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## Be In The Company Of Books

Greek philosopher Plato said that the state is primarily an educational institution and that if it neglects education, it matters little what else it does. For a civilized life on this planet, pursuit of education is a sine qua non of existence. Education is imparted through books, hence education and books are inextricably interlinked. The pre-eminent value of books can hardly be overemphasized. The books are the repository of all that is thought and expressed best by the wise and the enlightened. They contain the gems of knowledge and information on the multifarious aspects of human life. It is therefore imperative for us to live and move in the company of books. The status of a civilized society is judged by the status of its educational institutions, which again is judged by the status of libraries they maintain. Really, the status of an educated person is judged by the status of the personal library he or she maintains. The company of books provides peace and tranquillity to the mind and the soul. Books are the trusted friends unlike most of the worldly friends. Books in a library radiate spiritual impressions which impinge positively on our psyche, making life worth living and happy. In the midst of books we converse with the mighty minds of old and share with them their thoughts and experiences, which impart sustenance and succour to us when we are faced with the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", as Shakespeare puts it. Therefore, be always in the company of books and live a healthy, happy and peaceful life.

On the gate of a college library are written these inspiring words—Enter to grow in wisdom. Go out to serve humanity. As we know, a library is a place where collections of books are kept, looked after and made use of.

Whatever we have been taught or whatever knowledge we possess, is all given by books. When paper and printing press were not invented, even then books were in vogue, although in a different form. They had pages of palm leaves, BHOJPATRA—the bark of a particular tree and the matter was written by hand in specially made ink. We can say that the human civilization is contained in the repository of books, without which we should have been no better than savages.

When we read a book, we are in the company of the best of friends. The books give us knowledge about many things like a teacher; they guide us like a guide; they inspire us to do good things and goad us to look beyond the physical life. "A book is a garden, an orchard, a store house, a party, a company by the way, a counsellor, a multitude of counsellors." (H. W. Beecher)

Successful men are unanimous in accepting the debt of books and say that the books have made them what they are.

Of course, there are some bad books also, which create unsocial elements, criminals and black sheep of men and women. Most of the people avoid reading such books.

Only a negligible percentage of the society is seen reading such books. Tryon Edwards advises people not to read these books because "Bad books are like intoxicating drinks, they furnish neither nourishment, nor medicine. Books written improperly and in bad taste are exciting. They provide excitement to both the mind and the body. The desire for each increases by being fed. Both ruin, one the intellect, the other the health and together with it the soul. The safeguard against each is the same—total abstinence from all that intoxicates either mind or body.

But let us not forget that each and everything in this world has its own utility or usefulness. The so called bad books are not without some usefulness. Oscar Wilde writes "The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame." While picking up a book for reading, the reader should be aware enough to choose the right type of books. Books like friends should be few and well-chosen. Like friends, we should return to them again and again. We should be sure that like true and sincere friends, books would never fail us, never cease to advise and instruct.