

Bibliophile: A Fading Tribe in Tech-driven Modern World

Prof. Subhendu Bhattacharya, Assistant Professor, Amity Global Business School, Mumbai,

subh.econ@gmail.com

Dr. Sona Raghuvanshi, Assistant Professor, Amity Global Business School, Mumbai,

raghuvanshi.sona@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: As per the dictionary meaning, bibliophile implies the person who has affinity toward books. This category of people collect, preserve and read books quite often. They are also regarded as bookworm. Book is window to the world. Books of various categories inform us about historic past, inventions by creative genius, imaginations scripted in fictions, moral virtues and immoral vices, guidelines for activities to performs, exploration, victories and conquers made by valiant leaders, present world status and idea about future we are about to experience. Libraries have been prime source of information for ages. It is regarded as treasure trove buried in the pages of myriad books. Bibliophiles can be outspoken or introvert. But they are definitely more knowledgeable than common people. Human beings are made of the books they study. A globe trotter might be more worldly wise but a bookish person would definitely be rational, analytical and expressive. But with the passage of time, bibliophiles are mostly missing from the scene. IT revolution in 20th century and social media explosion in 21st century have created more avenues for enlightenment and entertainment than book reading pleasure of old time. People in modern societies are now tech-savvy and equipped with smart devices which provide them host of thrilling experience. Movie watching, video clips, listening to chart busters, receiving news updates, weather forecast, sports details, everything is now available at handheld devices. With affordability of smart devices and reduction in data service rate, access to digital medium of learning, interacting and entertaining options are available to all age group. So fascination and affection towards books are waning at faster pace and bibliophiles are gradually passing into oblivion.

KEYWORDS: *Bibliophile, Reading habit, book collection, library membership, Smart devices, IT revolution, Social media, Digital world, Virtual space*

I. INTRODUCTION

Book is the highway to knowledge and wisdom. It illumines our mind, broadens our vision, expands our outlook, nourishes our soul and enriches our existence. Book introduces us with the vast world. We develop our common sense, intelligence and ideology by reading books since school days. Those who wish to make a mark in academic field, inculcate affinity with books for securing erudite acumen. Bibliophile or book lovers take refuge in books and remain busy in collecting delectable nectar from the honeycomb of book world. Book lovers are always more informed and knowledgeable than book averse. It is also found that book aficionados are less prone to depression, suicidal tendency and harmful addictions. But there is no established correlation stating that book lovers are high in ethical sense and morality value. Fascination for books, inclination to get along new books and crave for reading all classic or bestseller books instigate them to develop their own library. Bibliophiles find an indescribable exhilaration with gift of new books, in visit to

library or in trip to well stocked book store with ample space for exploration like Crossword, or earlier Landmark and Oxford Gallery kind of store. They find book fair organized in places like Frankfurt, Leipzig or Kolkata as paradise. Literary festival as it happens in Jaipur or Mumbai, witness footfall of bibliophiles who come to get information of new books and fresh insights from budding and established authors. News of book and spending hours on favourite paperback kindle their spirit no matter how grief-stricken, debt ridden or disease afflicted they are. This tribe goes extra mile to collect their favourite book, visits the memorial of revered author or having an animated chat on topics of cultivated books. Books come as special item in their home décor and spending extravagant amount on rare or cherished book put their family budget under strain. Complete work of Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde collection, Maupassant or O Henry's short story, Jane Austin's Pride and Prejudice, Victor Hugo's Les Miserable, Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment, Agatha Christie or Arthur Canon Doyle's mystery stories generally ornate their bookcase besides books of other fictional and non-fictional

category. Unfortunately bibliophiles are reducing in number in the psychedelic maze of digital expansion. Books have taken a backseat in the world dictated and dominated by broadband service, wifi connection, 4G technology and ultramodern digital devices. Books are listened more than read using app based services such as audible by amazon, Google playbooks, Headway, ABS etc. Books can be downloaded through internet and preserved in PDF form. Books can be read in handheld devices like Amazon Kindle, Box Novo, Cobo Clara, Apple Ipad and Lenevo Yoga book which are useful in buying millions of books and storing in the device in hassle free way. New technology has given special dimension to e-library which can emerge mightier than the physical library in coming days. Good old bibliophiles are either migrating to new tech pattern or silently following their degenerative legacy demurely.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The chief objectives of the research paper are as follows-

