

POCKET DIARY BOOK CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

YEAR 2024

23/06/2024 03:00pm

EDITION 37

Venue: Akshat Drama Group Studio

Facilitators: Priya and Smit

Written by: Abha

Edited by: Priya

Theme: One book that everyone must read in their lifetime

Dearest Gentle Readers,

It has come to the attention of this author that 'So many books, so little time' is a thought which has plagued the members of this book club on more than one occasion. In the words of **Carl Sagan**, the trick is to know which books to read.

Thus, was conceived our Edition 37- members of the club were asked to bring one book which they think everyone should read at least once in their lifetime.

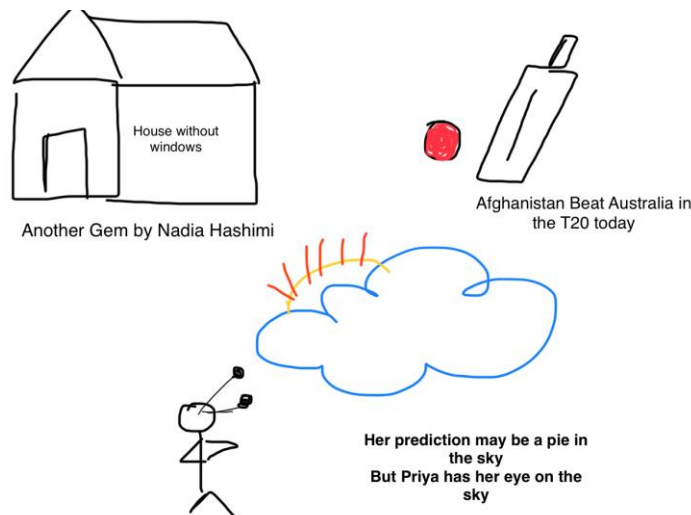
We started with **Rohan's** narration of a passage from '**Man's Search for Meaning**' (Viktor Frankl). Happiness was redefined- does it mean the presence of joy or the absence of sadness and misfortune? That it is a state of mind was unanimously decided. But the Holocaust was a misfortune in the real physical world, a real-world dystopia. There's only so much that the mind can ignore and be happy, correct? Wrong, apparently. An entire new ecosystem was set up in the concentration camps and people found some semblance of happiness even in their darkest hours. "Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which a man can aspire..." says Frankl.



Another Gem of a book on the
Holocaust

We then moved on from one real world dystopia to another. **Megh** narrated an excerpt

from **‘When the Moon is Low’** (Nadia Hashimi). The story is set in Afghanistan. Starting with the theme of finding love in an arranged marriage, it then chronicles the struggles of the protagonist in the face of the Taliban’s ascent to power. It stresses on how the patriarchal principles imposed by the Taliban affect both the genders. A mother’s dilemma on instilling the right values in her son, while fighting for her own survival, forms an important part of the narrative. This book reminded the members of a **‘Thousand Splendid Suns’**- so the sun, the moon and the Megh’s name were painting a very splendid picture indeed:)



Added to it, Priya noticed that everyone was wearing shades of a mature palette- black, white, grey or blue, but in dull tones. It was, as if, to welcome the first cloudy, pleasant, but may-rain-soon-heavily-anytime day :)

We then moved on to **Rajarshi’s** narration of **‘The Midnight Library’** (Matt Haig). Rajarshi was reading about a library inside a library (**PDBC**) which was very meta. The protagonist enters a library, where she can choose any book- only the books are a portal to the various multiverses to her life. Choosing a book as a portal to another world- a feeling we are all very familiar with! The butterfly effect was touched upon- no life in any multiverse was ‘perfect’. The protagonist wanted to enter a world where her cat, Walter was alive. But in the multiverse she chose, Walter had become Schrödinger’s cat- it was somehow alive and dead at the same time. Questions were raised about Walter’s pending eight lives. Walter had died due to restrictive cardiomyopathy - moral being ‘Restricting your heart is injurious to life’ ;) Alfred Adler as an author and **Pet Sematary** (Stephen King) came up as tangential reading recommendations.

Janak introduced us to the sci fi world of the '**Lord of Light**' (Roger Zelazny). The story combines Eastern mythology (including, but not restricted to Indian mythology) with a fantasy world- where technological prowess decides the social hierarchy. Most religions refer to the higher power as Light in some or the other way. This author would not pretend to understand the further intricacies of this very interesting piece of literature- but found these words noteworthy- 'No word matters but man forgets reality and remembers words':)

Logic

Knowledge

Wisdom

?

