

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

YEAR 2023

10/09/2023 3:00 PM

Akshat Drama Group Studio

Edition 22

Love on Himmel Street

'Hair the color of lemons,' Rudy read. His fingers touched the words. "You told him about me?"

At first, Liesel could not talk. Perhaps it was the sudden bumpiness of love she felt for him. Or had she always loved him? It's likely. Restricted as she was from speaking, she wanted him to kiss her. She wanted him to drag her hand across and pull her over. It didn't matter where. Her mouth, her neck, her cheek. Her skin was empty for it, waiting. - The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Attendees (15)

Ruchi, Yatvi, Reena, Bharath, Prince, Jay, Shweta, Navshin, Kusangi, Mitesh, Rajesh, Rajarshi, Nirali, Priya and Chirag

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Read by Ruchi

Lover boy Rudy represents the ideal human traits when it comes to Liesel like loyalty, rebelliousness, and self-confidence despite testing throughout the story. The Book Thief always made me ponder about death and the grim realities of wars but Ruchi today brought out the most adorable and the loveliest aspect of the book and that was Rudy and Liesel's tiff and friendship.

P.S. Ruchi has a crush on Rudy.



"... He stood waist-deep in the water for a few moments longer before climbing out and handing her the book. His pants clung to him, and he did not stop walking ..."

In truth, I think he was afraid. Rudy Steiner was scared of the Book Thief's kiss. He must have longed for it so much. He must have loved her so incredibly hard. So hard that he would never ask for her lips again and would go to his grave without them.

Rudy has taught all that Liesel required for surviving on Himmel Street a) cuss words and b) friendship. **Saukerl** and **Saumensch** which initially started as words of reproach but later become the comfort which Liesel started finding in the cigarette butts of papa and stern shouting of Rosa.

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Read by Yatvi

Gatsby's struggle and the undying "half-expecting Daisy to wander into one of his parties, some night."

Gatsby and his doomed love for the unattainable Daisy. Makes me wonder if Gatsby was in love with Daisy or in love with the idea of love where he placed Daisy in the centre.

By the way Yatvi seemed woowed by the Old Sport.

"... He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy ..."

The class rift and the ease of being at ease with the old money vis-a-vis the struggles of the new money to squeeze in the circle, it is touched upon with such tender words that it struck me only as an afterthought.

"... He had one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced, or seemed to face, the whole external world for an instant and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself ..."

Bharat: The book is a beautiful piece of Jazz.

The Panchatantra compiled by Pandit Vishnusharman

Read by Reena

One Vishnusharman, shrewdly gleaming

All worldly wisdom's inner meaning;

In these five books the charm compresses

Of all such books the world possesses

I picked up a copy kept at the library (version: Bhagwan Singh) and started skimming for something that holds worth for me today, is useful.

There were passages, quotes, shlok that I kept thinking, *ye wala is situation me use ho sakta tha...* I kept reading and every story weaved another story. This form of art at such a complex level is rarely found these days.

'**Mitra Bhedha**' (Loss of Friends), '**Mitra Laabha**' (Gaining Friends), '**Suhrudbheda**' (Causing discord between Friends), '**Vigraha**' (Separation) and '**Sandhi**' (Union).

As a community of readers, growing from strangers to friends, all the stories felt true.

Reena told us about the origin of the concept in A. Vishnu, he told the king that if I am not able to train the princes, the future of your kingdom in the art of political science, then I shall accept death. In those days, word had value, his conviction in his work inspired me to read this book to learn '**niti**'.

