



## FICTION FROM INDIA READING LIST

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**Forster, E.M.**

**A Passage to India**

**F FOR:E**

Set in British India this is a story of racial and political conflict. It is also the moving account of personal loves and loyalties as characters on both sides of the divide struggle to overcome their own differences and prejudices.

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**Ghosh, Amitav**

**The Glass Palace**

**F GHO:A**

Rajkumar is only another boy, helping on a market stall in the dusty square outside the royal palace, when the British force the Burmese king, queen and all the court into exile. He is rescued by the far-seeing Chinese merchant, and with him builds up a logging business in upper Burma. But haunted by his vision of the royal family, he journeys to the obscure town in India where they have been exiled.

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**Ghosh, Amitav**

**River of Smoke**

**F GHO:A**

In September 1838 a storm blows up on the Indian Ocean and the Ibis, a ship carrying a consignment of convicts and indentured labourers from Calcutta to Mauritius, is caught up in the whirlwind. When the seas settle, five men have disappeared - two lascars, two convicts and one of the passengers. Did the same storm upend the fortunes of those aboard the Anahita, an opium carrier heading towards Canton? And what fate befell those aboard the Redruth, a sturdy two-mastered brig heading east out of Cornwall?

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**Ghosh, Amitav**

**Sea of Poppies**

**F GHO:A**

At the heart of this epic saga, set just before the Opium Wars, is an old slaving-ship, 'The Ibis'. Its destiny is a tumultuous voyage across the Indian Ocean, its crew a motley array of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts. In a time of colonial upheaval, fate has thrown together a truly diverse cast of Indians and Westerners, from a bankrupt Raja to a widowed villager, from an evangelical English opium trader to a mulatto American freedman. As their old family ties are washed away they, like their historical counterparts, come to view themselves as jahaj-bhais or ship-brothers.

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**Grant, Neil**

**The Honeyman and the Hunter**

**F GRA:N**

When sixteen-year-old Rudra Solace's grandmother arrives from India and a long-hidden secret is dredged from the bay, life in his sleepy fishing village of Patonga shifts dramatically. It is not long before Rudra and his mother are bound for Bengal on a journey of discovery and danger.

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**Grindley, Sandra**

**Broken Glass**

**F GRI:S**

When Suresh and Sandeep run away from home to escape their abusive and bullying father, they do so with the hope that they are going to find something better. However, soon Sandeep and Suresh find themselves working to collect rubbish (broken glass) in the big city - and their new home is a traffic island in the middle of a busy road. Is this their future forever, or can the brothers change their fates to something much more hopeful?

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**Jaireth, Subhash**

**After Love**

**F JAI:S**

Vasu, a young Indian student of architecture, arrives in Moscow in the late 1960s. He falls in love with Anna, an archaeologist and an accomplished cellist, yet his romanticism about the Soviet Union clashes with her experience. They go to Venice, where Vasu has been offered a teaching position. In Italy their life unravels when Anna mysteriously disappears without a trace. Years later, Vasu discovers a painful, yet wonderful, truth.

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**Jhabvala, Ruth  
Praver**

**Heat and Dust**

**F JHA:R**

The juxtaposition of past and present India is explored in this novel. The 1923 storyline tells of Olivia, who, though married to a British officer stationed in India, falls madly in love with an Indian prince. It is also about Olivia's husband's granddaughter by a second marriage, who has come to India to discover the details of Olivia's life but finds that, although India and women have become modernized, she must face many of the same choices as Olivia. The intrusion of British culture on India's own traditions and values is a second theme in the novel.

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**Kelman, Stephen**

**Man on Fire**

**F KEL:S**

John Lock has come to India to meet his destiny: a destiny dressed in a white karate suit and sporting an impressive moustache. He has fled the quiet desperation of his life in England and come to offer his help to a man who has learned to conquer pain, a world record breaker who specialises in feats of extreme endurance and ill-advised masochism.

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**Kunzru, Hari**

**The Impressionist**

**F KUN:H**

In India, at the birth of the last century, an infant is brought howling into the world, his remarkable paleness marking him out from his brown-skinned fellows. Revered at first, he is later cast out from his wealthy home when his true parentage is revealed. So begins Pran Nath's odyssey of self-discovery - a journey that will take him from the streets of Agra, via the red light district of Bombay, to the green lawns of England and beyond - as he struggles to understand who he really is.

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**Lahiri, Jhumpa**

**Interpreter of Maladies**

**F LAH:J**

Navigating between the Indian traditions they've inherited and the baffling new world, the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's elegant, touching stories seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations.

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**Lahiri, Jhumpa**

**The Lowland**

**F LAH:J**

From Subhash's earliest memories, at every point, his brother was there. In the suburban streets of Calcutta where they wandered before dusk and in the hyacinth-strewn ponds where they played for hours on end, Udayan was always in his older brother's sight. So close in age, they were inseparable in childhood and yet, as the years pass - as U.S tanks roll into Vietnam and riots sweep across India - their brotherly bond can do nothing to forestall the tragedy that will upend their lives.