- I. To portray the subtle and enigmatic characteristics of bibliophiles
- II. To elucidate the behavioural changes of bibliophiles in tech-driven digital era

II. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive, analytic and fact finding based research. Major emphasis is given on understanding distinguishing attributes of bibliophiles. It's a special cohort on which limited study had been done. The attempt has been made to figure out the influence of technology that acted as change agent for this category and the new trend has panned out. There is primary data collection through online survey to find out the transformed nature of this special tribe. In the survey process Google doc had been used for drafting of questionnaire and circulating the same among people of various age groups. Data are mostly qualitative in nature and analysis of same is psychographic type. An endeavour is exerted to seek the difference between old pattern and new style in book aficionado segment. The difference is stark and comparison is vivid between them. This bibliophile oriented study is quite less. There is scope of further study in this field and revealing facts can be delineated on sincerity of previous form and frivolity of present incarnation. There is an attempt to track the reason for young generations to go for alternative pastimes. As book reading is not a compulsion for different age groups and students are also accessing digital medium for study material, the behavioral aspect has been cultivated in the study to gauge environment and circumstance in modern digital world to develop affinity for various diversions.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the article titled 'For Those Who Want to Lead, Read' published in Harvard Business Review in August 15, 2012, author John Coleman expressed concern about declining reading habit of people which is in sharp contrast with rising literacy rate. He noticed this receding trend among all age groups of American. He extolled the broad reading habits of eminent leaders which helped them to develop gainful insights, innovative ideas and reach acme of their effectiveness. He substantiated the fact with example of revered leaders such as Apple founder Steve Jobs, Nike initiator Phil Knight or former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill nurtured reading habit and went far ahead of their contemporaries. Author referred that bibliophile nature assists the person to gain knowledge in varied field, make him articulate orator, instil managerial acumen and improve emotional intelligence. Author recommended all to join book club, encourage acquaintances and relax, rejuvenate oneself with this magnificent habit.

In the article 'What Books Should Asian Leaders Read?' published in Harvard Business Review in September 09, 2010, author Adi Ignatius expressed that reading of oriental and occidental classic and contemporary books help us to develop personal and professional values. In his opinion books with intellectual value and literary elegance are influencer in formation of consciousness, profundity, and intent of a person. In the explanation author cited that great leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton were voracious readers and credited their success to reading habit.

In the article 'Reading culture fading away' published in Daily Excelsior by Agrita Chhibber, authoress expressed anxiety over decaying art of reading in modern society dominated by mass media, social media and networking sites. In her interpretation she referred that school students are indifferent about visiting library which used to be source of happiness earlier. She appealed to create environment for book reading by youngsters and alerted about deleterious impact of obsession with videogames for tender minds. She emphasised about guiding youngsters to read old classics and popular modern bestsellers to have holistic view of the world.

In the article by Emma Charlton titled '5 reasons why reading books is good for you' published in World Economic Forum- Agenda dated June 04, 2019, authoress did analytical study and expressed her views with diagrammatic interpretation. In her narrative, she highlighted conducive impact of reading. She mentioned about longevity of the readers, erudite elevation, acquisition of skill for better future prospect, strengthening vocabulary, sustaining neurological proficiency etc. She also referred that reading physical book proved to be effective in competency building compared to leaning on digital print.

In the article titled "Can reading improve your wellbeing?" by Josie Billington published in World Economic Forum-Agenda dated February 13, 2015, authoress claimed that readers lead fulfilling life and 28 percent of non-readers are prone to be depressed. As per her opinion, book reading habit can help to overcome loneliness and isolationism. She stressed that readers usually find purpose of living and lead a balanced, happy life compare people who spend time on watching television, social media or recreation magazines. She mentioned that readers are mostly resilient, face setbacks boldly and bounce back steadily.