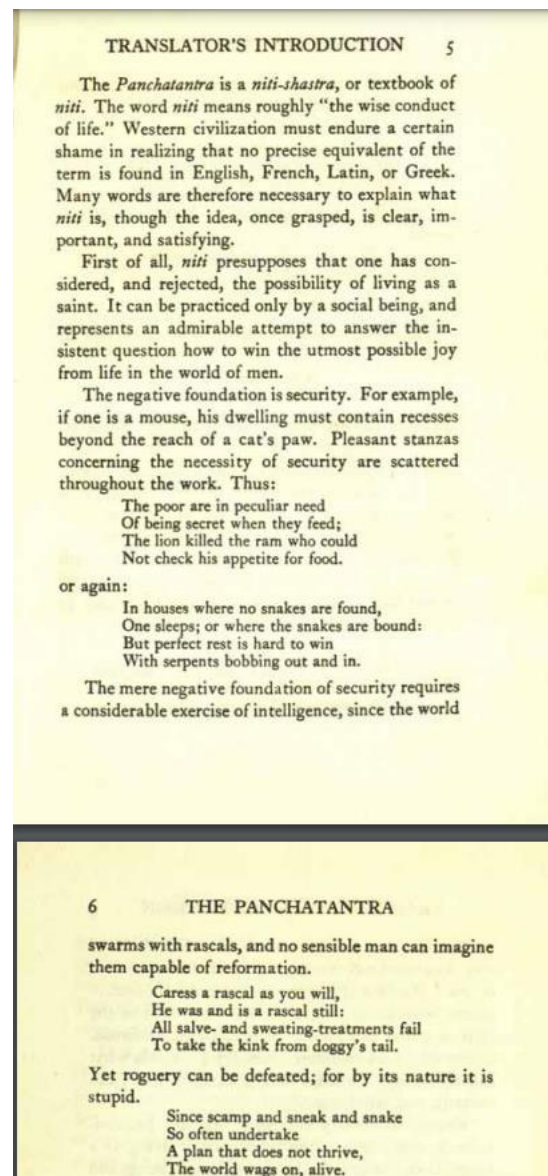
Tracing history and variations of Panchtantra: <https://indicportal.org/literature-panchatantra/>

That was autocracy, and the princes were the future rulers. Times have changed, we live in a democracy, where everyone has a voice and the power to vote. In that mathematical equation, the stories retain their value, we are all princes.

*"... **Arthur William Ryder**, a Sanskrit professor at University of California, Berkeley also translated Panchatantra in English from the 12th century manuscript of Purnabhadra. In the introduction of his work (The Panchatantra: Purnabhadra's Recension of 1199 CE) he said, "**The Panchatantra is a niti-shastra, or textbook of niti**".*

He also laments about the lack of vocabulary in western languages for Sanskrit words like niti. In the introduction section he further writes, "The word niti means roughly "the wise conduct of life". Western civilisation must endure a certain shame in realising that no precise equivalent of the term is found in English, French, Latin or Greek. Many words are therefore necessary to explain what niti is, though the idea, once grasped, is clear, important, and satisfying ..."

The Panchatantra-text of Purnabhadra:



<https://archive.org/details/panchatantratext00hert/page/n13/mode/2up>

Another related classical Indic work on niti, '**Nitishatakam**' it is said to be for adults (because, no animals):

<https://indica.courses/enroll/prof-m-a-narasimhan/introduction-to-nitishatakam/>

...

Old man and the sea By Ernest Hemingway

Read by Bharath.

Bharath and I reminisced about how it was read way back in school times and how it never felt and meant so much as when we come across it as adults. The ocean LeMar in Spanish is the beloved for the old man who sometimes is cross with him and at times bestows all the love of the world. Bharath read the part where the old man finally brings in the big bait and is exhausted and the boy is in awe and admiration for him. How Santiago struggled with the great marlin he caught and how he broke his unlucky streak and finally barely reached home with the carcass of the great marlin is not known to the villagers and Manolin. But the boy fetches coffee for the old man, checks on him every few hours and wants to go fishing with him again. Bharath ends with

The old man returns to sleep and dreams his usual dream of lions at play on the beaches of Africa.

P.S Bharat carries a beautiful bookmark with him, he seems to have a great collection of bookmarks and one liners.

13 Reasons Why by Jay Asher

Read by Prince

Who can remember their growing up years as soothing, mature and no acne, taunts or hormones?

This book was written for those angst ridden, self-esteem building, depressing years. Teenagers.

"Thirteen Reasons Why", his debut novel, spent over two years on the New York Times children's hardcover best-seller list.¹

What we heard about the book in the club from the reader was that this girl dies and leaves letters/cassettes behind and gives 13 reasons why she committed suicide.

Sure, why not. When Veronica decides to die, we accept her choice.

