

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

*A Red Bow on the top, a giant sock at the bottom left,
golden balls and bells hanging here and there,
a string light draping the edges,
and a tree of books.*

Edition 27

24.12.2023 3.00 PM

AKSHAT DRAMA GROUP

Written by: Janvi

Attendees:

Bharat, Janvi, Mitesh, Disha, Nija, Shweta, Ruchi, Pruthvi, Shaurya, Sharvil, Aswathy, Rajesh Ji, Prince, Abhiraj, Smit, Sandeep Ji, Yogesh Ji, Priya, Chirag

Tis the season! – Christmas has arrived.

The studio is filled with festive cheer, maroon sweaters, a Christmas tree, banner, and cake + all of our excited faces. The sound of jingle bells was playing in the background.

Everyone was busy. Yogesh Ji and team were rehearsing, not letting others take even a sneak peek! I was putting up the Christmas banner outside. Chirag and Nirali had made a Christmas Tree of books in the bookshelf with string lights outlining the tree, small Santa and stars and glittering balls hanging on it. Smit and Sandeep were discussing the flow of the event.

Priya missed Nirali. Then came a delivery man knocking, bringing us plum cake sent by the person we were just missing...

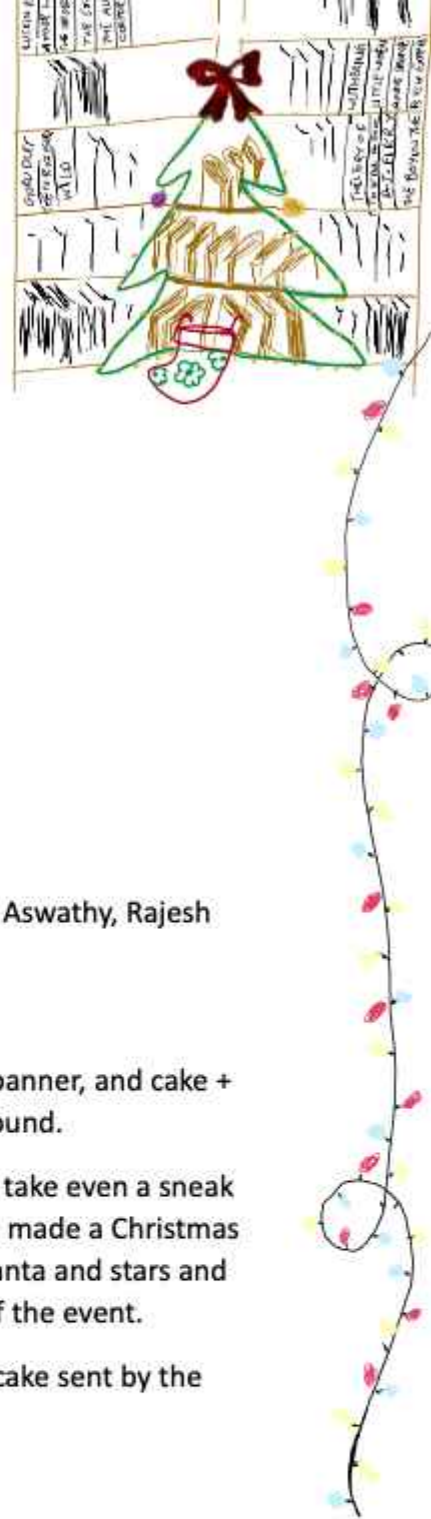
The clock struck 3 pm.

Skit Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2LEjq4CdZs>

“By the order of Charles Dickens, we raise the ghost of the idea... May this ghost haunt you.”

Bharath was the nephew, Sandeep was his khadoos Uncle, Sharvil was the ghost of his dead business partner, who came to scare (warn) him.

Bhoot Voot kuch nahi hota... there came the sound of crying women as Jacob left a desperate and scared Scrooge behind. He could not sleep. He kept counting the hours as the clock toiled its hands, bringing the time of the arrival of the first spirit, of the Christmas past (Aswathy).



