

# EISHOB Dinraatri

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Every cat is a great teacher. I live with five and I know for a fact that they are.

And every cat parent is a great photographer. I live with five and I know that too. My phone gallery is basically 1/2 cats, 1/4 my selfies with the cats and the rest, other things. Simply put, my cats have made me wise and creative.

I have seen my cats celebrate the smallest of things with utmost pleasure. They also teach me to do the same, everyday.

Bagheera is the first cat I brought home, and just like the parent of a firstborn, I got carried away while buying stuff for her, especially toys to make our play sessions more fun. From a battery run mouse to all those feathery teasers—we got her everything. But Bagheera's list of likes were different. She would play with simple things, sometimes for hours. For example, 1. Strings (nylon, plastic) 2. Cardboard boxes—small and big 3. Plastic shopping bags 4. Paper shopping bags 5. My hair 6. My hair bands, to name a few.

One day I found her playing with my phone charger, cut in half. "Seriously Bagh?," I asked her, exasperated. "Why do you have to play with my charger?"

"You know, life is about these little things. When you pay attention to these everyday things in your life, you will get to see how many gifts you actually have that you can appreciate," replied Bagheera, chewing one half of my charger.

Enjoy the little things—that's a cliché but I trusted her. They are cats: the greatest of phi-

losophers. They know everything.

After Bagheera, four more cats came and all of them are great reminders for me that the little things that we barely even notice we are doing, are of vital importance.

Bagheera and gang make my mundane beautiful. There is beauty and wonder to be found in the smallest moments, they teach me that too.

How? When I am cooking dinner, one or two of them would lounge on top of the fridge, doing one of their most favourite, independent activities—staring. When I drape my saree, they would come play with the end of it. When I change my bedsheets, they would always volunteer to be my assistants, and make my job more 'fun'. If I paint, they need to be there sniffing my paints. If I am working on my laptop, they would sit right on the keyboard and yawn. I am always under their unflinching gaze, the kind of gaze that makes you feel loved.

There is something comforting and refreshing about shared silences—another lesson I learnt from them. Sometimes, in each other's presence we can sit in silence, for hours at a time, each carrying on with our day, without feeling any pressure to keep a conversation going. This shared silence, I tell you—it's a gift and oh, what a gift!

When the outside world is so crazy and incredibly loud and it makes me feel like I am running out of moments and space for my mind to unwind—my cats make me feel at home.

The Internet is filled with tons of articles on how amazing cats can be as therapy animals for people living with anxiety, depression, chronic loneliness and personality disorders, and how their purring and cuddles are healing agents. I heard my friends talking about their cats being a massive help when they felt vulnerable or upset. One of my friends has a cat who somehow seems to know whenever she is close to an anxiety attack and helps her by purring. Bagheera and gang, in my case, never give me the luxury of crying, face buried in their furry tummy. They don't sniff at my tears. They don't purr sitting on my lap when I feel down.

They help me with their company, and all of these teachings. With them, I am more mindful of the movements my body is making.

They don't walk around giving me wellness tips and self-care advice. But they did get me out of my bed, on days when just the thought of getting out used to fill me with dread.

In each other's company, in silence and conversation—we make sure we are perfectly functional. And I think that's enough.

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