After a deep surfing and reading many passages from this book, it was like by getting hit by a truck because we didn't look up in time.

¹ <https://www.chartwellspeakers.com/speaker/jay-asher/>

The main ex-character, the one who died and passed the blame tape to 13/14 people, in a game of chain-chain, all those she holds guilty for her own action.

This main character had witnessed her friend being raped, when she was drunk and passed-out, and then described her rape to 13/14 people in detail on the tape, telling her how the victim's crush enabled it, and telling the rape victim, how her rape affected her as she hid in the closet and watched. She blames the victim in the book, several times, for their broken friendship and hence a reason for the suicide. This blamed girl had to listen to her own rape in detail that she did not remember.

This reminds me of how a hiding child deals with the aftermath of watching one's best friend being raped in *The Kite Runner*. Only, that book dealt with it by showing his inner struggle.

She passes on the tape to rape-enablers to call them out but never sends it to the rapist.

If this was not enough, she had a haircut and wanted people to understand that it was a sign that she is having suicidal thoughts, sarcastically.

The person who could have done something was her teacher. She put an anonymous note in the bag for class discussion topics stating that she was contemplating suicide

"... So I did just that. I wrote a note to Mrs. Bradley that read: "Suicide. It's something I've been thinking about. Not too seriously, but I have been thinking about it ..."

and her guidance counsellor, who she told she was having suicidal thoughts.

Zach, a student, stole compliment chits from her anonymous compliments bag in a class to annoy her. She blames him in her tapes, for taking hope away from her, and being one reason for her suicide.

Hannah suffers from low self-esteem. It crumbles from bullying, sexual harassment and lack of social integration. When her guidance counsellor tries to get her to talk, she pulls away and leaves.

<http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/16507/1/15320174.pdf>

Even the show, based on the book, conveniently, does not use the word depression at all, it claims to promote mental health, with a very graphic depiction of suicide.

She made plans of revenge on her peeping tom, including his address in her map of who to visit while listening to her post-suicide tapes, to ensure that his privacy is invaded. One of the reasons here to commit suicide is an eye for an eye.

If you don't listen and pass on the tapes to the next person, copies of all the tapes will be reaching to that person, pre-arranged, pre-planned. She wants people to realize their mistakes, her death must prove useful.

13 reasons why suicide is never the answer on how to take righteous revenge, there needed to be a counter book by a qualified psychiatrist. The intent of the author to spread a message about teenage depression and looking for signs gets lost with romanticization of suicide as empowerment.

1984 By George Orwell

Read by Jay

Jay read very calmly and was poised. He read a politically charged passage hinting towards totalitarianism. Power is not a means, it's the end.

"... Until they become conscious, they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled, they cannot become conscious ..."

There was no safe space and no one could escape the omniscient eye of the big brother... amidst this Julia and Winston begin their affair with their own ways of resistance and political beliefs... the most haunting line from the book as one approaches the end,

"If they could make me stop loving you, that would be the real betrayal."

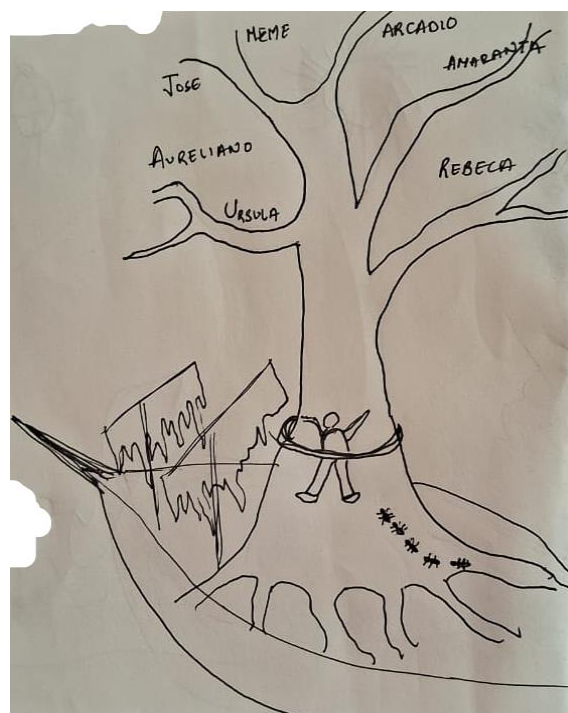
Roads to Mussoorie by Ruskin Bond

Read by Shweta

She read about Pindhari glaciers, Phurkia, a small dreamy hamlet one comes across before the summit of the glaciers. Phurkia means *the whispering of the wind* and when Rusty goes on to describe these magical places, we felt like we were there too. Shweta became all animated as she talked about how Ruskin's episodes with his friends, his sufferings and joys of traveling with friends are so relatable.

