semester.

"If you feel this is a problem, I understand if you wish to drop the course."

After reading **Dreams** with Uvais, his first fiction read, I realised how we scoff in public, add a disclaimer, at the first fiction novel we read in teenage.

How pathetically self-critical are we!

We can read what makes us happy without judging ourselves.

As I am finishing writing this, I wrote "Book Club" on Youtube and found 4 women, age 40 and above, in a movie world, discussing Christian Grey.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDxgPlsv6sY>

If you are a woman, when you have an ache, this movie is your comfort cushion.

If you are a man... well, I am signing off.

