



THE STATUS OF READERSHIP THE PERFECT PAST, THE IMPERFECT PRESENT AND THE PROGRESSIVE FUTURE A RETROSPECTIVE INTROSPECTION

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Abstract:

Reading sensibility constitutes the most spectacular transitional achievement in the prolonged existential process of man. Reading as is widely misunderstood does not mean the mere meanness of reading a piece of write up. It transcends all faculties of sensibility. Man's observatory sense distinguishes him from the rest of his fellow creatures. In the broad perspective, the prototype that he made for his long run comfort by imitating the physical properties of the fellow creatures is an established testimony of his reading ability. He accomplished this feat, by putting all the substantial mastery of his sensibility in tandem with nature. All progress in physical, material, scientific, and technological by nature is the bye- product of his exceptional reading ability. Through this paper the author categorically analyses the reading impulse of man in the past and the laxity being exhibited by the present generation in reading written materials. But the all hopes are pinned on the future generation whose reading calibration would increase to a substantial level. In the past people heaved trust on books as the media for entertainment besides attaining satiation in the quest for knowledge. Man was on the verge of knowledge emancipation. The true search for unravelled knowledge led him to discover unending new areas of knowledge from which theories, theorems, equations, permutations, calculations, laws, thesis, principles etc., were generated for the future generation to engage in research and contribute further findings for the following generation. The great sages, saints and prophets who were transcendentalists brought out new schemes of things on the then available materials. These were read and re-read paving way for further churning of thoughts. The resultant products were further subjected for study. Newer versions were created. In the process countless print materials were seen light of the day in the form of scriptures, fictions, biographies, travelogues, scientific matters, etc. These have been voraciously swallowed by the hungry readers who did not have a substitute for pass time and also felt insatiable thirst for furthering knowledge. A library revolution swept the reader's quest which had felt its reverberation all over the world. The present generation is unique in many respects. First, information exodus created a blot on the otherwise ought to be vibrant generation. Speed and space were the ensigns. All things were judged in terms of speed. Values were seen as materialistic. With the inception of internet, the world was reduced into a fistful matter. Information became an 'open sesame' at a merely few clicks. Playing cricket tests of four days were treated tortuous by those who batted for limited over matches. The wide acclamation this new model received from the stakeholders proclaims the inclination of present generation to speed. Where then is a space for taking at least one hour a day for reading? Reading was symbolised as a lethargic exercise and stamped as the sign of mental retardation. The advent of electronic gadgets worsened the situation. Book publishers closed their shops. Research papers were written in the interest of academia and only as eligibility for elevation and more pecuniary benefits. Reading as an inevitable part of human culture has lost its significance in the present world. The readership would emerge eminence in the future. The future readership will be launched from the pad of the present scientific achievement. The research fraternity is prone to the institution of library where books on fictitious topics were replaced with printed journals. With the advent of internet, various platforms like blog writing, use of social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc., enhanced the scope of community literature where the gifted writers write for the curious readers to read. The concept of a library with typical infrastructure is going to be an old woman's tale. As some of the stalwarts in this field had foreseen in the future library there shall be no material entities. There shall prevail only virtual library with infinite books on myriad topics. This will be known as E- Library and the stuff one can download and read repeatedly will be E-books. This magic system would serve miracle in the future students who will make use of the innovation to the fullest core.

Index Terms: Readership, Past, Present, Future, Community Literature, Social Media, E-Library & E- Books

1. Introduction:

The very emergence of man as the most superior among all creatures explains why he is undaunted and haughty. His head has been stuffed with myriad minute sensor chords. These miraculous and indefinable chords make him to think, memorise, calculate, analyse, encode and decode, observe and discover. The conspicuous exclusion in this elaborate intellectual exercise, is reading. Perchance reading attributes the corner stone of all faculties. While reading ability cannot be delinked with the rest of the faculties, it is the most subtle abstract that is inclusive to the core. Further, reading has too many ramifications. It does not merely confine to the activity of a superfluous art where the function of eyes synchronise with the vocal cords or plainly a matter of

comprehensive exercise. Reading is so much a divine work that all intellectual facets blend harmoniously into a single activity.

The existential history of man in the planet is a spectacular saga corresponding with his inquisitiveness to amass knowledge. His life in the initial years of survival as man with all humanly features had been viewed as the beginning of an unprecedented era in the long history of earth since the great Bing Bang. As sapiens or homo sapiens or homo sapiens sapiens man in general exhibited his skill of reading. The reading skill was used either for marking targets while hunting or determining the distance he covered while lusting to wander for fresh pastures. Those were abstract ways of reading. The contributions of the ancient Egyptians in the great advancement saga of man were unique. The discovery that the bark of papyrus could be used for writing made a significant contribution. What were written were meant for reading. The writing of hieroglyphic scripts on pillars which were deciphered just one century before also should be earmarked as the frontrunners in the long quest for man's reading thirst.

