

Adieu to another book lover's haunt in Delhi

The quintessential bookshop jammed from the ceiling to the floor with books - the last refuge of a loner and a book junkie - is a genre fast dying out in the capital.

The Bookworm, a haunt for all those who wear with elan the tag of a 'passionate book lover', is soon going to disappear from the hustling streets of Connaught Place, just like The Bookshop did from Khan Market.

But unlike The Bookshop, which relocated to the Jorbagh market not too far from Khan Market, it is decidedly the end of the road for The Bookworm.

Those who frequented the shop will remember its owner, Anil Arora, sitting behind the counter, girded by tomes, tapping the keys on the computer to track down books his customers were looking for.

Arora has no hopes of taking his business elsewhere. His shop is not going to be relocated. He does not even know where he is headed next.

'I have had enough. It may take a month or so before we close shop,' he said.

The Metro construction, its infrastructure blocking the front of his shop, the faltering visitors, the slide in the sale of books - all came one after another. It was like loving books in the 'time of cholera'.

Arora, who started the shop in 1977, said shops that have stayed 'loyal' to books - those redolent with the musty smell of paper and ink and not the aromatic whiff of coffee - are becoming vulnerable before the determined march by book chains which, like the big retail departmental chains, are filling up space in glitzy malls - almost a physical and cultural invasion.

'More and more malls are having book shops. It is not a happy change,' said Arora.

Arora, who was into liquor business before he opened the bookshop, spent three decades delving into books. From this week he will put them up for sale. By the time it is time to shut shop, most of the books would have disappeared.

A decade ago the sale of second hand books every Sunday on the pavements of Daryaganj in the old part of Delhi would invariably nudge its way into any discussion on books. In [Kolkata](#) too, a decade ago booklovers would trudge from one end of the city to the other to take a look at the books lining up the pavements on College Street.

These were the original 'bookshops' - stripped to their bone and marrow - the only wares they had on display were books. There were no add-ons, no trappings.

'Now there is a spurt in bookshops at the malls,' said Arora. The crowd of casual turner of pages, more serious about the brand of coffee they could get rather than the repertory of books the mall may have, is thickening.

'Ironically coffee table books are not selling these days. Fiction still continues to be the frontrunner,'

said Arora.

But he is dropping out of the race on a note that will bring the last cheer to The Bookworm lovers.

There will be a 15-day sale of books at the shop beginning Saturday.

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