POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

YEAR 2023

July 09, 2023

15:16

Edition 18

"REENA JI IS AWESOME!"

On the occasion of 18th edition, she got cupcakes for us all. PDBC is adulting like a responsible sober grown up that it has turned now.

We had cupcakes, we had the 18 number candle, but no source of fire, even in digital age. Enter Sandeep Ji.

Not all superheroes wear capes, some carry माचिस।

When Priya and Nirali blew the candles, everyone screamed "SPEECH, SPEECH SPEECH!" The savages they are, we got none. Nirali seemed lost today, because out of nowhere, she said, "Oh, ise khana bhi toh hai."

Rajesh Ji came late. Must've felt wonderful feeling you've escaped the rules recitation. Or so did he think. We waited just so rules could be read in his presence. When Priya forced him to read it himself, "The first rule of the book club", he said, in a very no-funny-business voice, "is no one talks about the book club."

He had convinced me for a minute that it was a real rule.

He continued, "The second rule of the book club is, always remember the first rule".

He had us baffled! When everyone (except the moderators) was reluctant to read the rules, Ankit was the last refute.

We began today's session with **Pandora's Box**.

Notes from the internet: "Pandora's Box" is a Greek myth that comes from a set of epic poems titled Works and Days by Hesiod. Written during the 7th century B.C., these poems centre around how Pandora, the first woman on Earth, was created by Gods and how the gift Zeus gave her ultimately ended the Golden Age of human kind. *But there is a lot more to it:*

https://www.thoughtco.com/what-was-pandoras-box-118577

I wonder if it's blasphemous to imagine Greek gods, hanging out casually on Mount Olympus, enjoying a cup of yogurt while playing conspiracies against humans, YET AGAIN.

Pandora's fatal flaw was curiosity. Pandora was an insufferable victim of impulsive thoughts when she opened the box just enough to let escape all the maladies but managed to close fast enough to withhold the biggest demon- apprehension. Perhaps knowledge is dangerous.

Next, we read **Sidney Sheldon** where Robert is investigating the driver that witnessed the accident, we dive right into the case and as soon as we're captured by the scene, Reena ji ends the chapter at, "Let's look into it". How unfair! Like Pandora, Rajesh ji is also a curious person, but his curiosity is always killed by people who leave us hanging, never finish their stories.

(Book suggestions: For thriller fanatics, Smit suggests author **Ravi Subramanian**, who's referred as India's Grisham)

Next is Ankit, who got Devadutt Patanaik's **Jaya** today. He has injured himself, but when Yogesh ji playfully asked, "How many sessions is this book going to be stretched to?", seemed like it must've hurt more. He familiarises us with the folklore behind the character building of Bhishm-a.

If someday I go abroad and have to answer about India and why we brag about diversity? I will quote Mahabharat. In **Mahabharat** Version H, Balaram was known as Narsimha, In Mahabharat Version P, the five Pandavas come to Krishn-a for help against the 100 Kauravas who have declared war against them. Krishn-a promises to help them if they help him fight Jarasandha.

A few interesting links:

https://www.boloji.com/articles/49995/variations-in-folk-mahabharata

https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-version-of-the-Mahabharata/answer/Prasanna-Bhalerao (Can this question ever be answered? Each variation, has its critical analysis done).

But one desire that binds many readers is a craving to find time and a centuries old looking book of Mahabharat. Irrespective of version A, B, C; we will steal it.

Soumya's book choices lit mine and Nirali's eyes. She read **The Bell Jar** by Sylvia Plath, a semi-autobiography, where the protagonist, Esther Greenwood, who aspires to become a poet, and just like Plath, is depressed and obsessed with suicide. She tries to replace happiness with efficiency to fill the inadequacies of her life. Throughout anti-psychotics and institutionalisation, Esther's journey is a coming-of-age story of Plath's battle with depression, which she loses eventually, but not without leaving her written legacies behind.

Smit read a book called, **No Full Stops in India** by Mark Tully. The book provides insights of influences of culture, and the role power dynamics play in it. Smit, Reena and Priya discussed the longest written case in India, discussing the preamble of our constitution. Me & Nirali shared blank stares and nodded at each other.

