Reading fulfils psychological need to belong

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By IANS

Washington (IANS) - Given a chance, many of us would happily spend an entire day curled up with a book. But researchers say reading is not just a hobby, it satisfies a deeply human, evolutionarily requirement -- the need to belong.  
  
"The study explains how this everyday phenomenon - reading - works not just for escape or education, but as something that fulfils a deep psychological need," says psychologist Ariana Young, from the University of Buffalo, US.  
  
Shira Gabriel, who led a study with Young, surveyed 140 undergraduates about their need for staying connected by identifying with groups, reports the journal Psychological Science.  
  
Some students were made to read a passage from the novel "Twilight", in which Edward describes what it feels like to be a vampire and his romantic interest Bella, according to a Buffalo statement.  
  
Others read a passage from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone", in which Hogwarts students are separated into 'houses' and Harry meets potions professor Severus Snape.  
  
Participants were given 30 minutes to read the passages and were instructed to simply read for their own pleasure. Then, two measures gauged the participants' psychological affiliation with vampires or wizards.  
  
As predicted, on both measures, Harry Potter readers "became" wizards and the Twilight readers "became" vampires.  
  
Besides, participants who were more group-oriented in life, showed the highest assimilation effects. Finally, "belonging" to these fictional communities delivered the same mood and life satisfaction people get from affiliation with real-life groups.