Introduction

The Man Booker by common consent is the most prestigious and highest profile prize, awarded each year for the best original full-length novel, written in English, by a citizen of the British Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland. Unlike the Noble Prize, the Booker focuses on a particular novel rather than a particular author, and unlike Pulitzer Prize, it is associated with England and the Commonwealth rather than with the USA. The Booker Prize holds the key to commercial and critical success. It has rapidly become one of the most prestigious and glamorous literary prizes in the English speaking world.

1.1 Booker Prize - A brief history

First awarded in 1968, and originally known as the Booker-McConnell Prize, the winner of the Booker prize is generally assured of international name and success in addition to a cash award £21,000 which was subsequently raised to £50,000 in 2002 under the sponsorship of the Man Group making it one of the world’s richest literary prizes. It was founded to encourage reading and jolt the British book trade out of its lingering post-war recession.

Tom Maschler of the publisher’s Association, Martyn Goff of the National Book League, George Hardinge and John Murphy from the Author’s Division of the agricultural company Booker McConnell are the personalities who have defined the Booker’s success and its original mission. In 2002, the investment management firm Man assumed sponsorship and the administration of the award passed to the Booker Prize Foundation, chaired by Jonathan Taylor and under the Literary Direction of Ion Trewin. Todd, describes how in the 1960, Britain had a number of literary prizes, but they all lacked prestige and impact outside the literary world. The prize money was insufficient to allow a winner to become a full-time
writer and a win brought no significant increase in sales. France and Italy had the
Prix Goncourt and the Premio Strega, a long established and high profile prize for
literary fiction. These two remain very important prizes, largely because “to win
the Goncourt or the Strega was and is to be assured of massive sales.” (Todd, 56)

The situation changed, when, The Booker prize for fiction was first awarded
in 1969. It was set up and aimed “to reward merit, raise the stature of the author in
the eyes of the public and encourage an interest in contemporary quality fiction”
(Booktrust, 2002). The prize, then as now, was open to writers from the
Commonwealth and the Republic of Ireland. It was modelled on the Prix Goncourt,
but with the difference that the Goncourt awarded only nominal prize money,
whereas the Booker winner received £5,000 in 1969, an amount that has increased
gradually since. This prize money, a substantial amount of money at the time,
ensured publicity for the Booker. However, it was the years 1980 to 1982 that saw
the Booker’s profile raised to new heights.

The process of selection of a novel for Booker Prize is well-defined. A jury
of judges first selects a long list of more than a dozen novels from the many dozens
entered, and after a full point of public debate six finalists are shortlisted. Each
year, the management committee selects a panel of five jurors-critics, academics,
 novelists and “general reader”, to consider and verify more than 120 novels for the
prize. Extensive deliberations result in a long list, announced in July, which is
further narrowed down to a short list of five or six finalists in September. The
winner is announced at a nationally televised ceremony in mid-October. In 1969,
P.H. Newby’s *Something to Answer For* was the first Booker Prize winning novel.
In 2014, Richard Flanagan from Australia won the award for a historical novel, *The
Narrow Road to the Deep North*. 
One of the most significant features of the Booker prize is the role played by publishers. Initially, the publishers could submit up to three eligible novels, which were later reduced to two in 1996 after the number of submitted novels had exceeded 140 in the previous year. Judges must also call in at least eight to twelve extra novels from a list of further nominations by publishers, and may call in any other novel, even if it has not been submitted by its publisher. Also, novels by any writer shortlisted in the previous ten years can be submitted in addition to a publisher’s other nominations. To be eligible a book must be a full length novel and “be a unified and substantial work. Neither a book of short stories nor a novella is eligible.” (Booker Prize, 2003)

There have been some recent changes in the running of the Booker. In 2001 it was decided to announce a long list of twenty four novels under consideration for the award. This practice will continue, though the exact number on the list will vary, as a way of bringing more publicity to the prize. In 2002, the Man Group becomes the new patrons of the Booker Prize and increased the winner’s prize money to £ 50,000.