IV. RESEARCH OUTCOME

In the online survey conducted with the help of Google doc, the 55 respondents were from various age groups who responded thoroughly. There were 13 questions in the questionnaire. It went in the sequence of simple to in-depth. In the first question related to age 14.5% were from less than 20 years age, 58.2% lied between 20-30 age brackets, 5.5% were from 30-40 and remaining 21.8% were from 40-50 category. So mostly we got the response from millennial, Gen Z and a reasonable slice was from Gen X. Female respondents outnumbered male counterpart in slight margin. Astonishingly, 63.6% of respondents denied being habitual reader, only 32.7% acknowledged with affirmative response. Only 3.6% admitted they are clueless about their status. This clarifies that book reading habit is on declining trend. It doesn't appeal to majority of the masses now. In the query related to means of staying updated, majority (> 60%) expressed their likeness towards tracking News on Mobile App or showed preference for social media and networking site based updates. Only 30% cared about newspaper reading and miniscule 1% tries out reading GK and current affair book. This tendency also portrays antipathy towards reading book for being informed about worldly affairs. With respect to e-library, majority (about 56.4%) are not sure about its effectiveness over physical library. 20% of respondents emphatically voted in favour of e-library and 21.8 % denied about it and infinitesimal 1.8% are almost indifferent to it. Book lovers basically prefer well stocked library and eager to spend more time in physical library than coffee shop. But very few are now interested to spend time in library as smart devices offer plethora of exciting experience. In response to follow of bestseller's list 36.5% replied that they are not concerned about it, but few check it in Wikipedia, Amazon, The Guardian or New York Times list. Only bibliophiles' are ones who care about best sellers list and book review. Spend time on reading excerpts of book launched new in the market. Non book lovers remain oblivious about it. In response to the question related to visit to bookstore, majorities are either in long back (27.3%) or can't remember (23.3%) category. Only 29.1% is comparatively serious about visiting bookstore for whatsoever reason. This also bears testimony of loosing significance of books displayed at bookstore. Digital stores mostly face more

footfalls than bookstore which is on regressive track. In response to question about preference to get book as a gift on anniversary, Majority (59.3%) are of sometimes, not so sure, less often or never category. This behavioural pattern shows how other objects are taking precedence over book in the life of people. With respect to possession of book reading devices, 59.3% is devoid of this privilege. This also highlights the antipathy towards buying device which facilitates book reading exercise. Finally when question was raised to know the opinion of people about effectiveness book reading in neutralising incidence of war, terrorism, immoral act, crime, violence and poverty, majority are inconclusive and indeterminate about it.

BRIGHTER SIDE OF BEING A BIBLIOPHILE

Reading leads to illumination of mind. Good books with spiritual messages or social values and with gripping storyline putting emphasis on virtues of human existence can enrich our souls. Reading habit is like meditation. It helps to forget us about miseries of our world or hardship of daily lives common for majority of the masses. Books are teachers and educate us on various subjects. It helps in self-learning exercise to great extent. Bibliophiles are mostly avid readers and they are praised for possessing encyclopaedic knowledge base. They are more rational in approach and have a logical explanation for every phenomenon of the world. They tend to look at the brighter side of every occurrence and their interpretations are replete with irrefutable reasoning. Books can be best friend of human beings. We build affinity with books at early stage of life at the inception of schooling. Books create awareness about good and evil. It illuminates about virtues and vices for mankind. It helps us to understand necessities of righteousness and how significant this exercises is to have a peaceful solemn life and it's also instrumental for achieving salvation and divine bliss. Bibliophiles are less likely to suffer from dementia or Alzheimer's disease or depression.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study on bibliophile cohort is with a purpose to track their special characteristics and how this group is acclimatizing itself with tech-driven modern world. This group is secular in nature and try to understand the world around them through insights buried within pages. Books act as window to the world or universe for them. But surprisingly this tribe is on diminishing side. New generations are not so keen to be part of this group or fail to acknowledge being a part of it. Collection of books by eminent authors and seizing the beauty of delineation or elucidation of story scripted in pages doesn't capture the imagination of new generation. Social networking sites and social media is more appealing to present generation and majority are drawn in the spiral of news and information circulated through it. Less take trouble to spend time on paperback or on reading classic novel. Visit to library and spending hours in company of books does not cut a deal for

youth compared to visit to well decked coffee shop or posh hangout zones. Bookstores in metro cities are fighting hard nowadays to draw attention of buyers and gradually converting it into multifacility shopping unit to receive more footfall. Majority of youngsters don't care about checking bestseller list or what books are new arrivals in the market. Bibliophiles are curious about it and ready to read the excerpt to get a glimpse of the storyline. Reading habit is useful for public speaking. More a person read more eloquent he/she could be and speech will be enriched with widely chosen phrases, proverbs, refined vocabulary and reflect a spark of wisdom. So many well-known leaders of modern and yesteryears gave credit to books for their ascendancy and stature. The paradigm has shifted for new world bibliophiles. New gadgets have made the task easy to buy books and preserve in e-store inbuilt in handheld devices. The easy access of books in electronic form may create a new wave if new generations are motivated for reading books. But good old charm with physical books would always remain special for genuine booklovers.