It was not funny, watching Scrooge watching his childhood self with its teddy bear, laughing along on his child self's jokes. The room was full of silent eyes. Listening to his sweetheart asking Young Ebenezer as they danced together, *'can you love me?'*

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It is Christmas Eve, the day which movies have told us, is to be spent spreading joy and cheer. Everyone, (not pre-planned!) came in either maroon or red sweaters, some were complimenting in green.

We had a carton outside in which every coming member had to drop their newspaper wrapped book in, with a message inside for whoever they got.

SECRET SANTA

3... 2... 1

Jump! Grab your book!! And tear open the gift-wrap!

Rajesh got Ibn-e-batuti, *"One of my favourite books, which I have donated, comes back to me."* *"Oh, I love this book"*, I saw Aswathy hugging her gift.

"This book has been a prized possession", Sharvil started reading, the message written inside the book by his Santa, *"Sharvil is still in character"*, Sandeep pulled his leg. He continued reading the message. *"Kaunsi book hai lala?"* – guess who asked?

"A book is a gift you can open again and again" – From Smit, to Nija. Everyone was clapping, he was blushing.

I got **Raat Pashmine Ki** by Gulzar. Inside, it was written, *"Whoever has it, may the nights be full of stars and light."*

Rajesh makes a very cute awee sound. He was reading the message written on a pink slip kept inside his gift. *"A Song of Ice and Fire, Ruchi? Ruchiee!!!"* Big Smiles were exchanged.

Bharath and Shaurya were sitting together, THE SCIENCE BROS. Both wearing complimentary colors. Crystal Teal (no I did not know the color, had to google) and shades of green.

Bharath was wearing a spacey jacket (sky, universe and stars) He got a postcard inside his book! Aaj ke zamane me bhi sandese aate hai... his gift and chitthi was from Shaurya. No guesses there.

Ruchi got an old amazing smelling edition from Disha.

These moments truly were special, they connected us with each other as people of a small specie, finally finding each other, readers. As soon as it opened, and they unwrapped the book, the joy on their face, everyone feeling giddy, messages and the warmth it spread, we cannot measure it, it was unmeasurable.

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READING SESSION



From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death

Author: Caitlin Doughty, Read by Bharath

She is a funeral home owner. She is fascinated by how in American culture, it is frowned upon to talk about death, till people die.

"... One afternoon in August I received the email I had been waiting for.

Laura, a very dear member of our community was found dead early this morning: she had a history of heart problems and had just entered her 75th year. Don't know where you are, but you're welcome to join us.

Stephanie

Laura's death was unexpected. On Sunday night, she danced with abandon at a local music festival. On Monday morning, she lay dead on her kitchen floor ..."

Bharath narrated about Laura's journey after death. It was an ideal start for the day. Death is not just the end. In truth it was a subtle but a tongue in cheek way to write about what people feel about different methods of saying goodbye, attachment to the dead body, prejudices, forgetting one's own cultural history, only a century old practices and ultimately, the fear of death, showing itself in so many ways.

Next up, we had **The Father Christmas Letters**

Author: John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Read by Janvi (me)

In 1920, a few years after Tolkien returned from World War I, he began a family Christmas tradition. After the birth of his firstborn son, John, Tolkien began to write for his children, letters from Father Christmas. These North Poles tales told Father Christmas' struggles against the north's bat-riding goblins, the mischievous antics of his assistant, North Polar Bear.

I read two letters from it.

Found the book (copyright free):

https://archive.org/details/lettersfromfathe0000unse_c1t9/page/n3/mode/2up

The book spiked the discussion about Santa Claus and his existence. Also, everyone was surprised to know that JRR Tolkien has written this book. One could never imagine him writing something so warm and beautiful but the Goblins, demons and all that.

An afternoon in winter, reading, is completely incomplete without a cup of strong **Masala Chai** – made by Divya Prakash Dubey, Read by Mitesh

"... Ek ladka jiska dil toot jaata hai woh apni zindagi savaar ne k liye shaadi karne ka sochta hai ..."