Any full length novel from a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland is eligible for the Booker, yet the prize is generally seen as one for ‘literary fiction’, a difficult concept to define. According to the Booker prize’s Website, the selection of the judges is particularly important to the process: “Every effort is made to achieve a balance between the judges of gender, articulacy and role, so that the panel includes a literary critic, an academic, a literary editor, a novelist and a major figure.” The Booker Prize is judged by a centralised committee based in London: the judges for the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize are appointed. The selection process for the winner of the prize commences with the
formation of an advisory committee, which includes a writer, two publishers, a literary agent, a bookseller, a librarian, and a chairperson appointed by the Booker Prize Foundation. The biggest problem facing the judges lies in the definition of the overall objective of the Prize to find “the best novel of the year”. Such a definition is flexible, and each judge will receive his or her own interpretation in the selection criteria. The Booker Prize Foundation announced in January 2010, the creation of a special award called the “Lost Man Booker Prize” with the winner chosen from a long list of 22 novels published in 1970. Alice Munro has a unique place in Booker Prize history. Before 2001, each year’s list of nominees was not publicly revealed.

The panel of judges is selected by the Booker Prize Management Committee, which decides first a Chairperson and then selects a panel designed to provide a suitable balance. An illustration of how judges interpret the nature of the Booker Prize came in 1998 when William Trevor’s Death in Summer did not make it onto the shortlist, despite being thought of as one of the most likely winners that year. Martin Goff, the administrator of the Booker Prize, explained the judges’ decision by saying that, “Trevor had been discussed at length. He was felt to be a brilliant story writer, but not a great novelist.” (Alberge.1998:5) The function of publishers also influences perceptions of the Booker. It is they who set the majority of records, which are put forward for the trophy and who create the situation where judges have to read, over a hundred novels. Unlike other literary awards the Booker judges must read all submitted novels (Booker Prize, 2003), a process that according to Valentine Cunningham, Chair of judges in 1998, “addles the brain.” (Cunningham, 15)

John Sutherland, who was a judge for the 1999 prize, has stated,

There is a well-established London literary community.
Rushdie doesn't get shortlisted now because he has attacked that
community. That is not a good game plan if you want to win the Booker. Norman Mailer has found the same thing in the US – you have to ‘be a citizen’ if you want to win prizes. The real scandal is that [Martin] Amis has never won the prize. In fact, he has only been shortlisted once and that was for Time’s Arrow, which was not one of his strongest books. That really is suspicious. He pissed people off with Dead Babies and that gets lodged in the culture. There is also the feeling that he has always looked towards America.

All these controversies and many others were news items that got publicity for the Booker. When defending himself against the accusation of leaking the deliberations of the judging panel to the press John Sutherland wrote, “Publicity, even bad publicity, is good for the Booker. What kills prizes is indifference.” (1999) One of the most significant consequences of this high profile is that winning, and even being shortlisted for the Booker, brings a great increment in sales figures for a novel. Salley Vickers, a judge in 2002, writes,

The impact on a writer’s reputation, and earnings, if she or he wins the Booker is enormous - so enormous that the task of choosing would be inhibiting if one lingered too long over the consequences of that choice. (2002)

In 1971, the nature of the Prize was changed so that it was awarded to novels published in that year instead of in the previous year; therefore, no novel published in 1970 could win the Booker Prize. This was rectified in 2010 by the awarding of the “Lost Man Booker Prize” (Melvern Jack, 2010) to J. G. Farrell’s Troubles. One view of the Booker Prize is that its annual shortlist is highly predictable. The Booker Prize is often seen as rewarding a certain type of book, what might be called a ‘Booker Novel’. Allowing freedom for the judges to be highly subjective means that the Booker can remain abroad prize. The judge should remain free to reward both the ‘status’ and ‘contract’ novels.
List of Indian Booker Winning authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre(s)</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Salman Rushdie</td>
<td><em>Midnight’s Children</em></td>
<td>Magic realism</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Arundhati Roy</td>
<td><em>The God of Small Things</em></td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Kiran Desai</td>
<td><em>The Inheritance of Loss</em></td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Aravind Adiga</td>
<td><em>The White Tiger</em></td>
<td>Novel</td>
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A separate prize, the Man Booker International Prize, was inaugurated in 2005 and is awarded biennially for which any living writer in the world may qualify. Man Group plc in 2007, established the Man Asian Literary Prize, an annual literary award given to the best novel by an Asian writer, either written in English or translated into English, and published in the previous calendar year.