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez

Read by Navshin



The Buendia family, generations of loneliness, generations of quest for something unattainable, generations of visionaries and dreamers. Patriarchal households and magical realism... Boy who carried yellow butterflies wherever he went... girl with a dreamlike presence... woman with black laces bandaged forever on her hands...

A chestnut tree which binds the generations between life and death... A shipwreck in the middle of a Spanish desert... 100 years of solitude navigates through all the emotions, mores and the very fibre of existence and our quests for finding reasons.

With a quiver that is very much the essence of her voice, Navshin said her favourite quote from what she has read so far is

"a person doesn't die when he should but when he can."

Woman to Woman: Stories by Madhulika Liddle

Read by Kusangi,

While she read, I got goosebumps... the book comprises of short stories with big impacts like an asteroid striking the earth's atmosphere, burning up, streaking the sky with its brightness.

She read the story *Paro* which was inspired by an unnerving series of interviews with trafficked brides over the course of a day spent with a German journalist who was researching the subject.

Her story reminded me of the story in [A Full Night's Thievery](#) (a woman travels to a desolate guesthouse deep in a forest on a stormy night, that journey taken alone and thinking of her loneliness)

ज़िन्दगी आइस पाइस by निखिल सचान

Read by Mitesh

गिल्लू गिलहरी से कुमार तक - मितेश का सफर with PDBC.

All were overcome with such awe and warmth as he narrated Kumar and Vikram's wedding woes... As we see a small world contained in a passage, a world with no prejudices against love, only feelings remain, nothing is masked, the love is expressed and shown in so natural and raw words between two people, it was like chai on a rainy day...

बलमवा तुम क्या जानो प्रीत Gramophone plays this song and they try to resolve the lover's tiff

तुम्हारी आँखें हेज़लनट जैसी हैं...

हमारी शादी में दूल्हा बनके कौन आएगा मिस्टर कुमार the way he said these and the way the entire room was lost in this world painted with just love was a completely different experience...

I thank Mitesh to bring out such beautiful pieces of work out in happy yellow glow of PDBC.

Also, it reminded me of Schitt's Creek, for me it's till date the most brilliant portrayal of LGBTQ relations.

मृच्छकटिक by शूद्रक

Read by Rajesh

A timeless sanskrit classic, we are glad to see such books coming to the club. Most of it went over the head but could catch a few... all I could sense was the heavy ornamental use of metaphors to describe the very mundane events of life...

A classic in its own...this play had many of its firsts in it from not talking about kinds and instead about the common people... secularism to addressing all the possible vices of life...

The reader kept smirking and guffawing while reading; interrupting our listening,

"... The play is set in Ujjain – a prosperous, urban Indian society – one which places importance on wealth and gives women who are married, a higher status. In the first act itself, we are introduced to Charudatta, a wealthy noble-man who has fallen on hard times; Vasantasena, a beautiful courtesan (nagarvadhu) who longs to marry Charudatta; and Samsthanaka, the evil brother-in-law of the King, who is determined to 'conquer' Vasantasena's attention ..."