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**Lahiri, Jhumpa**

**Unaccustomed Earth**

**F LAH:J**

Eight stories that take us from Cambridge and Seattle to India and Thailand.

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**Lalwani, Nikita**

**Gifted**

**F LAL:N**

Cardiff in the 1980s is a place where maths can get you noticed. Rumis Vasi is the town's 'maths prodigy': untangling numbers and Rubik's Cubes protects her from the harsh vagaries of the playground and gives a pattern to her world. But after years of her father's determined tutoring, Rumi finds that numbers are beginning to lose their innocence. India infuses her with a romantic sense of belonging and, as she grows older, the idea of love is opened up to painful examination.

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**Laurence, Murray**

**Subcontinental Drift**

**F LAW:M**

Nothing prepared Murray Laurence for India when he first travelled through the country in the 1970s. His first impressions were of its 'surpassing weirdness' but it soon cast a spell on him, and for the next forty years he kept returning to India over and over again.

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**Rai, Bali**                      **The Night Run**                      **F RAI:B**  
Amritsar, India, 1919. A city on the verge of meltdown, as tensions between the local people and the British colonial rulers explode. 12-year-old Arjan Singh learns that his father has been falsely charged with serious crimes and faces hanging.

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**Ray, Kalyan**                      **No Country**                      **F RAY:K**  
In November 1989 an immigrant couple are discovered murdered in a small town in upstate New York. They lie together as though just disengaged from a long embrace. These killings have been two centuries in the making.

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**Roberts, Gregory David**                      **The Mountain Shadow**                      **F ROB:G**  
Shantaram introduced readers to Lin, an Australian fugitive, working as a passport forger for a branch of the Bombay mafia. In its sequel, *The Mountain Shadow*, Lin must find his way in a Bombay run by a different generation of mafia dons, playing by a different set of rules. It has been two years since the events in *Shantaram*, and since Lin lost two people he had come to love: his father figure, Khaderbhai, and his soul mate, Karla, married to a handsome Indian media tycoon. Lin returns from a smuggling trip to a city that seems to have changed too much, too soon.

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**Roy, Arundhati**                      **The God of Small Things**                      **F ROY:A**  
Rajkumar is only another boy, helping on a market stall in the dusty square outside the royal palace, when the British force the Burmese king, queen and all the court into exile. He is rescued by the far-seeing Chinese merchant, and with him builds up a logging business in upper Burma. But haunted by his vision of the royal family, he journeys to the obscure town in India where they have been exiled.

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**Roy, Arundhati**                      **The Ministry of Utmost Happiness**                      **F ROY:A**  
In a graveyard outside the walls of Old Delhi, a resident unrolls a threadbare Persian carpet. On a concrete sidewalk, a baby suddenly appears, just after midnight. In a snowy valley, a bereaved father writes a letter to his five-year-old daughter about the people who came to her funeral. In a second-floor apartment, a lone woman chain-smokes as she reads through her old notebooks.

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**Rushdie, Salman**                      **The Ground Beneath Her Feet : a Novel**                      **F RUS:S**  
In a novel that takes the reader from India to England and America, Vina Apsara, a famous and much loved singer with a wild and irresistible voice, is caught up in a devastating earthquake and never seen again. This is her story, and that of Ormus Cama, the lover who finds, loses, seeks and again finds her, over and over throughout his own extraordinary life in music. The story of a love that stretches across their whole lives, and even beyond death.

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**Rushdie, Salman**                      **Midnight's Children**                      **F RUS:S**  
Saleem Sinai was born at midnight, the midnight of India's independence, and finds himself mysteriously 'handcuffed to history' by the coincidence. He is one of 1,001 children born at the midnight hour, each of them endowed with an extraordinary talent - and whose privilege and curse it is to be both master and victims of their times. Through Saleem's gifts - inner voices and a wildly sensitive sense of smell - we are drawn into a fascinating family saga set against the vast, colourful background of the India of this century.

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**Rushdie, Salman**      **The Moor's Last Sigh**      **F RUS:S**  
Mine is the story of the fall from grace of a high-born crossbred - me, Moraes Zogoiby, called 'Moor', for most of my life the only heir to the spice-trade-'n'-big-business millions of the da Gama-Zogoiby dynasty of Cochin - and of my banishment by my mother Aurora, nee da Gama, most illustrious of our modern artists.

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**Rushdie, Salman**      **Shalimar the Clown : a Novel**      **F RUS:S**  
Los Angeles, 1991. Maximilian Ophuls is knifed to death in broad daylight on the doorstep of his illegitimate daughter India, slaughtered by his Kashmiri driver, a mysterious figure who calls himself Shalimar the Clown. The dead man is a World War II Resistance hero, a man of formidable intellectual ability and much erotic appeal, a former United States ambassador to India, and subsequently America's counter-terrorism chief. The murder looks at first like a political assassination but turns out to be passionately personal.