Having veered a bit to Illuminati (now operating via WhatsApp groups apparently)- we were ushered into the world of childhood innocence by **Mitesh**. '**Zindagi Aais Pais**' (Nikhil Sachan). **As children, all of us were aware of the distinct sounds of our father's scooters.** The protagonist of Mitesh's story is a child who forgets the mathematics of '19 ka pahada' but remembers the tune in which it is sung (which had me singing Pahada Pahada to the tune of Bahara Bahara for some reason). The child gets stuck on 19 tiya...19 tiya...and hence hates the number 57! I sympathise because at the face of it-57 looks like a prime number! It's an imposter of a number (unlike our Edition 37- which indeed is a prime number:)).

We all jointly coo cooed over Rahul Dravid- and why being Mr Dependable makes him relatable to the protagonist's father.

Nijaji then ushered us into the absurdist world of a translated French work titled '**The Outsider/ The Stranger**' (Albert Camus), based on what country you buy the book from. 'Absurdist' actually turned out to be the word of the day with all of us wondering about its correct Hindi translation (it's betuka FYI). The protagonist in this book receives a telegram informing him about his mother's demise-which made me wonder how people spelled correctly and made grammatical sense, even when they were being charged by the word. And now when we have unlimited free writing space, well :). Further into the

story, the protagonist somehow ends up accidentally killing a man and is put to trial. Two questions are put before him- Does he feel remorse for what happened? Does he believe in God? What does he say? Well, you have to read and find out for yourself. As Nijaji put it, 'everyone interprets this book in their own way.'

Nijaji

Just doodling her pretty name

The theme of absurdist literature was taken forward by **Saurabh** who read from

'**Women**' ( ?) by Charles Bukowski. The protagonist of the book mirrors the author's own personality. He is a writer and a recluse- however the girl he is courting, Lydia, is a social butterfly. She calls him the most unknown famous man. Which the protagonist is absolutely fine about. I guess that is the reason why most authors have pen names.

Lydia just wants to partayyyy



From the world of absurdist literature, we moved on to the world of epic fantasy literature- '**Lord of the Rings**' (JRR Tolkien). **Bharath** dictated a passage focusing on a character called Boromir. His character arc and growth throughout the series were discussed. The perils of owning the ring, whether the evil coming from the ring was absolute or depended on who wielded its power, is a question that plagues Boromir's mind. The discussion somehow shifted to re-releases of Rockstar and Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara and it was a task indeed to conquer the nostalgia and proceed with our next narration.

So from discussing Second coming of Rockstar and ZNMD, we moved on to '**Second coming of Gluttony**' (Ro Yu-Jin) narrated by **Prince**. The book has 489 chapters (yes gentle reader, I do not mistype- chapters), each having 15-20 pages. Some time was taken to calculate the number of pages in the entire work. It is, ironically, what is called a light novel. When Prince mentioned that the book is so interesting that 'Aap isko padhte reh jaayenge'- he also meant it literally.

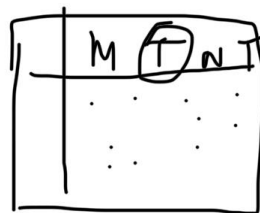
Gaurav, our next reader, introduced us to a '**Brave New World**' (Aldous Huxley). As one character in the book asks, and I quote- "For what was there one could do in private?"-

'Read', I thought . In the book, Bernard, is now a part of a dystopian world where the citizens are classified in an intelligence based social hierarchy. People are constantly overstimulated and supposed to be happy forever. Bernard, on the other hand, wishes to promenade. He is averse to electromagnetic golf. He wishes to experience human emotions, even the sad ones. Analogy was drawn to the current state of society and social media. Too much content actually causing discontent.

After all the fantasy and dystopia, we finally landed back on earth. Or stars, if I may! **Sudhanva** narrated from '**The Fault in our Stars**' (John Green). Sudhanva had read this book as a teenager and wished to revisit it now. He feels that it carries him back to that time he read it first. He developed a penchant for reading sad books post reading this one, however, no other book has been able to recreate the magic of reading this back in his teenage. He mentioned that 'We grow with every book we read'. Also, what should we say to someone who's crying? Stop crying? Or let them? Is crying cathartic? Is reading sad books 'sad'ist?