1.2 Booker Prize - Indian Winners

Indian writing in English has come quite a long way from the mere use of the English language as an authentic tool for expressing one’s ideas, thoughts, concepts and imagination. It has attained maturity, but it is not that it suddenly emerged from nowhere. It had its own phases of development. Throughout the decades, Indian authors have continued to gain reputation, prestige and accolades for their literary works. As a result of the quality and popularity of the Indian authors, they have earned several international awards and honours. The greatest recognition and award was in 1931, when Rabindranath Tagore won the Noble Prize in Literature for his collection of poems, *Geetanjali*. The development of the Indian novel follows certain definite patterns, and it is not difficult to trace its
gradual progression from the imitative stage to the realistic to psychological to the experimental stage.

The prominence of India in the brief history of Booker fiction is unquestionable. India and the Man Booker’s link go back to the time of Sir Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul, the Indo-Trinidadian writer who won the Booker Prize in its third year, 1971. Naipaul became the first person of Indian origin to win a Booker Prize for his book *In a Free State*. Critics laud Naipaul for the extraordinary vision that marks his writing. Perhaps due to his status as rootless wanderer, Naipaul consistently knocks down idealized views of the places he journey’s to, like England, Trinidad, or Africa, in favour of a more complex, bitter, sometimes even contradictory truth. His award-winning book, *In a Free State*, is a short story, set in a fictional African state which recently acquired independence, where the King, although liked by the Colonials, is weak, and the President is poised to take power.

Naipaul is neither English nor Indian nor Trinidadian; he is his own person. In an interview with Rahul Singh, on being asked whether he felt more of an Indian since one of his later novel *Half a Life* portrayed an Indian from India as its main character, Naipaul retorts:

> What do you mean more Indian . . . ? I don't like such terms. I said when receiving the Nobel Prize that I was born in Trinidad, I have lived most of my life in England and India is the land of my ancestors. That says it all. I am not English, not Indian, not Trinidadian. I am my own person. (The Times of India, 2002)

Nearly seventy years after Tagore (1912) was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, a novel about India by an ethnic Indian, won the Booker Prize. In 1993 *Midnight’s Children* was awarded the ‘**Booker of Bookers**’, as the most influential novel to receive the literary prize in the first
twenty-five years of its existence. It made the novel, “one of the most important novels to come out of the English – speaking world in this generation”. In 2008, the novel was voted the best of Booker, i.e. the best winning book of the 40 years that the Booker Prize exists.

After 1980, it was the period of new fiction; the dominant figures are Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) especially achieves great success, betokens a new era in the history of Indian writing in English. In recent times, more and more Indian English writers have been showcasing their ingenious works like *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai and *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga won the Booker Prize. Indian English fiction is gradually more in the spotlight in the literary position in the world.

**Ahmed Salman Rushdie** was born in Mumbai into a Muslim family on June 1947. He had his early schooling there, before moving to England. Rushdie has been highly controversial yet globally appreciated author of Indian origin, who won the Booker prize for *Midnight’s Children*. More known to the world for the infamous fatwa imposed on his head by Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran for his alleged anti-Islam remarks in his book, *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie is considered to be one of the most influential, acclaimed and controversial authors of the 20th century. In his works he examines post-colonial countries, depicting the problems of immigration, cultural operation and self-determination. Rushdie creates a new history based on historical facts – he sets his main character against “a real historical backdrop”. Among his major works, *Midnight’s Children* won him the Booker in 1981, while his novels, *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1985), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *and Shame* (1983) were also shortlisted for the coveted award.
The Booker winning *Midnight’s Children* is a loose parable for events in India both before and after the independence and partition of India, which took place at midnight on August 15, 1947. The time of Saleem’s birth connects him closely with his country, making him “mysteriously handcuffed to history with his “destinies indissolubly chained to those of [his] country.” (MC, 3) The protagonist and narrator of the story is Saleem Sinai, a telepath with a nasal defect, who is born at the exact moment that India becomes independent. Saleem Sinai’s life then parallels the changing fortunes of the country after independence. In Rushdie’s novel the development of India as an independent and therefore ‘new’ country compares to the development of a newborn baby, Saleem Sinai. The story is told retrospectively by grown-up Saleem, who writes his incredible life-story right before his death, comparing himself to Scheherazade, in order to warn his nation and prevent his people from forgetting their history. He claims, the Indians “are a nation of forgetters. There are moments of terror, but they go away.” (MC, 43)

The purely fictional part of the novel is manifested through the use of magic realism, making use of magic features, supernatural skills, fantasy and unusual things.

