

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which won the Booker Prize in 1981, was the first novel to identify Indian English as distinct from that of Britain. Since its debut, South Asian writing in English has taken off. Novelist Amitov Ghosh writes for *The New Yorker*, Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize in 1997, had 22 editions worldwide only four months after its publication, Vikram

Seth's *A Suitable Boy* brought him a \$1 million advance from his publishers. Yet English, or even Hinglish, is not replacing local languages. In Kerala, books written in Malayalam sell more than English language books by ten to one.<sup>14</sup> Then there is award-winning Ruth Praver Jhabvala, who writes not only fiction but also film scripts for Merchant and Ivory, and whose *Heat and Dust* also won the Booker Prize for best novel.



Newspaper vendor in India CIDA Photo: David Barbour

## Did you know

that the words and the music of the national anthem for India, and for Bangladesh, were written by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), poet, fiction writer, essayist, songwriter and painter? His fiction, translated from the original Bengali, has been made available by Penguin Books.

Hundreds of Hindi films are produced in Mumbai which competes with Hong Kong for the title of world's largest film industry. Packed with fights, chase scenes, dancing and singing, they are enormously popular, and a good indication that even with global cultural influences washing over India, Hindi culture is thriving. The movie soundtracks blare from overloaded trucks, competing with the tootling of car horns, the calls of street vendors, and the general hubbub rising from the busy streets. And driving down this street in her Maruti is a young woman on her way to the India Institute of Technology, wearing Bata lace-ups and listening to Bryan Adams on her cassette player.

Ads for a movie, Pakistan  
CIDA Photo:  
Ron Watts