In this paper the author makes a humble attempt to assess the historical compulsion for man to take a head on with the necessity of linguistic vividness for his intellectual and cultural survival. The distinct feature that segregates man and animal is the mode of their expression of ideas. While animals depend on mere sounds to convey their ideas which are mostly monotonous and stereotyped, man resorts to duotones which, apart from mere communication becomes the highest modulation of eternal music. Man's progress in the field of communication testifies the millions of books on a host of subjects have been seen the light of the day since the invention of printing press.

2. Advantages of Reading:

Reading is a highly engaging activity to the mind which leads to many mental quotient. The first and foremost is the mental simulation. Activating mind is the most important existential need of man. As physical exercises stimulate muscles so as reading stimulates brain. This aspect transcends time and space. Why is then the laxity and lethargy being shown towards this most acceptable panacea for all ailments of mind?

Reading is a major activity that can reduce stress. The conditions facilitating for stress generation are more relevant today than in the past. Stress was rather an unknown mental state in the past. In other words stress literally meant that something that is given more importance. In the modern context stress is the product of modern occupational style. Both employers and employees are equally responsible for such predicament. The irony that is doing the rounds is, in the past there was no stress but reading was in the forefront. The fact that 'wellness' is an invariably misinterpreted word correlated with physical aspects. This explains why the wellness products like gymnastic equipments find a mad rush to the corporate where 'stress' is generated in bulk. The best way to assuage stress is to inspire and motivate the employees to take to serious reading of books of their choice. A healthy mind can boost productivity. Moreover a regular and serious reading can keep Alzheimer's and Dementia at bay. Little do the great wellness experts realise the need of the mental health so that an efficacious remedy is suggested which is none other than reading, a measure that should go hand in hand with physical exercises. Rubbishing this away as an intellectual activity inappropriate to a layman is utmost absurd. Another advantage of reading is the enhancement of knowledge. The more knowledge one possesses the better it will be to equip to meet the challenges of life. Language in any dialect is complete only with apt vocabulary. Vocabulary is the collective form of words which synchronise the various aspects of phonetics. One needs to command a perfect diction to make adept at communication. The calibration level of the qualified candidate for employability has undergone major twists. Accuracy in the answers was substituted by the way the answers were presented. The ability to communicate. The only way to acquire a desired level of vocabulary is reading books and relevant print stuffs. Reading is a top rung facilitator for memory improvement. It is a kind of regular tonic that helps to rejuvenate the mind. Psycho- medicos who treat acute cases of Alzheimer's and dementia stand testimony to this fact. All parents should encourage children to cultivate reading habit and present before them the awe inspiring world. Seduced by the unethical advertisement techniques, parents blindly feed children junk food supplements under the guise of improving memory power. But little do they realise the futility of this. Had they been wise enough to cultivate reading habit at an early age good many incidents of loss of memory and related maladies would have been avoided. It is a proven fact that reading strengthens analytical and thinking skills. This explains why such of those who are accustomed to serious reading have better stakes in the interviews to premium jobs. They could equip with sufficient IQ to succeed in the professions like journalism, public administration, legal practice and teaching.

Once the art of reading becomes a regular habit in children, their ability of focus and concentration in studies and other activities would increase manifold. It is an acceptable truth that reading stylises writing skills. Art of writing would undergo a drastic change improving style in language, presentation, arrangement of ideas, and maintenance of tempo.

3. The Status of Readership in the Past:

The aftermath of Renaissance and later Industrial Revolution proved breathers for the reading cult. The invention of printing press served the much required boost in the art of handling languages. Good many books have started reaching the questing hands of the readers. The readers showed a peculiar interest in fictions

especially satires and adventurous stories. That was mainly due to the convergence of Eastern and Western intelligentsia whose intellectual thirsts were unquenched as a result of the annexation of Constantinople by the belligerent Ottoman Turks. In the wake of hedonic national feelings that paved the way for fervent and solid nation states, poems in praise of countries of one's birth took a prominent place among the myriad reading stuff that were in the disposition of readers. The books irrespective of their contents became the entertainment mainstay of the people. Books also served the largest communication media in the absence of any other dependable device. The following facts and figures throw enough light on the reading exodus decades and centuries ago. First we shall strive to obtain the readership rate in numbers in the following countries.

