



The Diary of a Space Traveller and Other Stories

Satyajit Ray

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The Professor is an eccentric genius and scientist who disappear without a trace after the shot off into space in a rocket from his backyard in Giridih, accompanied by his loyal servant Prahlad. what has become of them. Has he decide to stay on Mars, his original destination? Or has he found his way to some other planet? Our diaries unearthed from his abandoned laboratory revael even stanger and more exciting adventures in this amzingly original story.

The Diary of a Space Traveller and Other Stories Details

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From Reader Review The Diary of a Space Traveller and Other Stories for online ebook

aditya shankar says

Great read.

One of the earlier works from the author. Way ahead of time, written in 60's, tons of information in there.

Sandeep Kumar says

The Diary of a Space Traveller is a collection of sci-fi stories, stories of an eccentric genius and scientist professor Shonku.....

The author Satyajit Ray, one of the great filmmaker in the world, had a brilliant imagination skill and this book is one proof of that.....

Hemantkumar Jain says

Satyajit intends to capture and fire-up the imaginations of the young kids through his stories.

There is a unique simplicity in his stories that make them not only enjoyable and suitable for kids but also equally easy and delightful to consume by the older ones too.

Madhvi says

Professor Shonku and his amazing adventures! This book is basically collection of science fiction short stories originally written in Bengali by master story teller Satyajit ray for young readers! nevertheless less ,I love anything authored by him.I enjoyed all stories so much! The simplicity and briallnce with which they were written,showed nothing but utter genius of author.

Neha says

Which is your most memorable stories from childhood?

Can't think of many, when someone asks you about like that. But there are times when you come across a book or a story that brings all those childhood stories rushing into your mind. That is what I felt when I read this book. Satyajit Ray and his children stories are like a fresh breeze in all the current adult fiction. Unlike the Bengali children who looked forward for the next edition of these stories in Bengali magazine 'Sandesh', I have grown up on my own set of Hindi stories and comic books. They were different and so were the

protagonists but the way this book made me feel is just like my own childhood reads.

I remember how I used to save money to buy comic books which were generally Rs 10 for a big edition and Rs 5 or 7 for a small edition. Sometimes my parents gave me monthly pocket money of Rs 10 and all I did with it was buying comics. Sometimes I used to rent a book for Rs 2 when I could not manage the money to buy it. The shop keeper was generally a grouchy guy who used to make money from little kids, charging extra if we delayed the return of the book. My mom used to buy me comic books sometimes to bribe me on her shopping tours. I used to finish reading them there itself while following her from shop to shop or on our rickshaw ride back home. There was this cousin of mine who had this huge collection of comic books – must be 100s with every nook and corner of their house brimming with books. I used to love visiting their home and start reading his books starting morning till evening till mom dragged me back home. I read all sorts of books - Chacha Chowdhury, Pinky, Biloo, Nandan, Chandan, Amar Chitra Katha, Tinkle, Lotpot, Champak, Chandan, Nandan, Chanda mama, Indian super heroes like Nagraj, Dhruva, and then there were DD serials like Stone Boy, Vikram Baital, Gayab Aaya, Potli Baba ki, ohh how I loved all of them. In the world of Marvel & DC comics we Indian kids had our own world of Diamond and Raj comics – gulping down even the small strips of cartoons from daily newspapers.

So Professor Shonku with his own set of stories made me reminisce my childhood and I relished each of his amazing adventures, travels, inventions and discoveries. His experiments were a mix of science, nature and art making it simple yet enjoyable for all young and old. The pleasure of visiting your childhood stories is like to returning to childhood ice cream flavours of orange chooski, frozen milk scoops served on leaves, or kulfi sticks dipped in cream before the global flavours of Gelatos, Sorbet and Chocolate fudges came visiting us.

