

The instant thought that rushed through our minds as we stepped into the glistening 10,000 square feet of a library was ShantiNiketan. No, this isn't Kolkata one is referring to but the recently refurbished Nehru Centre Library that shifted to the Discovery of India building on the occasion of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's 124th birth anniversary.



The writer reads a book at the renovated library while on the wall behind, an expansive map traces all iconic spots in the city.  
Pic/Rane Ashish

Facsimile of a magnolia tree stands tall in the elongated space while red poinsettias extend a vibrant touch. The bamboo-lined walls rejuvenate the reclusive reader breaking the sleepy monotony most libraries exude. We glee at the harmonious balance that the library offers, irrespective of the extended line of computer systems on our left.

Quizzing the head librarian, Aarti Desai, we find out, "Libraries in India do not have a very welcome look. They are mostly equipped with rows of benches and have dark and dingy reading rooms. But here, a reader feels that he / she is reading in a garden. The huge glass windows invite one to walk in and explore the wealth of information that we have." Though the library currently stocks 30,000 books, Desai is charged with the mammoth task of adding 70,000 more in the coming two decades.

The sheer thought of one lakh books amidst Mumbai's readers' flutters the heart, and all that is available free of cost. The resource centre now boasts of the Online Public Access Catalogue. All this has led to a welcome change as Desai informs us, "The number of visitors to the library has increased by almost five times. Footfalls are definitely more in the new location...a positive sign!" Sharing her joy on how the library envisions to play a focal role for Mumbai's readers by organising author meets, discussions and more, she excites us. Plans are afloat to reach out to the far and wide, "We've just started our own blog through which we will keep people posted about new additions in our library. You can also visit it from our webpage on the Nehru Centre website," reveals Desai.

As we flip through *The Emperor of Maladies* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, Desai cuts the reverie by stressing, "The library boasts of a wide range of general and subject encyclopedias, special Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi collections, and one of the best biography collections in the city. We also pride ourselves in the fact that we have the single print copies of the National Geographic magazine dating back to January 1947. Since we are not a membership driven library; we do not have a huge fiction section, but we do have most Indian fiction authors. Plans are on the anvil to build a section on South Asian countries, specially our neighbouring countries." As if this wasn't astounding enough, we are told that 1,50,000 articles are all set to be digitised and be available as links to the readers. The dream of a buzzing library is imminent; Mumbaiites, go grab a book in the marvellous wonderland, we urge.

**On: Monday to Friday; 1st, 3rd and 5th Saturdays: 10 am to 6 pm; 2nd and 4th Saturdays: 10 am to 2 pm at Dr Annie Besant Road, Worli.**

**Call: 24983921**