It was then time for yours truly to reflect further upon life and mortality. '**Tuesdays with Morrie**' (Mitch Albom) deals with the dialogue between a professor ailing from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and his student, wishing to seek his wisdom in light of his impending mortality. I read this book on a Tuesday for it be an immersive

experience 

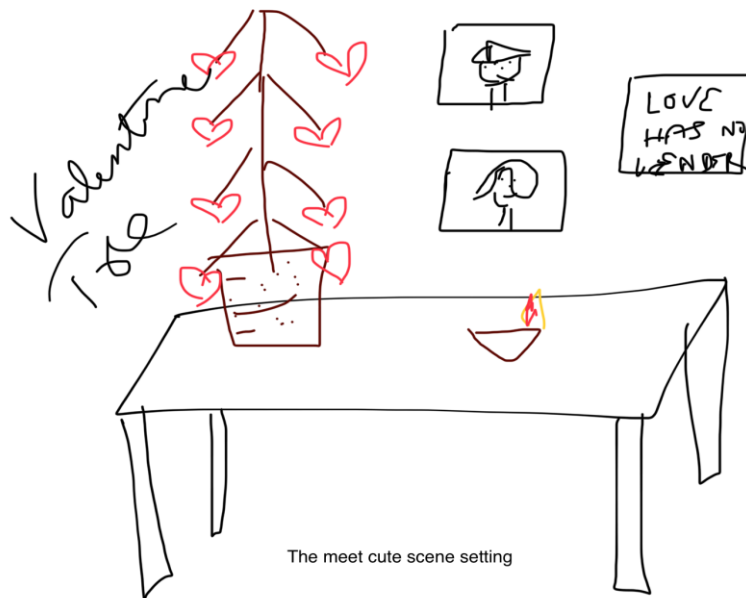


Priya is reading from '**Have a Little Faith**' by the same author. We discussed about Morrie's optimism and compared it to the optimism of a PDBC club member dealing

with a life-threatening issue but having the same zeal for life as Morrie. Morrie pretends he has a little bird (Morrie has a little bird, little bird, little bird) sitting on his shoulder. He asks her daily, is today the day I die? If yes, if this was your last day on the planet, what would you do differently?

It was now time for the lady herself, **Priya**, who narrated from a book very interestingly titled- '**lbnebatuti**'. The meaning (or rather the lack of a meaning) of the book title was discussed. The scene she read from was a meet-cute. The book has both- the tingles of a new blossoming first love, and similar tingles of a more mature second chance at love. The book reminds Priya about the sacrifices a mother has to go through to ensure the well being of her children. It talks about a life's worth of opportunities missed, but also how it is never too late to find oneself. Also, the correct reply to Laaton ke bhoot baaton

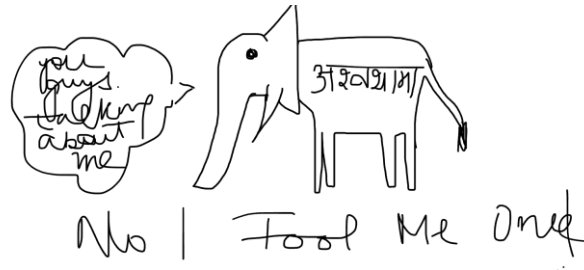
se nahi maante is - Baaton ke bhoot laaton se nahi darte



Our penultimate book was '**The Courage to be disliked**' (Ichiro Kishimi, Fumitake Koga) narrated by Sameerji. Another setting in which a dialogue takes place between a young man and a wiser, older person regarding whether or not etiology leads to teleology, and if not, what exactly is the relationship between the two? 'Any notion of happiness is absurd', believes this author- hence proving that the interpretation of happiness is, indeed, different for different people.

Our closing act was a passage narrated by our facilitator. **Smit** read from '**The Difficulty of Being Good**' (Gurcharan Das). This is one of the many retellings of the Mahabharat- each chapter from the POV of a different character in the Mahabharat. The chapter Smit read from was from Aswathama's POV and titled 'Aswathama's Revenge'.

'Revenge is a human institution, not a natural fact', says the author. Is forgiveness easy? No. But is it the only way to end the cycle of revenge? Yes. 'The Mahabharat Secret' by Christopher Doyle came up as a related reading suggestion. After all, there is no such thing as too many adaptations of the Mahabharat:)



With this, we ended this edition- with promises to meet immediately at the chai ki tapri- and soon of course- in the next edition. Until next time.

Yours truly

Abha :)

Megh - When the Moon is Low

Sameer- The Courage to be Disliked

Bharat- Lord of the Rings

Rajarshi- The Midnight Library

Priya - Ibnebatuti

Abha- Tuesdays with Morrie

Saurabh- Woman

Rohan- Man's search for Meaning

Smit – The Difficulty of Being Good

Prince – The Second Coming of Gluttony

Gaurav Gupta - Brave New World

Sudhanva- The Fault in Our Stars

Nija- The Outsider

Janak- Lord of Light

Mitesh - Zindagi Aais Pais