The book was later awarded the ‘Booker of Bookers’ Prize in 1993 as the best novel to be awarded the Booker Prize in its first 25 years. *Midnight’s Children* is also the only Indian novel to make Time magazine’s list of the 100 best English-language novels since its founding in 1923. Rushdie denies that English is a foreign language to India, a believed “truth”, by “reterritorializing” to make it distinctly Indian. Through the narrator’s interactions with Reverend Mother and Padma, Rushdie illustrates that Standard English alone is not enough for Indians to
communicate and must be adapted to best suit Indian needs. He uses the words of native language like Urdu and Hindi along with English.

In 2007, Salman Rushdie was awarded a knighthood for services to literature. His knighthood has been condemned by Pakistan's parliament and Iran. Rushdie has been accused of insulting Islam. His fourth book, *The Satanic Verses*, describes a cosmic battle between good and evil and combines fantasy, philosophy, and farce. It was immediately condemned by the Islamic world because of its perceived blasphemous depiction of the Prophet Muhammad. Both, *The Satanic Verses* and *Shame* stirred up controversies and *The Satanic Verses* have been banned in most of the Muslim countries. Iran’s spiritual leader Khomeini issued a fatwa in 1989, demanding a death sentence for Rushdie. Despite living as a virtual prisoner, with full police protection, Salman continued to write and produced several novels and essays during his confinement. A devout secularist, he backed and supported much controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen.

**Suzanna Arundhati Roy**, born in 1961, is the first Indian woman writer to win Britain’s most prestigious literary award. This public acclaim assured her status as a new novelist of striking ability, especially at the level of her innovative style. She has been a figure of huge media interest both in her native India and worldwide when she was given title “Literary Queen” by Barbara Wickens in Maclean’s (64). Roy was born in Assam, but following her mother’s divorce she returned to Ayemenem. James Joyce and Gabriel Garcia Marquez seem to have a deep impact on Roy’s mind and writing.

After a gap of 16 years, Roy brought the Booker back to India. Her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, won the Booker Prize in the year 1997. It became an international literary sensation and a bestseller as soon as it came out. Roy was
paid a total of 5,00,000 pounds in advance by 18 publishers worldwide, thereby creating history in the publishing field. *The God of Small Things* is a semi-autobiographical, politically charged novel. It is a story about the childhood experiences of a pair of fraternal twins who become victims of circumstance. The book is a description of how the small things in life build up, translate into people’s behaviour, and subsequently affect their lives. It was indeed a great achievement for Arundhati to receive the prestigious Booker award for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*. The book has created waves in international literary circles, selling more than 350,000 copies. It has been or is being translated into 22 different languages, including all the European languages. Apart from winning Booker, She is also the winner of Cultural Freedom Prize and Sydney Peace Prize. In the United States, the book has been on The New York Times, bestseller for five weeks, perhaps the only other book by an Indian to figure on the The New York Times list after Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. In India, it has been a bestseller, selling closer to 30,000 hardback copies in less than six months.

She has since devoted herself solely to non-fiction and politics, publishing two more collections of essays. In addition, she now works for social causes. She is a figurehead of the anti-globalization movement and a vehement critic of neo-imperialism and of the global policies of the United States. She also criticizes India’s nuclear weapons policies and the approach to industrialization and rapid development as currently being practiced in India, including the Narmada Dam project. Roy has to her credit essays on varied subjects like ecology, social unrest, urbanization, industrialization, the Kashmir issue, etc. She has built her reputation as an activist, writer and has articulated her concern on many issues like
displacement of people due to construction of dams proposed over Narmada River and the repercussions of mounting nuclear weapons.