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**Sankaran, Lavanya**      **The Red Carpet**      **F SAN:L**  
A collection of stories as rich and absorbing as any novel. From traditional mothers trying to marry off their Westernised children to software billionaires, chauffeurs and the legacy of the Raj, Lavanya Sankaran's stories of Bangalore, India's Silicone Valley, are a pleasure from first to last.

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**Sarma, Siddhartha**      **The Grasshopper's Run**      **F SAR:S**  
1944. World War II is raging in Asia and the Imperial Japanese Army is about to invade India. Just as the invasion begins, an ambitious and vicious Japanese officer orders the massacre of a village of the Ao Naga tribe. Among those killed is Uti, grandson of the eldest Ao chief. Gojen is his best friend, and on hearing the news of Uti's death he is unable to stay in school in Calcutta and so returns to the ancestral home, where he embarks on a gruelling journey of revenge.

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**Scobie, Claire**      **The Pagoda Tree**      **F SCO:C**  
Tanjore, 1765. Maya plays among the towering granite temples of this ancient city in the heart of southern India. Like her mother before her, she is destined to become a devadasi, a dancer for the temple. She is instructed in dance, the mystical arts and lovemaking. It is expected she will be chosen as a courtesan for the prince himself. But as Maya comes of age, India is on the cusp of change and British dominance has risen to new heights.

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**Seth, Vikram**      **A Suitable Boy**      **F SET:V**  
Vikram Seth's novel is, at its core, a love story: the tale of Lela's, and her mother's attempts to find a suitable boy through love or through exacting maternal appraisal. At the same time, it is the story of India, newly independent and struggling through a time of crisis as a sixth of the world's population faces its first general election and the chance to mop its own destiny.

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**Sinha, Indra**      **Animal's People**      **F SIN:I**  
Ever since he can remember, Animal has gone on all fours, the catastrophic result of what happened on That Night when, thanks to an American chemical company, the Apocalypse visited his slum. Now not quite twenty, he leads a hand-to-mouth existence with his dog Jara and a crazy old nun called Ma Franci. When a young American doctor, Elli Barber, comes to town to open a free clinic for the still suffering townfolk, Animal plunges into a web of intrigues, scams and plots with the unabashed aim of turning events to his own advantage.

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**Scott, Paul**      **Staying On**      **F SCO:P**

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Tusker and Lily Smalley stayed on in India. Given the chance to return 'home' when Tusker, once a Colonel in the British Army, retired, they chose instead to remain in the small hill town of Pangkot, with its eccentric inhabitants and archaic rituals left over from the days of the Empire. Only the tyranny of their landlady, the imposing Mrs Bhoolahoy, threatens to upset the quiet rhythm of their days. Both funny and deeply moving, "Staying On" is a portrait of the end of an empire and of a forty-year love affair.

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**Swarup, Vikas**                      **Slumdog Millionaire**                      **F SWA:V**  
Ram Mohammad Thomas has just got twelve questions correct on a TV quiz-show to win a cool one billion rupees. But he is brutally slung in prison on suspicion of cheating. How can a kid from the slums know who Shakespeare was, unless he is pulling a fast one? In the order of the questions on the show, Ram tells us which amazing adventures in his street-kid life gave him the answers.

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**Tagore, Rabindranath**    **Quartet (Chaturanga)**                      **F TAG:R**  
Set in Bengal at the turn of the century, "Quartet" is a story of archetypal conflicts - between reason and emotion, mysticism and passion. Written with terse elegance, "Quartet" is at once a philosophical exploration and a poignant love story.

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**Thayil, Jeet**                      **Narcopolis**                      **F THA:J**  
Narcopolis charts the evolution of a great and broken metropolis. It opens in Bombay in the late 1970s, as its narrator first arrives from New York to find himself entranced with the city's underworld, in particular an opium den and attached brothel. Decades pass to reveal a changing Bombay, where opium has given way to heroin from Pakistan and the city's underbelly has become ever rawer. After a long absence, the narrator returns in 2004 to find a very different Bombay. Those he knew are almost all gone, but the passion he feels for them and for the city is revealed.

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**Umrigar, Thrity**                      **The Space Between Us**                      **F UMR:T**  
Captures the delicate balance of class and gender in contemporary India, witnessed through the lives of two women bound by friendship and loss, yet separated by blood and class.

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**Waheed, Mirza**                      **The Collaborator**                      **F WAH:M**  
It is Kashmir in the early 1990s and war has finally reached the isolated village of Nowgam close to the Pakistan border. Indian soldiers appear as if from nowhere to hunt for militants on the run. Four teenage boys, who used to spend their afternoons playing cricket, or singing Bollywood ballads down by the river, have disappeared one by one, to cross into Pakistan and join the movement against the Indian army. Only one of their friends, the son of the headman, is left behind. The families in the village begin to think it's time to flee, to search for a place of greater safety. But the headman will not allow his family to leave.

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