"... Jis ladki se pichle 5 saal se pyaar karta tha, uski abhi 6 mahine pehle shaadi hogayi ..." Is line pe to sab foot foot ke hase.

"... Jaane se pehle usne vahi bola jo Hindustan ki kareeb-kareeb har ladki bolti hai, 'Apna khayal rakhna aur apni shaadi mein pakka bulana.' ..." yaha sab has-has ke pagal hogaye.

"... Ab set ho jaana chahiye yahi sochke Jeevansathi.com pe profile banata hai aur fir badi koshish karta hai koi ladki mil jaye par kambakht nai milti ..."

Mitesh ne yeh padha aur sab has has ke lot pot ho gaye.

Agar variety me hasna ho, to Mitesh ko humare edition me kitab padhte jarur suniye. Vo best passages ke print nikal ke lata hai.

Is kitab ki chai ka to pata nahi, par masala bahut badiya hai.

Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy by Douglas Adam

Read by Disha

A comedy sci-fi... This book is a favourite of many. Disha read the prologue. What a story- two people survive the senseless destruction of earth and their adventure in space and time. Book is filled with dry humour and lovely analogies. This also popped a question in my mind... What if an alien spaceship were to reduce the earth to ruins, and we only had a handful of time to hurl the books in our backpack before leaving for a different planet, which books would you choose? Keep pondering my dear readers!!!

The Authenticity Project – by Clare Pooley

Read by Nija

Nija in her sweet voice introduces the book and narrates what the book is about. A celebrated artist writes his truth in a diary and leaves that in a café. Monica, the owner of the café, finds it and also writes in the book and in this way, the book travels from country to country.

The line that struck me was *"... My name is Julian, here is the truth: I am lonely. ..."*

Rajesh Ji was reminded of the song from the band **"Yellow Diaries"**

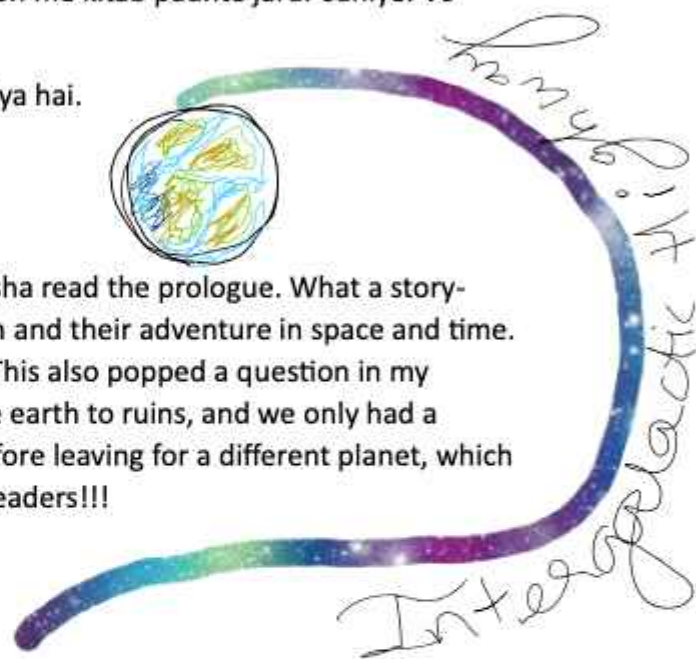
We got a copy of it in PDBC kindle. Lucky us.

Well, each and every one of us have our own hidden, unknown to us, but the ultimate, truth. Interesting, interesting book!!

Upstream – by Marry Oliver, Read by Shweta

Shweta read a cute passage from the book Upstream which is a collection of essays. Two children bring an injured bird and tend to it. The bird didn't recover completely and had only a few days, the children enjoyed their time with the bird and in the end the bird died.

It's difficult to let go of things and living beings you get attached to. Sandeep Ji asked Shweta why she chose this book and the passage, she felt an emotional connection with the story...