Kiran Desai was born in India. She is the third Indian English novelists to win the Booker Prize after Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. Her novel focuses on an Indian family in the 1980s and their struggle between two cultures. Desai, an Indian-American writer, was born in 1971 in New Delhi, India. She left for Britain at the age of 14, moved to the U.S and studied at Bennington College, Hollins University, and Columbia University. At 35, she is the youngest woman ever to win the Booker. Kiran’s first novel, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard, received accolades and brought her literary attention, winning the Betty Trask Award. However, The Inheritance of Loss, her second book, won the 2006 Booker Prize. The book tells the story of Jemubhai Patel, a judge living out a disenchanted retirement in Kalimpong, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills, and his relationship with his granddaughter Sai. Kiran, had spent her small chunks of her own life, up to age fourteen, in Kalimpong and her connection with Kalimpong provided the lens through which she developed her novel. Many of Desai’s characters, such as Father Booty, the Afghan Princesses, and Lola and Noni are exact replicas of real life residents of Kalimpong, presented often without even a change in names.

The theme of the novel concerns migration, postcolonial struggles, and living in between two worlds, the past and present. It is a book about class, multiculturalism, and a post-colonial society. The characters in the novel are an elderly judge and his granddaughter Sai; his cook and the cook’s son Biju, Gyan, Sai’s tutor. The novel presents Gurkha nationalistic political movement, and we move from the Nepali town of the subcontinent to the underbelly of New York, as
the characters and the lives move from place to place. The specific setting of the novel is of major significance. In an interview Desai was asked why she chose Kalimpong. Desai replied that she spent part of her childhood there with an aunt, at a place called Cho Oyu (!), and that she “wanted to capture what it means to grow up in such a fascinating environment, with such wonderfully disparate people.” Hence, also in the case of Desai, her personal experiences have influenced her novel (Singh, “Kiran Desai Interview”).

Apart from the Booker Prize, the novel also received the prestigious National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in the same year (2006). It is likely that Desai inherited the writing talent from her mother, Anita Desai. It is obvious that Desai received literary legacies from her parents, inherited the traditions of Indian literature, and after winning the Man Booker Prize she was right at the point of beginning her career.

Aravind Adiga was born to Dr. Madhava Adiga and Usha Adiga on 23 October 1974, in Chennai. He spent his childhood in Mangalore, studying in Canara High School and then at the St. Aloysius High School. He immigrated to Australia and then to the States, to study English Literature at Columbia University in New York and Oxford for further education. Adiga, at 33, became the second-youngest winner of the prestigious literary award Booker for his debut novel The White Tiger. He won the £ 50,000, Man Booker prize for a novel that examines “the dark side of India”. The White Tiger is his first novel that is a darkly comic and fiercely angry story of a man’s journey from Indian village life to entrepreneurial success.

The five members of the judging panel, chaired by former Conservative cabinet minister Michael Portillo said: “My criteria were, does this book knock my
socks off? And it did.” He said, “I think what set this book apart was its originality; for many of us this is entirely new territory - India the dark side. It was in many ways perfect.” Mr. Portillo said there was no “blood on the floor” during the judging process, which whittled the shortlisted six novels down to two, but added, “It was an emotionally draining experience.”

As Michael Portillo, Chairman of the judges of the Man Booker Prize said,

In many ways, it was the perfect novel. The judges found the decision difficult because the shortlist contained such strong candidates. In the end, The White Tiger prevailed because the judges felt that it shocked and entertained in equal measure. The difficult novel undertakes the extraordinarily task of gaining and holding the reader’s sympathy for a thoroughgoing villain. The book gains from dealing with pressing social issues and significant global developments with astonishing humour. Portillo went on to explain that the novel had won overall because of its originality. He said that The White Tiger presented a different aspect of India and was a novel with enormous literary merit.