Habib Tanvir, the noted Indian playwright produced the play under the name **"Mitti ki Gaadi"**,
[part 1 & part 2 video of the play:](#)

https://archive.org/details/dni.ncaa.IGRMS-3B_213-BC

https://archive.org/details/dni.ncaa.IGRMS-3B_214-BC

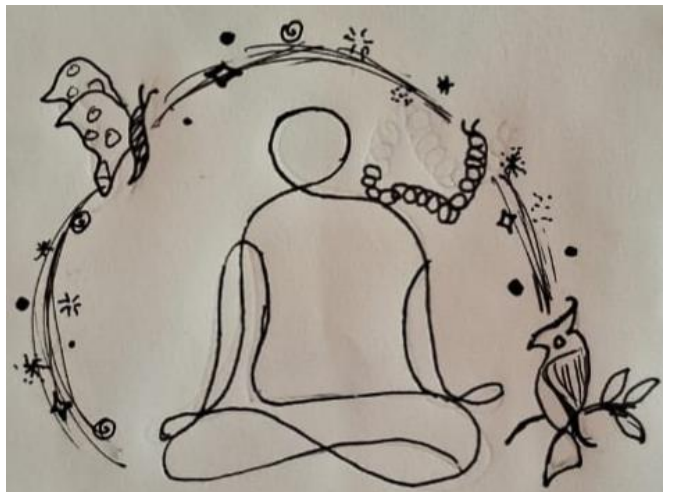
So intrigued by the title and its complexity I had to look it up, the play inspired painter Abindranath Tagore, first silent Kannada film, Hindi film "Utsav" directed by none other than Girish Karnad, this link explains the play's history beautifully:

[Vasantasena on stage : the timeless Sanskrit drama, 'Mricchakatika' \(The Little Clay Cart\):](https://www.theheritagelab.in/mricchakatika-vasantasena-sanskrit-drama/)
<https://www.theheritagelab.in/mricchakatika-vasantasena-sanskrit-drama/>

Samsara: Enter the Valley of Gods by Saksham Garg

Read by Rajarshi

Rajarshi came to the editions after what seemed like ages...Today too he says that the family almost convinced him to stay home as he was a bit down due to the weather... but he popped in the pill and here he was... He planned on reading Samsara, a book close to his heart since the Kavi Dalpatram Chowk event.



A combination of fictional stories spiced with the tadka of Indian mythology... Rajarshi a fan of audiobooks came across this book and took it up as his responsibility to bring up this lesser-known Indian Harry Potter to the club.

He donated the book to the club, he answered the questions and explained the story very well, almost every present listener wanted to take this book and read it.

मेरे मन में सवाल पैदा हो रहा है। मुझे रोक लो। - Rajesh

Ruchi, Priya, Bharath & I, we all had questions which were checkdammed.

We couldn't go on with questioning him about the story just to listen, *aage kya hua...* because the story was so mesmerizing coupled with his way of telling it like a folklore, the next part is yet to be published so... we wait, patiently.

Kafka by the shore By Haruki Murakami

Read by Nirali.

Playing with the metaphysical shore between the conscious and subconscious, this book is peppered with riddles and barely any solutions. We travel from the daylight logic of consciousness to the labyrinth's dark confusion, aptly conveyed by Crow's warning before Kafka begins his journey:

"The storm is you. Something inside of you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn't get in, and walk through it, step by step. There's no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverized bones. That's the kind of sandstorm you need to imagine."

The story of a teenage boy Kafka who runs away from home to escape his father, and an elderly man who has the ability to talk with cats, a mysterious Johnny Walker who kills and kidnaps cats, with the backdrop of World War II and unsolved mysteries, Kafka may be on the shore but you surely will be on the edge.



The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Read by Priya

Priya texted me one morning *"I read the ceremony"* and I immediately replied to her that I have vivid visions of the ceiling, and goosebumps... Later she asked me how I can immediately recall it and I was like let the Atwood axe cut you, you will dare not forget the visual she strikes on your psyche. Priya read and she read with an intensity to cut through the fabled glass ceilings.



The dystopian state's entire structure, with its religious trappings and rigid political hierarchy, is built around assuming complete control of women's bodies. Women cannot vote, hold property or jobs, read, or do anything else that might allow them to become independent.

They are reduced to their fertility, treated as nothing more than a set of ovaries and a womb. This reminds me of another key scene in the novel,

Offred(Protagonist) lies in the bath and reflects that, before Gilead, she considered her body an instrument of her desires; now, she is just a mound of flesh surrounding a womb that must be filled in order to make her useful.

Hmm...

dystopia is fiction in a book; the reality is fiction for real

This session was pregnant with suspense, but it was by choice. We all wanted answers.
