

Books can say  
"books," we have to  
be



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Books exercise a silent power on the sensitive mind. They lend a joy and a delight, which is exclusive to the reader as it is precious. Silent, passive and noiseless, they set in motion countless multitudes and change even the character of nations, much more than individuals. They are a potent weapon because the printed word has a power of its own. Lord Byron says, "A drop of ink can make millions think."

"Alexander the Great was respectful as well as fearful of books. It is said when he conquered a country, he ordered its libraries to be burnt. We can understand Alexander's apprehension of books creating long-range unrest against him. Milton puts it, "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose for a life beyond." The famous French writer, Voltaire, says, "the entire known world, excepting savage nations, is governed by books." This is close to "except a living man there is nothing more wonderful than a book."

"There is a profound reason for it because, next to our soul, a book is the only thing that takes us to immortality. Who are the people, men, and women who have come, down to us from generations? They are the people who have left us something worthwhile in the form of books. Minus them, we would have been mentally bankrupt, so to say. We have to lose and find ourselves in the books of others. That is one way of identifying ourselves with it. An enlightened mind likes to lose him in other's mind, more enlightened."

Charles Lamb says, " When I am not walking, I am not reading, I cannot sit and think. Books think for me." This, however, does not mean that we should not use our own critical faculties when we read a book.

These days especially when books are being churned out from printing presses sooner than you can say " books," we have to be choosy and selective. The litmus test is that the books which make us think the most are the best. Some books need no mental exertion in reading them because they, in the first place, needed none from those who wrote them! There is no worse stealer of time than such a book. Books are useful in understanding and exploring vast, hidden " internal territory.

" Carlyle has said, " The true university of these days is a collection of books." To this, we may add inspiration and self-help books. There is always room for improvement, however impressive you think your personality already is. In fact, most of us pass through life without ever realizing our full potential. A majority of people fail to realize their real potential. Books, the distilled wisdom of the ages, can help a good deal in realizing our real potential. When Mahatma Gandhi said that the real transformation in his life came after he read the Gita, he was expressing the same truth.

Reading at random is unlikely to yield fruitful results. It is like rushing through a garden without looking at the beauty of flowers. Fix your goal carefully and then select the best book in that area. Prepare a list of other books, which can be taken up later, enlarging your interest information and knowledge. Draw a distinction between information and knowledge.

The former is sketchy and smacks of smatterings. The latter has depth, is many dimensional and makes you a modest authority on a subject. That is why Bacon says, " Some books are to be tasted, others swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested." Choose a book, which elevates you and inspires you and raises your spirits so that you emerge a better human being. Such a book appeals to you because your own limited information fails you. Thus, be willing to be led by it into a wider insight and clarity of concepts. Books (good ones) are " teachers" and " preachers" though silent ones. They are selfless and have advantage over oral teaching.

Above all, they are ready to repeat their lesson as many times as you want. The focus should be your own development and improvement. Simple principle is' the best book is the one which meets your wants, the natural thirst of your own mind, arouses interest in further reading and also rivets thought. The art of reading lies in judicious omission. Pay a visit to any bookshop, and you will find many such books on almost every conceivable subject from good, better vocabulary to a winsome personality. Go to a good library and you will be simply astounded by the wealth of material available.

Avoid aimless browsing. You will walk through the library without picking a good book of your requirement. Go with a pre-determined mind. You save time. If you go to the library sans aim, there is a strong possibility that you will come out without a book or a wrong book. No matter how deep (or shallow) your knowledge, you find something to whet your interest and curiosity and give you the advantage of a well-stored mind and a full, better life.

But do not mindlessly run after what are called "best-sellers." They are products of high voltage publicity. They usually contain nothing but ornamental trash. They have been aptly called "girded tomb." Be genuinely interested.

Choose something in which you are already interested. Interest is the key to all learning. A cox-comb is like a bird in interested artificial feathers! When you choose a book, buy it. A book borrowed is not quite the same thing as a book owned. Possession means interest as well as an added value.

You are at liberty to mark its pages, and underline it as you see fit. This is valuable as you are to keep the book for future reference. Hasty reading is like a spirit in a garden. You ignore flowers, texture of the grass, etc. Another disadvantage is that you have to backtrack to know what has passed you unnoticed.

Do not buy books because they have been brought out by a noted printer. It is like buying clothes which ill-fit you but have been tailored by a famous firm. Read the preface. Scan the contents, the areas covered and the topics dealt with. Go back over them slowly second time, pausing over bits you do not follow, underlining those paragraphs, which seem vital or in some way arrest your attention. Some books are sure to call for much more thought and concentration. Take time to ensure that you really absorb them, like a sponge. The book fills your mind and it becomes a part of your personality.

Practical wisdom books yield a rich harvest. You are never too young or too old to profit by them. The opportunities are endless for widening knowledge, for finding a new interest, and cultivating a new hobby. Thirty-six years ago. I

adopted writing (bad, then it was) as a hobby. Today, it is my passion. It brings a daily delight, and is an eternal prize packet.

Learning is a permanent luminary, which may be fogged for the time being, but when the fog disappears, is again bright. A good book may be neglected but when opened, will impart instruction again. It is a lighthouse of knowledge. If the book is along the line of your job, it adds to your efficiency. Victor Hugo began to study Greek when he was past fifth he had become so charmed with the language. De Quincy, whose prose style has served as a model for perfection relates that he spent hours looking for a word, which would give the exact shade or meaning he intended. If such luminaries felt it necessary to devote the better part of their lives to the improvement of their vocabulary, surely, you, too, will consider it a goal worth your effort and consideration, if you aspire to write or read well.

You want to speak more effectively. There are many books on the subject. They are down-to-earth, practical and written in a vivid style. Those, which deal with the psychological approach to the problems of living, are of immense help. Psychology has brought a wealth of knowledge to every part of life, which has revolutionized thinking and brought loads of help, to ordinary people. How-to-do books are a simple version of what pure psychology is, telling about the kind of person you are and how your mind works. You get instructions as to how you can help yourself to become a balanced and integrated personality. How to sleep well, overcome inferiority complex, mastering shyness, fear and phobias and a whole lot of them on sex, marriage, psychocybermatics.

Choose one area for improvement of you personality at a time. Then pass on to another. Shed the notion that you are born with a fixed, rigid personality.

Personality is acquired. You may not be born with a magnetic personality but what prevents you from acquiring magnetic manners? Apart from the sheer inspiration of striking out into something new, you will be surprised at how your life changes inside you. A new person emerges from inside you.