Andrea says

I am only just now discovering for myself the wonderful literary creations of Satyajit Ray -- young adult literature that is pure enjoyment for all ages. I finished *The Diary of a Space Traveller*, and am on weekends working through the large collection of detective stories, *Feluda*. The first of the stories of Professor Shonku opens with the discovery of his diary in a meteor crater, and this is one of the first lines:

Oh God, was he going to tell me another story about a tiger? Tarak Babu had this most annoying habit of dragging a tiger into whatever anecdote he happened to relate. (2)

Who can resist this? There is no tiger, but an irascible and brilliant old man who ceaselessly invents the most wonderful things. The first entry in Professor Shonku's diary sets the stage, when he is startled by an intruder -- a weird looking man -- but finds it is simply his own reflection that has startled him, as his faithful servant has removed an old calendar from the mirror. So he shoots his servant with a snuff gun, ensuring he will be sneezing for next 33 hours. I am not generally in favour of shooting servants ever, but I am indeed in favour of the existence of a snuff gun. I also enjoyed his desire to invent various pills for making annoying people uncomfortable enough to leave him alone.

His is not precise science you understand, more that marvelous old-fashioned alchemical science that relied on bunsen burners and vials, glasses full of strangely coloured liquids bubbling over flames and jars full of rare and magical things (like the whiskers of lobsters). And this is not a world empty of what appears to be magic, but one where science acknowledges there is much that it does not yet know.

It is a world of intelligent cats and crows and nosy neighbours and rockets and all things nice.

It has titles like 'Professor Shonku and the Egyptian Terror', and another reason to love the professor:

I decided to visit this strange tomb, if I could find the time and opportunity. I love cats. I had to leave my own Newton at home. I feel homesick whenever I think of him. (161)

These particularly reminded me of Verne or Conan Doyle -- Professor Shonku is described by Satyajit Ray as a mixture of Doyle's Professor Challenger and his own father Sukumar's creation Hesoram Hushiar. They are told resolutely from a Bengali perspective. A scientist with many friends in European and American circles, who travels widely and is as widely respected, but still within a post-colonial reality where he occupies a certain space. He is told by a sinister Egyptian:

'You appear to be an Indian. So why are you getting mixed up with these white brutes? Why are you so concerned about the ancient and holy objects of our past?'

Despite this space, he shares some shortcomings that usually I only associate with Americans and Europeans

--

But that was really not so amazing, was it? Bengalis might be a most diverse race--two unrelated men rarely look similar. But the Egyptians are different. On Egyptian frequently looks like another. (174)

Oh dear...he says something very similar about the Chinese. But still. His love of ancient and holy objects and knowing the past is actually combined with a strong respect and ethics in dealing with such things found rarely if ever in fiction by white authors. I loved 'Professor Shonku and the Box from Baghdad', where they come across both mystery and treasure and this happens:

Al-Hubbabal smiled a little dryly. 'I don't mean you, Professor Shonku, but--' he paused and glanced at Goldstein, '--many of our valuable possessions have made their way to museums in the West. So even if you didn't want anything for your own use, I fear you might tell some museum or other about things you've seen.'

Goldstein looked embarrassed... (211)

Spoiler alert -- Goldstein does in fact try to take the marvelous Box, and he is struck down with a fitting punishment.

Finally. Everyone gives a cheer.

This little book ends most delightfully with more information about both Satyajit Ray as author (and, of course, famous director) and Professor Shonku. There are two fact files and these brilliant lists as little games that younger readers can play guessing their meanings. The first list is of some of Shonku's inventions:

Camerapid
Luminimax
Annihilin

Remembrain
Cerebrilliant

Pretty awesome. And then there are all these wonderful compounds:

Paradoxite powder
Bicornite Acid
Paranoium Potentate
Ferro-satanic Acid
Tantrum Boropaxinate

Immensely enjoyable, the only thing I am saddened by is the lack of presence his hometown of Giridi bears in the stories, or any of the cities he visits. But you can't have everything.

Aruna Kumar Gadepalli says

12 Stories dealing the protagonist Prof. Shonku takes readers to the sci-fi world of Ray with his poetical prose. Translation seems to be good as I see the story took me in to the story easily.

Ranjan says

Professor Shonku is such an amazing character, can't imagine how much I would have liked it if I read it in my childhood. Pure beauty and master story telling ♥

Do make your child or younger ones read this or read it to them ;)

Tilak says

amazing

Harsha says

i did not like it when i first saw it but as we say NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY IT'S COVER it became one of the 3 best books i have ever read

Jeffy Joseph says

As these stories were written for a younger audience, it is only fair that I review it from the perspective of the

intended reader. If I had gotten hold of this collection when I was younger, say 10 or 12 years old, I would have adored it. All the stories in this collection are fantastic adventurous tales of Professor Shonku. The themes of these adventures vary from space travel to hypnotism, from an ancient Egyptian projector to a sage that rejuvenates the dead. Although there are supernatural elements at play in these stories, they are quite captivating.