Emotions matter a lot. Only when we create a beautiful bond with a book, we are able to experience the reading.

The housekeeper and the Professor – by Yoko Ogawa, Read by Ruchi

"... It was March of 1992 when the Akebono Housekeeping Agency first sent me to work for the Professor. At the time, I was the youngest woman registered with the agency, which served a small city on the Inland Sea, although I already had more than ten years of experience. I managed to get along with all sorts of employers, and even when I cleaned for the most difficult clients, the ones no other housekeeper would touch, I never complained. I prided myself on being a true professional. In the Professor's case, it only took a glance at his client card to know that he might be trouble. ..."

Ruchi read this curious book in which a professor who is a workaholic, is trying to solve his ultimate problem, keeps forgetting his housekeeper's presence, a lady who helps him. A boy named Root (he is called this because his head is like a square root) has gone to camp and has not returned. Ruchi read further that there is a unique bond between the professor and housekeeper.

After she finished reading, a discussion sparked on zero. Aryabhatt (accepted discoverer of Zero) is not known by everyone. I was in my own thoughts about Zero, the non-existent – making it exist.

Zero brings great order in our lives. It changes class, it brings a smile, it is abused when someone feels like a Zero, or is the happiest thing in the world when one gets too many on the left-hand side of a number.

At this point Rajesh Ji is giving himself a manicure lost in his own world.

Trouble with Women – a graphic novel by Jacky Fleming

Read by Pruthvi

"... In the Older Days there were no women which is why you don't come across them in history lessons at school ..."

It is an Absolute Truth. The species of women began life on earth in early 1900s.

We do find names such as Marie Curie, Kalpana Chawla in school books but they were born with a genetic disorder which enabled them to look beyond the general issues with women.

Pruthvi was nervous, he surely brought trouble with the book. Hehee... He gave a fair warning and wanted to be free from getting hit by the women seated... great satire... just remarks from great philosophers and revolutionaries about women.

His reading reminded me of chapters dedicated to great women in school books on history, separately, like a quota.

He wanted to read the sarcasm, but he forgot that only he could see the funny drawings in the book, placed in to mock the quotes of some of these famous personalities.

The author quotes from **The Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer** in her doodles. Going through his essay, '**On Women**', I found something related to India:

"... In India, no woman is ever independent, but in accordance with the law of Mamu, she stands under the control of her father, her husband, her brother or her son ..."

His reading made me laugh a little, but also angry.

Shaurya is quiet, appreciating the nothingness of the moment...

He read **Chaos: Making a New Science** – by James Gleick

Shaurya started reading and everyone was just listening to him intently... Science is unpredictable... A scientist was working on a simulation and accidentally he typed the data in such a way that rounded off the number and there was a breakthrough. It's like a turning point in lives of people... small changes do have a major impact on anything on our planet...

Shaurya also quoted – *"For a loss of a nail, the kingdom was lost."*

My take about this was that to fight chaos we have to fight our chaotic self-first.

By now, we were hungry, Sharvil said, he knows a good place to eat.

Restaurant at the end of the Universe, by Douglas Adams

The sequel to The Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy. Another humorous piece, after his ghost of a performance! So first he blasts earth to stardust, then opens a flng restaurant (insert laughing emoji here).

At the restaurant in a different universe... meat comes and introduces its parts... discussing about which part to eat... In the end irked by this the people decide to eat green salad.

Does it serve coffee?

Good Omen - Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett, Read by Aswathy

How earth came into being? this question brought with it, its little, excited brothers and sisters, asking relative questions.

Aswathy read enthusiastically that **the Earth was created on Sunday at 9.00 am.**

Analogy of earth as a zodiac sign... Everyone discussed about the author of the book.

Sandeep ji said *"Behind every origin there is a meaning"*.