(2008)

The White Tiger won the 40th Man Booker Prize in 2008. The award propels the book into the centre of literary discussion worldwide and its author into the top ranks of writers in the English language. At a time when many refer to India as “an economic miracle” citing an economic growth rate of nearly 10% per year, and “the world’s largest democracy,” Adiga challenges these notions. “It is important,” he says, “to introduce other dissonant chords into the largely triumphalist notes. It is important to realize that large numbers of people are not benefiting from the economic boom that social tensions are increasing.” The White Tiger is the story of a poor man in today's India. Aravind Adiga said in an interview with the BBC, “My hero or rather my protagonist - Balram Halwai is one
of these faceless millions of poor Indians.” Balram transcends his sweet-maker caste and becomes a successful entrepreneur, establishing his own taxi service. In a nation proudly shedding the history of poverty and underdevelopment, he represents, as he himself says, “tomorrow”. (TWT, 319)

Adiga says in an interview,

At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society. That’s what writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens did in the 19th century and, as a result, England and France are better societies. That’s what I’m trying to do - it's not an attack on the country, it's about the greater process of self-examination. (Jeffries, 2008)

1.3 Indian shortlisted writers for Booker Prize

In addition to the four Indian Booker Prize Winning authors, many other diasporic authors regularly appear on the short list that comes out several months before the prize is actually awarded, and which leads to rampant speculation and odds-making in the weeks and days before the winner is announced. Anita Desai (three times) and Rohinton Mistry (twice) have appeared on the shortlist. In addition to his 1981 Booker, Rushdie has been shortlisted four times. In 1993, Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy caused a stir, but was not nominated for the Booker, despite numerous predictions that it would be the odds on favourite to win.

Anita Desai, born in Mussoorie is an Indian novelist and short story writer. She is known for the sensitive portrayal of the inner feelings of her female characters. Anita Desai has been shortlisted at the Bookers not once, not twice, but thrice! The first time was in 1980 for her post-partition novel Clear Light of Day. In 1984, she made the list for In Custody that was made into a film in 1993. The
third and final time was for her bi-cultural novel *Fasting, Feasting* in 1999. Sahitya Akademi awardee, Desai’s last novel was *The Artist of Disappearance* in 2011. Anita Desai is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Girton College, Cambridge and Clare Hall, Cambridge. Presently, Anita lives in the United States.

Rohinton Mistry is the only author, whose all three novels have been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), and *Family Matters* (2002) are all set in India's Parsee community. *Such a Long Journey*, which made the list in 1991, made more headlines when Bal Thackeray’s complaints got it removed from the University of Mumbai’s syllabus. The second book *A Fine Balance* (1996) has been successfully adapted for stage. The third and final novel by Mistry is *Family Matters* (2002). His works portray diverse facets of Indian socioeconomic life; as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs, and religion.

Indra Sinha, a Cambridge-educated, British-Indian writer had been in the finalist’s list for his novel on the Bhopal gas tragedy – *Animal’s People* in 2007. The novel is a powerful fictionalization of the Bhopal disaster of 1984 in which a gas escape from a US-owned chemical factory killed thousands in the central Indian city. The story is told by Animal, a 20-year-old whose spine was wrecked as a result of the leak and who has been reduced to walking on all fours. It is a remarkable piece of ventriloquism by the cultivated, Indra Sinha. He also writes non-fiction and carries out translation of ancient Sanskrit texts into English. Sinha has the distinction of being in the list of the top 10 British copywriters of all time.

Amitav Ghosh, a Bengali Indian author, is known for his work in English fiction. He was born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956 in a Bengali Hindu family and
grew up in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. He studied in Delhi, Oxford and Alexandria. In 2008, his novel, *Sea of Poppies* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and awarded the Crossword Book Prize and the India Plaza Golden Quill Award. He was awarded the Padma Shri by Indian government.

Jeet Thayil is an Indian poet, novelist, librettist and musician. His debut novel, *Dealing with the Bombay of 1970’s* is a tale of a man’s journey in and out of the intoxication of opium. This novel, which took him five years to write, is about his own experiences as a drug addict. Thayil has worked as a journalist in New York, Mumbai and Bangalore.

