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Books at your door

Vani Mahesh married her software skills with her passion for books by setting up an online library



Book ends Vani wants to inculcate the reading habit among youngsters

Sitting by the window and watching the rain you think it's the perfect time to curl up with a book. But you wish that some one would just come by and drop it off at your doorstep. Want this dream to come true? Log on to EasyLib.com, select the books you want and get them delivered to any part of the city you live in. EasyLib was started by Vani Mahesh for those who give up on reading thanks to a hectic lifestyle that did not allow them to visit a library.

Vani's fascination for books was so intense that she wanted to start a library at the age of eight! "There was no television those days. We did go for that occasional film or to the park, but books were my constant companions. I used to read a novel even before entering an exam hall. The usual trick of hiding a novel between a textbook always helped," she adds.

Vani also believes that if you don't try you can't be a reader. "It's all about stumbling on the right book," says this book addict, who graduated in electronics and communications. "I got married soon after graduation and was off to the United States where I did my M.S. in computer science. I couldn't work as I was on a spouse visa. In '93 I assisted a professor in Georgia Tech University. He was building a web page for his project. That was the time when the internet was also just evolving and this project helped me."

The project however, did not keep her from "haunting every library in the cities that I visited. In fact, I have hand picked the books for my library. Being a member of five online book clubs also helped."

Vani and her husband decided to return to India in 2000. "Coming back

Archives

- [Datewise](#)

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- [Lead](#)
- [Life Style](#)
- [Fashion](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Personality](#)
- [Eating Out](#)
- [Madras Miscellany](#)
- [Issues](#)
- [Arts & Crafts](#)
- [Information Technology](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Heritage](#)
- [Miscellany](#)

News

[News Update](#)
[Front Page](#)
[National](#)

States:

- [Tamil Nadu](#)
- [Andhra Pradesh](#)
- [Karnataka](#)
- [Kerala](#)
- [New Delhi](#)
- [Other States](#)

[International](#)

[Opinion](#)

[Business](#)

[Sport](#)

[Miscellaneous](#)

[Index](#)

Advts

[Retail Plus](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Obituary](#)

is no big deal. It is about being content and happy here that is important. EasyLib started in July 2001 as it took me a year to build the web page. I have arranged the books meticulously so that even a non tech savvy person can browse easily. It had to be an online library so that I do not get divorced from the internet or my software background,” says Vani.

“Indians are polished readers. They read everything from fiction to science and philosophy. In fact, the book industry here is so big that you will find stuff you think you will get only abroad. Be it board books or books for the young adult, philosophy or fiction, you find it all here.”

Those who are not still comfortable with technology can actually visit the library in Koramanagala and pick up books. “EasyLib has people coming from places like Malleswaram, J.P. Nagar and Whitefield. But there are also equal number of online members who order books online,” she adds.

“Given the urban hazards and the absolutely chaotic traffic, an online library is a sensible choice.”

You have to pay Rs. 10 for the books to be delivered or returned. “The reason why we charge is to make sure that people are there to pick up or deliver the books to our library boys,” says Vani, who then gives a “big credit to my manager, Harish, who has helped me with the library.”

Vani also believes that a library is a cultural hub and not one just to provide space for books, so she organises three events a month at the library.

The first is story telling for children aged three years and above. “This one is aimed at introducing them to books that they may not be picking up themselves, which I get to know with the online records,” she smiles.

Next is Meet the Author where she tries to get city-based authors to interact with children aged eight and above. “These are already readers and need to be groomed. These sessions introduce them to other related arts like poetry or plays”.

The last is called Mind Share for adults, where a group of readers meet and interact. “These activities are free for I do not want parents to think twice before bringing their children to library.”

Easy lib is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. and is closed on Wednesdays. It can be contacted on 41102231 and for the online library log onto EasyLib.com.

This column features those who choose to veer off the beaten track.

SHILPA SEBASTIAN R.

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