

GURGAON: In the bustling business activity hub of Gurgaon, where literature appears to have gone out of fashion, an increasing number of people are getting into books, with <u>a strong indication</u> of the trend being the growing existence of <u>book clubs</u> in the city.

When Sunil Sharma, who is into financial services, relocated from the US to Gurgaon for work two years ago, he found there were no operational book clubs in the city. "Being <u>an avid reader</u> of books, I decided to start one which is called Novel Ideas," he says.

With over 30 active members, the group meets every two weeks, usually at a Barista or CCD around the MG Road area or Galleria Market."Usually around 10 to 15 members show up, which is the perfect size to have a great discussion and give everyone a chance to share their thoughts," says Sharma.

A usual Novel Ideas book club meet is fun, enriching, thought-provoking, philosophical and humour-filled. Books discussed are chosen by consensus and the genres vary from week to week."The point of the club is to get people reading regularly, as most of us don't have time to read. Just as importantly, we should have a great time and enjoy the process. So we're not about hoity toity, we're more aboutintellectual discussions in a laid back environment over coffee. Our discussions usually end up very enriching as we don't usually stick to a fixed question-answer format, rather, we let the discussions flow and that's a very enriching process as all sorts of insights get flushed out in the process, leading to a memorable experience," says Sharma.

The members of Novel Ideas book club are in their thirties and forties, and some hardcore book lovers in their twenties."All ages are welcome. We only

ask that the member enjoy discussing books and is willing to devote some time to reading. We understand people have busy lives and are very flexible in our requirements," says Sunil Sharma.

Missing her international 'book club' experience, homemaker MeetaliNarain along with Uma Prakash brought to life The Laburnum book club, which was flagged off recently by author Laxmi Tendulkar Dhaul of the book 'In the Shadow of Freedom'.

"I have lived and travelled in various parts of the world. So, when I moved to Gurgaon I missed the international 'book club' experience. I wanted to start something exclusively for Laburnum where the all living in the area can meet and share their literary experience," says Narain, adding that a Laburnum book club member can be anybody from a homemaker to a corporate executive to a retired individual.

"Book Club culture in today's time is much needed and desired. Book Clubs provide focused, interesting and involved audiences. It is a brilliant experience for the author as well as the reader. The main feature of the clubs are that the audiences have already read an author's book. The author gets to speak to an enlightened audience who sometimes through their questions make an author 'think' different dimensions of their book and a reader gets to take a piece, so to speak, of the book with them and get a wide perspective of their latest read," said Laxmi Tendulkar Dhaul.

At present, the book club has 20 members in the age group ranging between 25 years and 81 years who meet once every month at the Laburnum Club House."Every month a particular member nominates a book for everyone to read and that member also takes the responsibility to coordinate that month's event in terms of inviting the author, a famous theatre personality, etc," explains Narain.

But why did she not join the existing book clubs in the city."This book club is different as it intends to invite the authors of the 'book of the month' to

interact with the members about the inspiration behind the book, journey, challenges etc," she explains.

City-resident UshitaBhanja, a teacher at Lancers International School, started the book club named On The Same Page last year to provide a forum for voracious readers to come forward and discuss books and ideas. The club members include educated, intelligent women with an interest in books. There are corporate women, entrepreneurs, home makers and even a writer.

"I was drawn into the club by a common friend. It is good to get together with like-minded women with similar tastes and interests over coffee once a month and discuss a particular book that we have decided to read. Each %of us shares recommendations and suggestions on books to read," says DebeshiGooptuBakshi, a member of the club.