To our escape, Rajesh Ji read **TAMANNA, AB TUM KAHAN HO?** The book is an amalgamation of revelations that come to life when he reads in his voice. When discussing his books, discussing pro-cigarette stories is a necessity. A coincidence? I think not, good sir, I

think not. I sense envy among some of us when we remembered how Rajesh ji is an excellent, professional cigarette holder, and not a lot of people can say that. Now, while smoking is not widely encouraged (18th PDBC is entitled to make their own decisions), but his blue, sleek, shiny lighter is the new talk of the town. He read one of the stories, a snippet of which he had previously shared on the group. Before we could all realise that, we assumed we all had a Deja-vu simultaneously. Mitesh took it upon himself to say it out loud.

Our **activity coordinator** Yogesh Ji, charming man that he is, had something special planned for us. He turned off the lights, brought up the volume, asked us to close our eyes, lay back our heads and listen.

Listen to the pouring rain

Listen to it pour

And with every drop of rain

You know I love you more

- Jose Feliciano.

(Check it out here!

https://www.saavn.com/s/song/english/jose-feliciano/rain/KDhfQEUGfHg?referrer=svn_source=share&svn_medium=com.whatsapp&utm_source=share&utm_medium=com.whatsapp)

Post the activity, we were hesitant to read aloud what we wrote on the piece of paper he gave to us all.

When I heard everyone recite what they wrote, my eyes were open wider than an atropine overdose. Time seemed to have slowed down for all those brilliant lines everyone wrote. As the biggest aromantic in the room, I failed the activity brutally.

But as we clapped and laughed alternatively on each member/writer's lyrics, we realised that it was not about what we wrote. It was about the time we spent listening to a song with our eyes closed and a paper and a pen in our laps, in a dark room at noon.

In the end, it was a successful, in-house mini version of a '*creative writing workshop'*.

Yatvi read **The Norwegian Woods**, Murakami, and the story, from what I understood was a romantic meta-cognition. Upon joining the dots, today's session could've had one of those trigger warnings for isolated, lonely losers.[1]

This doodle is especially made for Rajesh Ji:

- - - > > >

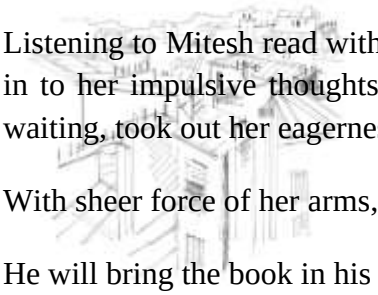
On Priya's insistence, adding the names of two readers: Shaurya and Raxil.

[1] Self-deprecating humour from Neha Raghani's jokebook.

They were there. When they were reading, I was thinking of book jokes. People expect jokes from me in the minutes of the meeting, I don't know why this is. I am serious.

We ended on a high note. Mitesh read **Chandpur ki Chanda**. Now you might assume it's JUST ANOTHER BOOK! and that's where, you are wrong.

चांदपुर! सरयू किनारे बसा बलिया जिले का आखिरी गांव! कहते हैं चाँद पर पानी है कि नहीं यह तो शोध का विषय है लेकिन चांदपुर की किस्मत में पानी ही पानी है। चांदपुर चलता है पानी में, जीता है पानी में और टूटता भी है पानी में।



Listening to Mitesh read with a UP bhaiya accent, Priya, like Pandora, could not resist to give in to her impulsive thoughts. She laughed, excitedly waited for more dialogues, and while waiting, took out her eagerness to do something on the pencil in her hand.

With sheer force of her arms, like Bahubali, she broke the pencil! खटाक!

He will bring the book in his next edition, on our forced/request. Mitesh's excellent command over his dialogue delivery and desi Bihari accent will convince you to go buy the book, visit Chandpur and play हनुमान चालीसा followed by भोजपुरी देवियों के गाने on your terrace, from loudspeakers.

As an ode to Mitesh, we created a playlist called भोजपुरी देवियों के गाने, check it out!

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1ZTRrhQtOt3vikDvVP0rWQ?si=Ofn2z2KPR5W1CyJZ5GRxUw&utm_source=copy-link