Neel Mukherjee is a London-based, Indian-origin writer. His novel, *The Lives of Others* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, the U.K’s most esteemed prize for literature in English in 2014. It is a dynastic saga set in 1960s Calcutta, but its scope and vision extend far beyond the familial boundaries to address questions of class, revolution and a nation’s destiny. It tells the tale of a family that unravels as the society around it fractures. Arranged marriages, births, deaths, fierce personal rivalries and resentment are stitched together with great skill as the family unravels amid a changing society. He brings the world to life with beautifully crafted prose, describing the weather, trees, jewellery and buildings in intricate detail. Food is a recurring theme while scenes of brutal torture, rotting flesh, blood and sickness, provide a shocking backdrop to the story.

**1.4 Indian English Literature - Past and Present**

Few centuries ago, English was spoken by just five to seven million people on a relatively small Island, and the language consisted of dialects spoken by monolinguals. Today there are more non-native than native users of English, and it has become the linguistic key used for opening borders: it is a global medium with
local identities and messages. English has become a world language widely spoken and written than any other language and can be said to be the first truly global language.

The Indian English literature has achieved far reaching importance both in India and abroad in the recent decades. Indian literature in English consists of two types of writings. The first category comprises English writings by Englishmen about their experiences of Indian subjects, and the second category presents Indian literature in English written by the native Indians. The literature written in English either by Indians or Englishmen was called as ‘Anglo-Indian’ literature. Anglo-Indian literature contributed to the common pool of world writing in English. It refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It is frequently referred to as Anglo-Indian literature. Many scholars like E.F. Oaten, Professor P. Sheshadri, Dr. Bhupal Singh and George Sampson included both categories in Anglo-Indian writing. Some Western as well as Indian critics have targeted Indian literature in English. It was said that since English is a foreign language for Indians, it cannot express genuine feelings and emotions. W.B. Yeats holds the view that “No man can think or write with music or vigour except in his mother tongue.”

Kailasapathy and Anantha Murthy remark: “English with most Indians is still a language of official public affairs, of intellectual and academic debates. They do not use English for their most intimate purposes to think, and feel, bless and curse, quarrel and kiss.” (946) But the artistic excellence of Indian writers in English like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya,
Santha Ramarau, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and several other writers have silenced the critics of Indian English literature.

The earlier novels in India were not just patriotic depictions of Indianness. In the thirties the “Big Three” of Indian Writing in English Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao arrived on the scene. They were the founders of true Indo-English novel. The history has seen many great works like Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938). These were the authors who established this genre popular and earned world recognition. They not only portrayed the village life and the concomitant effect of freedom movement, but also raised social issues present at that time in their writings. The social disparity in India is exposed in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Coolie* while, Raja Rao in *Kanthapura*, awakes Gandhism, in a sleepy village down south. It was R.K. Narayan who first portrayed a purely Indian sensibility. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says,

He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself.

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These “Big Three” discovered a whole new world in Indo-English fiction. They examined minutely the Indian sensibility and exposed the foibles of the Indian way of life. Indian English literature is born of “a cross fertilization of two faithful cultures”- Indian and European and therefore is called as “a Janus–faced literature”. The Indian fiction in English is now accepted as a significant part of the third world or new literatures. It is living, developing and evolving literary force. It has also established its firm roots in Indian soil and has attained a rich growth,
mounting extraordinary heights in the context of the contemporary Indian literature scene.

English fiction in India recently witnessed good writers who have stunned the literary world with their works. Their works have enriched the world literature, and they have been awarded with accolades and prizes in the field of literature. There are two kinds of writers who contributed to the genre of the novel: The writers in first group focused on the various social problems of India like poverty, class discrimination, social dogmas, rigid religious norms etc. which has an appeal to the West. The second group writers are global Indians, who are Indian by birth but they have lived abroad, so they see Indian realities objectively. With creativity and ease with the English, they have enriched the English language giving the freshness to their writings.

