

# Chapter One

## Introduction

Nobel prize, established by Swedish inventor and Industrialist Alfred Nobel, represent the pinnacle of recognition for outstanding intellectual accomplishments. This prestigious award Spans over different fields like Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, Peace and Economics. In 1895, according to Alfred Nobel's will stipulated that this award should be given to those who, during the preceding year have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.

The Nobel prize was first awarded on 10th December 1901 marking the fifth anniversary of Nobel's death. The Nobel Prizes hold an esteemed status within their individual domains, recognised widely as the most prestigious awards obtainable in those fields. The Nobel prize in Literature is awarded to an author who has made exceptional contribution to the world of literature. The winners are chosen based on their literary works, which include novels, poems, plays and more. The French poet and essayist, Sully Prudhomme was the first person, who won the Nobel prize in literature. The first Indian to receive Nobel Prize in literature was Rabindranath Tagore in 1913. The award was granted to him as recognition to his outstanding contributions to *Geetanjali*.

Some of the important Nobel Prize laureates who has contributed significantly to literature were:- Samuel Beckett, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Bob Dylan and Alice Munro.

Samuel Beckett was an Irish playwright, novelist and poet who received the Nobel prize in literature in 1969 for his significant contributions to the world of

literature, particularly for his plays and novels. The Nobel committee recognized Beckett's unique writing style and his ability to capture the human condition with depth and complexity. His works such as *waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* challenged traditional narrative structures and explored themes of existentialism and the absurdity of life.

Pablo Neruda was a Chilean poet-diplomat and politician. He received the Nobel prize in literature in 1971 for his exceptional poetry that captured the beauty of the natural world, the struggles of the common people and the power of love. Through his poetry he gave voice to the marginalised and oppressed. Neruda's works such as *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* and *Canto General* showcased his lyrical and evocative style, earning him international acclaim.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was a Colombian novelist, short story writer, and journalist, known affectionately as Gabo throughout Latin America. Gabriel Garcia Marquez was Awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1982. He is known for his unique style called magical realism. His work *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is considered as one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century. Marquez's writing explores themes of love, politics and the human condition, often against the backdrop of Latin America.

Toni Morrison was an American novelist, who received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993 for her extra-ordinary literary achievements and her powerful portrayal of the African American experience. Her novels such as *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon* and *The Bluest Eye* delve into the themes of identity, race and the complexities of human relationships. Morrison's writing is known for its lyrical

prose, rich symbolism and deep exploration of the African American history and culture. The Nobel committee recognised her immense talent and the profound impact her works have had on literature and society.

Bob Dylan received the Nobel Prize in literature in 2016 for his significant contribution to the world of music and song writing. The Nobel prize committee recognised Dylan for creating new poetic expressions within the American song tradition. His lyrics had a profound influence on listeners, addressing social and political issues with poetic depth and musical innovation. Dylan's ability to blend storytelling, symbolism and powerful imagery in his works made him a unique and deserving recipient of the Nobel prize in literature.

Alice Munro is the first Canadian and the thirteenth woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. She is a renowned Canadian author, who gained world wide recognition through her significant contribution in English literature with her prolific writing and insightful narratives. Her talent lies in her ability to create beautiful short stories which are at once lyrical, powerful, economical and intense, revealing the depth and complexities in the emotion filled lives of everyday people. Her stories have been said "to embed more than announce and reveal more than parade" (Herbert). She was born on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1931 in the township of Winham, Ontario as Alice Ann Laidlaw. Her father Robert Eric Laidlaw was a farmer and her mother Anne Laidlaw was a school teacher and both of them struggled with numerous financial issues. Alice herself revealed that she was raised on a collapsing enterprise of a fox and mink farm which was beyond the most disreputable part of town.

Alice Munro loved reading from an early age and commenced her writing journey during teenage years, marking its beginning with *The Dimensions of a Shadow*, her first published story in 1950. While pursuing English and journalism at the University of Western Ontario on a scholarship, her studies got interrupted in 1951, when she decided to depart from the university life, because of her pivotal decision to marry James Munro, a fellow student.

In her early twenties, Alice Munro entered into a marriage with James Munro and the couple shifted to Dundarave. While he worked in the city, she dedicated herself to homemaking and found solace in reading and writing. The couple had three daughters and despite the loss of a child and the routine of domestic life, she found inspiration in authors like Eudora Welty. Though she aimed to write a novel, her efforts led to the creation of compelling short stories because as a housewife with young daughters, she didn't have the time to devote to a novel. Her marriage with James Munro ended in 1962 and the family moved to Victoria in 1963, where she started publishing her books and established Munro's book store, a venture which continues to thrive today.

Alice Munro's initial publications appeared in Canadian magazines and after seventeen such publications, she gained national recognition with her debut short story collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* in 1968. Subsequently another collection titled *Lives of Girls and Women* in 1971 set the stage for her international success. The main reason for her literary accomplishments was the use of reality in her works. Her early life experiences greatly shaped her writing. Growing up in poverty provided her with a profound empathy for human struggle enriching her narratives with genuine realism. Her

portrayal of rural Canadian life, devoid of idealisation connected with readers globally by offering an authentic view. Furthermore, her own experiences as a woman in a challenging environment played a pivotal role in centering her stories around women lives, contributing significantly to feminist literature. The U.S release of *Dance of the Happy Shades* in 1973 significantly boosted her recognition. Munro's ability to interwine universal themes into precise yet emotionally evocative prose, firmly established her among esteemed literary figures. Throughout her literary career, Alice Munro authored fourteen short story collections.

Some of her most celebrated works are *The Dance of the Happy shades*, *The Moons of Jupiter*, *Lives of Girls and Women*, *Selected Stories*, *Runaway*, *Open Secrets* and *Dear Life*. Over the span of her career, she won several awards like Governor General Award, Giller Prize, The National Book Critics Circle prize, International Booker Prize etc.. and most importantly Alice Munro also won the worlds most prestigious literary award, the Nobel Prize in literature on 10th October 2013. On giving the prize, she was cited by Swedish academy as a “master of contemporary short story” and Munro's work was described as revolutionising the architecture of short stories especially in its tendency to move forward and backward in time.