

In October 1997 it came as a great surprise that Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* was awarded a Booker Prize for fiction, which in the last three decades had become the "paper Nobel" for writers from the Commonwealth. The book was chosen from a list of six other novels in which Roy was, besides Mick Jackson, the only first time novelist. 1

The novel, according to R.K. Dhawan, was not the most favoured by the judges. He writes "There was - a general feeling amongst the critics that, despite its popular appeal, it might not win the Booker.,,2 Nevertheless, the decision turned to Roy's book and almost five years of hard and creative work brought its reward. The book became a best selling "mega wonder" over night and sold more copies than any other Booker winner in the history of the contest. The novel has been translated into more than forty languages³ and became a popular subject of academic studies.

There is little room for doubt when stating that the path to popularity and importance for *The God of Small Things* has already been pre-paved by Salman Rushdie "who put Indian writing on an International literary map,,4; by Rushdie, the "messiah" for the Indian novel in English of the penultimate decade of the twentieth century. The appearance of his *Midnight's Children* "brought about a renaissance in Indian writing in English".