4. The Readership Status in Western World in the 19th Century:

Nineteenth century marked an era of mass literacy in the western world. This new cult of readers was appropriate for the newspapers and cheap fictions. Half of the male population in France in the post revolution were literate, whereas England and Germany boasted 70% in 1850 and 88% in 1871 respectively. It was the British novelist Willkie Collins who coined the phrase, 'The Unknown Public' to attribute with 3 million lower-class readers. The 'Unknown Public' refers to the 'lost literary tribes,' an attempt to describe the low class readers of illustrated cheap magazines, readers' letters, problem pages and cuisine recipes. But the 'young lady class' of domestic servants and shop girls who belonged to the 'Unknown public' and through them a holistic debate on good book and bad book began. Thus in the age of Enlightenment reading got a fresh lease of life with female readers considerably were on the rise. That trendsetting outlived many standoffs which otherwise would have marred the reading culture in the successive years.

In the 19th century the standard publishing form for British fiction was three volume novel which was nicknamed as three deckers or triple decker in which each novel became voluminous with 900 pages. That was divided into 3 volumes. But it was unaffordable for the average British middle class reader to buy them. Thenceforth Thanks to the lending libraries where they could check-out these books. Despite these setbacks, the rise in the readership and the proportional rise in the libraries contributed for the rise in the talented writers and shrewd publishers. During the Victorian age readers increased in leaps and bounds. There was a fresh fillip in the entire book publishing industry. The basic reasons that punched for this vigour were 1) Widespread schooling which created neo literates who in turn became attracted by the reading hobby 2) Cost of publication of books became cheap 3) Improved distribution of books due to better transportation 4) People need not have to use candle light or oil lamp for reading after dark as gas and electricity lighted their homes.

The stratified people like clerks, artisans, sales girls, dressmakers, millers and daily wage earners who pour into London everyday bought penny fictions to read in the trains or on the platform before the arrival of trains. This kind of an invigorated attitude existed all over European nations. Ultimately reading became a perfect recreational activity in the past. This perfection resonated throughout the twentieth century which resulted in the generation of record number of books in various disciplines. Even at the time of reading explosion one could not dodge sceptics. The cynicism mainly centred on the immoral aspect in which the multitude of readers was being allured to. Skipping work in the workplace to extract the high pitched tempo of the reading stuff made them lethargic and developed aversion to their job affecting productivity. Reading can thus be summed up as one of the most vivacious activities of man in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

5. Readership in the Present Times:

The modern era is significant in terms of information and knowledge explosion. Computer and its allied devices threw open a world of knowledge and information. The researches revealed the scope of electronic technology as boundless and what the modern man enjoys is only a fraction of what is in store in the future. If the dearth of any other recreational alternatives necessitated people in the bygone years to stick to reading, which is more recreational than knowledge accumulation the case of modern man is quite different. The vigour in the publishing industry has not plummeted notwithstanding the steep decrease in the demand for books. Owing to many reasons like the technological spurt in the world, focus on the thrust of tertiary sector, chiselling employability skills, rising job opportunities in the outsourcing model of business, youths becoming less academic etc., the reading sentiment got a death blow. To make matters worse, the emergence of smart phones laid the reading activity to an eternal rest. The 'app' revolution has been playing the spoil sport. The whole lot of the young generation has declared amity to the frolicsomeness of this part of the wonderful legacy of electronic revolution. The infinite feature of internet is more often looked down while dealing with it. The infinite possibilities of internet in the entertainment sector has not been tapped been in the way it is deserved. The endless lists of titles for online reading or keeping for future reading after they are being downloaded are the endless avenues before a questing reader. The old generation by and large has not accustomed with the changed scenario. They are still handy with the hard copies. The situation is highly explosive. The infinite reading materials on anything and everything at finger tips to satiate the reading thirst on one side and the laxity, aversion and indifference to make use of them on the other side strangulates the very survival of the reading spirit bestowed by our past generation. Except reading six pence novels and skimming through of regional newspapers by a bare minimum at an interval when their smart phones turn handicaps much reading legacy cannot be expected from this generation. Hence the coinage 'present imperfect of reading'.

6. The Progressive Future of Reading:

It is estimated and expected that a dedicated cult of reading mass is going to evolve thanks to the internet in its advanced version. The electronic researchers are successful in compressing terabytes of knowledge in tiny chips. Thousands of yesteryears classics can be squeezed in such spaces and made available in the form of visuals or prints. The advancement of facility notwithstanding, the thirst to read will be the crucial spirit.

7. Conclusion:

In spite of all the turns and twists reading confronted over the years reading as a recreation or knowledge enhancing method will rejuvenate once the world undergoes transitions which are inevitable. The principal stake holders like pedagogical managements, parents etc., can catch children when they are too young and imbibe reading spirit. Library use should be made mandatory on a rotational basis. Manual Libraries should be turned student friendly. Methods like E-library where students should be provided a computer each enabling e-book accessibility, reading sessions, and competitions debating competitions, storytelling competitions, mind reading sessions etc., can be initiated. To enable these methods practical the curriculum has to be restructured. To sum up reading has infinite possibility as a tool of personality development and help one to groom up for the advantage of society and nation.