VI. SUGGESTION

There are complaints from parents and teachers alike about obsession of new generations with tech devices. Modern gadgets and smart devices are ruling the roost and matter of prime importance for youngsters. In this fascination attention span is on decline and reading habit takes a backseat. It's a fact that nobody can be made bibliophile by force. It's inner drive or personal inclination for extracting wisdom of the world hidden in pages of numerous books. Youngsters generally pick up habits from their family members. If parents are not into books, children would less likely to be bookworm. There should be adequate books of different subjects within accessible periphery to make a person reach out for book. Book reading habit will start slow and gradually pick up momentum. New paperbacks should be gifted to near and dear ones to turn their attention to books. It should be highlighted that books are best friend and reading habit is one form of meditation. Self help books with lighter descriptions should be kept handy as they act cushion in hour of mental turbulence. Taking near and dear ones to well decked bookstores and having a trip to book fair can open channel for generating curiosity about books.

VII. CONCLUSION

The beneficial sides of book reading habits are unequivocal, enduring and effusive. It is said bibliophiles are rare to suffer from loneliness and remain devoid of depression. Book acts as great companion of human beings. It shows guidance in the darkest hour and also assists to tide over any crisis because age-old wisdoms, scientific-reasoning, and universal truths are held by books. Books alert people about consequence of moral slip and outcome of unethical practices or immoral acts. Books are like great preceptors. They guide readers to be worldly wise, financially

independent and to maintain a balanced life. Biographies or autobiographies are considered as great learning tool as they enlighten about hurdles to overcome in journey of successful life. There are evidences of successful people and billionaires giving credit to books for their success story. Although there is no guarantee that all bibliophiles would be rich, affluent and successful as sometimes book reading habit makes people indolent, indifferent about responsibilities and oblivious about priorities. But book reading addiction does more good than bad, as knowledge is supreme and knowledgeable people are highly respected in society. In this tech-driven world, when there are rising cases of stress, tension and anxiety related disorders for all age groups caused by factors like inequality, environmental crisis, health emergency, violence, injustice, deprivation etc, books give us healing touch and provide us relief from worries of the world. They instil empathy, lessen stress, help us to gain clarity in chaos and inspire us to make the world a better place to live in. Bibliophiles might be less in number but survived through ages. In recent time they are on crossroad and adapting tech-based facilities to sustain their existence and to give a new dimension of their likeness for books.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adi Ignatius (2010), 'What Books Should Asian Leaders Read?', Harvard Business Review, available at <https://hbr.org/2010/09/what-books-should-leaders-read?autocomplete=true>, September 09, 2010
- [2] AgritaChhibber(2018), 'Reading culture fading away', Daily Excelsior, retrieved from <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/reading-culture-fading-away/>, October 14, 2018
- [3] Chris Weller(2017), '9 of the most successful people share their reading habits', World Economic Forum- Agenda, July 27, 2017
- [4] Emma Charlton(2019), '5 reasons why reading books is good for you', World Economic Forum- Agenda, June 04, 2019
- [5] John Coleman(2012), 'For Those Who Want to Lead, Read', Harvard Business Review, available at <https://hbr.org/2012/08/for-those-who-want-to-lead-read>, August 15, 2012
- [6] Josie Billington(2015), "Can reading improve your wellbeing?", World Economic Forum- Agenda, February 13, 2015
- [7] Kevin Dickinson (2018), 'Bill Gates and Benjamin Franklin share this learning habit', World Economic Forum- Agenda, October 24, 2018
- [8] NehaSaini(2020), 'No more readers in libraries, publishers explore digital platforms to reach out', The Tribune, Amritsar, September 4, 2020
- [9] Priyanka Roy(2020), 'Independent small publishing in a post-pandemic world', The Telegraph, June 23, 2020
- [10] Richard Feloni(2015), '30 business books every professional should read before turning 30', World Economic Forum- Agenda, April 30, 2015
- [11] Benita Fernando(2020), 'Indie bookstore Wayword & Wise faces uncertain future', The Indian Express, Mumbai, September 11, 2020
- [12] Sumit Paul(2019), 'The saddest thing for a bibliophile', Deccan Herald, December 22, 2019