The 1980’s witnessed efflorescent of new Indian fiction in English heralding a fresh era of change in its tenor, tone and content. The new crop of writers produced their maiden works and brought a new conviction and maturity which was all its own. The 1980’s witnessed a second coming of the Indian novel in English. Its messiah seems to have been Salman Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie is a name with which almost the entire literary world is familiar. It won’t be wrong to call him the bold voice of the contemporary Indian subcontinent. His *Midnight’s Children* became a seminal book for most of the writing that has come from the third world. He stands with his ability to peel off the cicatrices of reality to show beneath it the raw flesh of a deep feeling of dispossession and displacement. In an interview, Rushdie explains that “Midnight’s Children was partly conceived as an opportunity to break away from the manner in which India has been written about in English” (Kanaganayakam, 2002, p. 171).
Arundhati Roy’s debut novel *The God of Small Things* examines India’s cultural transformation from colonial, postcolonial period to the contemporary era of globalization. Rushdie and Roy’s Booker Prize were two main catalysts for the contemporary success of Indian fiction in English. Rushdie’s and Roy’s frequent appearances on the media served to promote Indian fiction in English all over the world, and most especially in the West. It is a success confirmed by V.S. Naipul’s Nobel Prize in 2001 and the more recent Man Booker Prize awarded to Kiran Desai in 2006 and Aravind Adiga, together with the important number of Indian novels translated into other languages in recent years.

It is during the eighties that Indian novelists earned recognition and acclaim in the western world. The eighties and the nineties have been the most productive and eventful decade of Indian English Literature in terms of quantity and quality. The loss of identity, the search for identity and alienation has been recurring themes of the modern novels. Great masterpieces were created by the highly creative minds. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980), which became an international bestseller, can be called a turning point in the history of Indian English Literature. It is followed by his *Shame* and *Satanic Verses*. Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* and *The Golden Gate*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *Calcutta Chromosomes*, Upamajnu Chatterjee’s *The English August*, Allen Sealey’s *Trotter Nama*, Rohintan Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and *Fine Balance*, Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* are the internationally acclaimed novels written during this period. As they followed the footsteps of Salman Rushdie, they are considered as the children of Rushdie. In the past twenty-five years the Booker Prize has been awarded to four Indians, Rushdie for *The Midnight’s Children* in 1981, Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* in 1997,
Kiran Desai for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006 and most recently to Aravind Adiga for *The White Tiger*.

Literary prizes form a fascinating interface between literature and society as it results in name, fame with immediate boost in the sales of the winning novel. The “Booker Prize” has become perhaps the most significant annual international award and is considered ‘a signifier of marketplace success, a definition of literary value and is therefore is an effective weapon in the book marketer’s armoury. Not only does the prize result in an immediate boost in sales for that year’s winner but also immediate recognition. Nandita Agrawal, an editor at Harper-Collins India, says “As the world gets smaller, more and more people are getting interested in Indian writers.”(Sinha, 2010)

Salman takes history and fictionalize it, with imaginative brilliance, and much of his work is set in his native India and Pakistan. *Midnight’s Children*, ingeniously demonstrates his ability to historify myth and fictionalize history. The children born at midnight of independence are full of miraculous power. The novelist compares the superhuman traits of the mythic Hindu heroes with his “midnight’s children”. On the other hand, *The God of Small Things* makes an attack on patriarchal notions of Kerala’s touchable society; the high cast Syrian Christians and the high caste Hindus. In her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai analyses the issues of home, homeland, diaspora and belongings by treating it from multiple angles. The characters in her novel are leading the lives of dislocation - physical, psychological, emotional, ancestral and political—both in the alien land and in the homeland. During the age of modernization, globalization, industrialization and urbanization, a new cultured and sophisticated society is emerging in India, which has acquired its place in
the world economy. We shall see how far the characters of the four novelists are affected by the modernization for example; Aravind is attuned to the inequalities that persist despite India’s new prosperity while in Desai’s India, people are afflicted by incurable poverty and privation. Their minds filled with anguish and anger that result from non-fulfilment of their basic needs and that lead them to resort to terrorist, violence, etc.

Many research scholars have explored different aspects of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy’s multifaceted writing. They have analysed fictional works highlighting both the strength and weaknesses of their writing. The present research is an attempt to unearth and carry out an intensive study of all the four Indian Booker Prize winning novels. It is narrowed to vision of culture and society, the style and dominant themes of their novels.

A comparative study of the four novels will give the social and cultural milieu in which India thrives today. An analytical study will show the similarity and differences in the parameter of presentation techniques, theme and plot construction. Eclectic method will analyse the language of the novels. As tools, primary and secondary sources are consulted meticulously for bringing out an ideal research work.
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