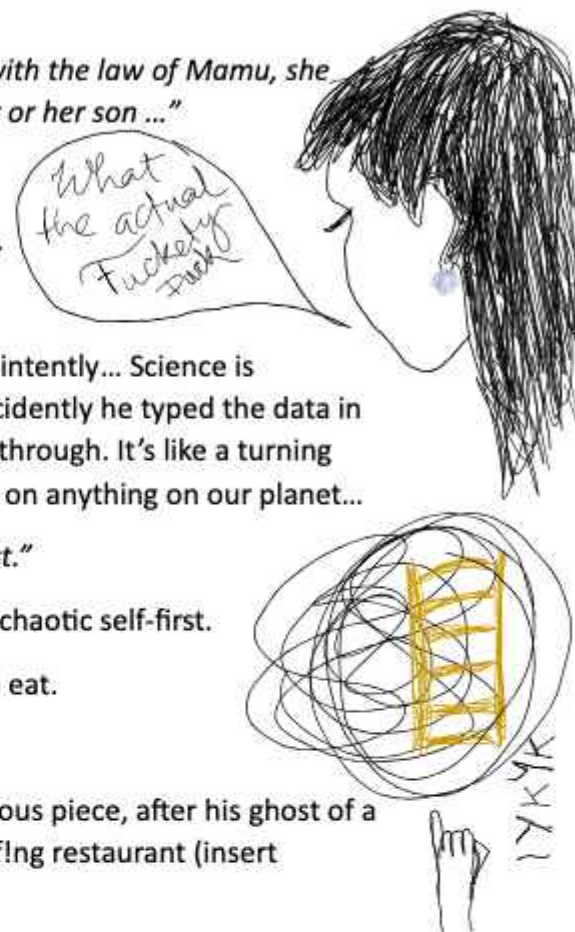
Aswathy also showed us the tattoo on her arm which is related to the books she loves.

Ab aaya, **Lapoojhanna** – Ashok Pandey, Read by Rajesh

A hilarious story of a 'Totla'. Scene of the school. Totla says – "Natne wali ko pesh kiya jaye".

"Thale mom ka hai toh mombatti banau thale ki".

One boy loses his crush to another friend... Again, totla says "thale hakle ne fath liya tumhari Bhabhi ko" I was laughing so hard that I couldn't note down anything!



Ye kitab to train me beth ke padhne layak hai.

A Child's Christmas in Wales – Dylan Thomas

Read by Prince

A sweet story of children enjoying the winters... It reminded everyone of Malgudi Days.

Stardust – Neil Gaiman

Read by Abhiraj

Abhiraj starts reading and talks about the book which has adventure and magic. Tristan, the protagonist, offers to bring the star in exchange of a kiss from Victoria, the girl he loves. Abhiraj decided to read the end part where Tristan is back but he is a changed person now. Victoria who feels guilty wants to talk to him. Alas! She loves someone else, so whatever Tristan did was for nothing? Or it was a way to discover himself.

Yogesh Ji's old memories were revived...

Mein Tenu Phir Milangi – Amrita Pritam

Smit paid a tribute to Amrita Pritam.



This definitely opened the floodgates of memories of the fatehsafari retreat... reading near the flowing river below the bridge, sitting with our feet dipped in it, some of us laying about on the small hill above, our tempo traveller parked just off the road, with Nirali, Chirag, Shaurya going in the water, lappujhannel

Smit sat on the edge with Priya and Prashant... reading from a printed paper he had brought, *"Yaadon ke dhaage qayamat ke lamho ki tarah hote hai"*

This is the best line of the poem, bringing back those memories from September.

Everyone went for tea at our post-edition adda. I was still wearing the Christmas cap, the red triangular topi with a white fur ball tinsel at its end.

"From the vantage point of space, earth emerges as a living, breathing organism - a testament to interconnectedness, where every motion, color, and shift symbolizes the perpetual dance of life. Much like the vivid tapestry woven by memory in 'the shadow lines', our view of the world is defined by the connections we perceive, where the beauty of our planet coexists with the stark realities, echoing the profound significance of our shared existence." – Shaurya.