However, some of Professor Shonku's inventions are hilarious. An ingredient (whiskers of a lobster) for his magical medical concoction (Miracurol) is reminiscent of the modus operandi of the dwarves in Norse mythology.

It is a fun read, if you remind yourself of the intended reader.

Deepthi Gopinathan says

I wish I'd found this book when I was a kid. Took me to the long-gone days of my childhood when you could be mesmerized by simple marvels of creative fiction.

Amogh Thakur says

Nice collection of stories, reminds me somewhat of Diamond comics.

A fun read, though mainly for kids, enjoyed it a lot. Some of the innovations mentioned by Satyajit Ray, are now commonplace, but to think that they were thought about back in 1960s, when there was no sci-fi genre for the mainstream, and man had yet to reach space, is truly amazing.

Vishy says

I have wanted to read a Satyajit Ray book for a long time. I wanted to start with the Feluda stories. But someone mentioned the Professor Shonku stories, and because I have never heard of Professor Shonku before, I thought I will try his stories first. There are three volumes of Professor Shonku stories available in English translation, and 'The Diary of a Space Traveller' is the first one.

'The Diary of a Space Traveller' has twelve stories. The first one is the title story. In this story, the narrator's neighbour comes and gives a diary to him. It looks like some kind of meteorite has crashed nearby and this diary was found in that site. This diary is written by Professor Shonku, in which he writes about his attempts to build a rocket to reach Mars and what happens during that trip. It looks like the Professor hasn't come back to Earth but his diary somehow has. The narrator then finds more diaries in Professor Shonku's house which detail his past adventures. These comprise the rest of the stories in the book.

I loved every story in 'The Diary of a Space Traveller'. The title story is science fiction and most of it happens in outer space and other planets. There are other stories in the book about dinosaur bones, ghosts, Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, hypnotism, the mysteries of the human brain, robots, intelligent birds, miniature planets and miniature living beings. In these very different stories, Satyajit Ray explores many fascinating mysteries which have haunted the human imagination. The stories feel like classical science fiction / fantasy - the kind of stories which came out in the 19th century and the dawn of the 20th century,

that Jules Verne, H.G.Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle used to write, the kind of stories which came out before science fiction writers moved their stories to other planets and galaxies with alien civilizations, which sounded the death knell of classical science fiction. Satyajit Ray's stories hark back to that innocent era of classical science fiction and I felt nostalgic while reading them. Many of the stories are open ended with no clear cut resolution in the end. It adds to the beauty of the story. The prose flows smoothly, there is enough information to make the reader understand the story, there is the right amount of humour. The translation by Gopa Majumdar is beautiful - I can only imagine how much more beautiful the original Bengali version must be. I loved the main characters - Professor Shonku, our eccentric scientist, his assistant Prahlad, his cat Newton, his neighbour Avinash Babu, who is always taking potshots at the professor's research. Then there are characters who come only in specific stories, who are all fascinating. The book has an introduction by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in which she describes how Bengali children loved Professor Shonku's adventures when they first came out. The book also has an afterword by the translator which makes for interesting reading.

I loved 'The Diary of a Space Traveller and other stories'. The stories in it were fascinating, gripping and entertaining. I loved the classical feel of the stories. I can't wait to read more Professor Shonku adventures.

I have to say one last thing. Bengali friends, I am so jealous of you. I am so jealous that you got to read Satyajit Ray's stories when you were young. I am so jealous that you got to read them in Bengali. I am happy I discovered them finally, but I wish I had read them when I was young.

Have you read this book or other Professor Shonku adventures? What do you think about them?

Isha Bhallamudi says

Oh, what a lovely book. I didn't know Satyajit Ray had a series of stories about an eccentric professor, I had only heard of Feluda. This is Indianised science fiction. The writing is gentle and funny and takes you back to the kind of stories you absolutely loved as a child. Also, my brother is a big fan of Rick and Morty, and this professor reminded me quite a lot of Rick. Suspend your imagination for a little while, and dive into this book.
