“The autobiographer Nirad C. Chaudhuri has been, throughout his long life, an erudite, contrary and mischievous presence.”

— Salman Rushdie, ‘India and world literature’

1.1 A BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER

All writers write out of their lives’ experiences. Hence, in order to analyse their writings, it is helpful to know their lives. Such knowledge helps an analyst to gain a comprehension better than that of a lay reader. It is for the purpose of a comprehensive analysis that this section sketches the life of writer Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri (23 November 1897 – 01 August 1999). ¹ The sketch highlights those aspects of his life which appear to have influenced his works.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri was born in a small town of eastern Bengal, now in
Bangladesh. The second son in a family of eight children, he made his father anxious about his worldly prospects. The senior Chaudhuri used to say, “I have no anxiety for my other sons, but Nirad is utterly unfit to go through the world.” (Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921 - 1952 xxii) Most of Nirad’s siblings became well placed in society — his elder brother was a High Court advocate, the brother immediately after Nirad was a paediatric doctor, the next brother was a civil engineer and the sisters were wealthy homemakers. In stark contrast to their socially successful lives, Nirad became an accounts clerk, a journal editor, a private secretary and a news writer at different points in time. He was frequently without work or working in part-time jobs.

Nirad Chaudhuri and his siblings had received the best education which their parents could afford. Initially, it was the father who taught them English grammar. “The two years,” writes Nirad, “were the decisive years in my understanding of the fundamental principles of the English language.” (The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian 140) After their linguistic roots had been planted at home, the Chaudhuri siblings were put in schools for further studies. They were also placed under tutors at home. However, boy Nirad grew dissatisfied with the low standard of his English textbooks and read up those of his elder brother. His learning of English is of particular interest to us because he finally became a writer in this language.  

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After completing middle-school in his home town, Nirad Chaudhuri was sent
to Calcutta (now Kolkata) for high school. The World War I (1914 – 1918) was raging at the time and he followed the news of the war out of personal curiosity. He was surprised to find, however, that the gravity of the situation was not being conveyed by its official communication. Chaudhuri happened to discover that the communiqués through the media tried to downplay the reverses suffered by the Britain-led Allied Forces. This surprise finding taught him the necessity of forming his own opinions, independent of others. He writes, “So I would not accept an opinion simply because it was a product of the times.” (Thy Hand xxvii) It was the genesis of his self-opinionated persona. 3

After completing his schooling, Nirad Chaudhuri studied Arts with History Honours in a Calcutta college. Out of personal interest, he also read literature in Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, English, Greek, Latin, French and German. The result of his wide reading was that, in the examination for Bachelor of Arts, he stood first in the First Class. Despite such an excellent result, it turned out to be his last examination ever. As his reading habits kept growing, he could not confine himself to the limited syllabus of an examination any more. Consequently, he dropped out of the course for Master of Arts in History in which he had taken admission. About his lack of a post-graduate degree, Chaudhuri wrote, “It put academic employment out of my reach, because in India no one could become a university teacher without the MA degree.” (Thy Hand 4)

After dropping out of the MA course, Nirad Chaudhuri managed to get a
clerical job. It was in the government’s Military Accounts Department and it revived his earlier interest in matters military. He started working well and was recommended for a promotional examination. In the study leave of two months, however, he did not prepare for the test but read up Matthew Arnold’s poetry instead. The Scholar Gypsy inspired him to “leave the world, with powers / Fresh, undiverted to the world without, / Firm to their mark, not spent on other things; / Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt, / Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings”. The poem’s spirit dissuaded Chaudhuri from pursuing careerist goals rather than scholarly ideals. He decided not to take the promotional examination because it would tempt him towards careerism and away from scholasticism.⁴

After declining promotion avenues in the job, Nirad Chaudhuri started to dislike government service itself. Ironically, he disliked anti-government agitations too. While he did not like government service because of its monotony, his dislike for anti-government agitations was because of their coercion. During a strike protesting the visit of the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, Chaudhuri saw that some of the protestors held whips in hand. They were forcing other Indians to join the strike. Chaudhuri resented such bullying so much that he jumped their barricades and narrowly escaped being roughed up. He writes, “All my life I have resented and defied any attempt at coercing me.” (Thy Hand 19) The more he got agitated by such incidents, the more he wanted an escape to a scholastic idyll. He penned an article in literary criticism and published it in The
Modern Review, an English magazine with all-India circulation. Soon thereafter, Chaudhuri chucked up his clerical job but continued writing articles.

As a budding scholar, Nirad Chaudhuri was painstakingly meticulous. An example of his painstaking nature was the trip he made from Benares to Sarnath in 1926. He walked the distance of eight miles in the hot sun instead of taking a more comfortable mode of transport in order to vicariously experience a historical journey. He explains, "I recalled that pilgrims had come from far-off China on foot to visit the place of origin of their religion, and I thought it would be sacrilegious softness if I went to Sarnath in a horse-drawn carriage." (Thy Hand 185) Chaudhuri's meticulous scholarship was seen in the originality of his observations too. One of his observations was on the comparative artistry of the sculptures at Sarnath and those at Puri. He noticed that the beauty of the former was puritanical while that of the latter was sexual. Another original observation of his was regarding the anatomy of the sculpted figurines. He found that the figurines, whether at Sarnath or at Puri, were subtle representations of the local populace. 5

For all the places Nirad Chaudhuri could not visit, he had to rely on books. They became his "mental nourishment" and buying expensive books became a habit. (Thy Hand 193) He was forced to buy them on credit though, because he was jobless. Consequently, he had to escape the creditors, for which he used to lock himself inside his house. Such humiliation ended only when his booksellers and landlord were paid their dues by his father. Nonetheless, Nirad justified taking
credit or borrowing money on the ground that he was too pre-occupied to earn a living. In his pursuit of knowledge, he was like the holy mendicants who get so involved in meditation that they do not mind begging for food.

To take a break from this difficult situation, Nirad Chaudhuri went to his hometown in eastern Bengal for a short trip. It turned out be his last visit there. After coming back to Calcutta in early 1928, he did not return to East Bengal ever again. It was the first step of his westward march in life, where there was no looking east. In Chaudhuri’s words, “My life has always moved West, and once it has done so its direction has never been reversed.” (Thy Hand 683)

Back in Calcutta, Nirad Chaudhuri started editing a monthly journal on literary polemics. This job was closer to his heart than his first one, clerkship, was. However, the city police found some article in his journal to be obscene and summoned him to their headquarters. Though he was let off with a warning, it is ironical that a fledgling anti-nationalist like him should have been harassed by the Calcutta Police which was otherwise notorious for harassing nationalists. Subsequently, Chaudhuri quit the journal because of a policy disagreement with one of its founders. He proved his editorial worth, nonetheless, as an editor by helping new writer Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyaya publish the famous novel *Pather Panchali* [The Song of the Road].

After resigning his editor’s job in late 1928, Nirad Chaudhuri got another.
He became an assistant editor of The Modern Review, the magazine which had published his maiden article. At that time, he came under the pan-Indian influence of Gandhi and broke the infamous Salt Act at a marsh of eastern Calcutta. He also supplemented one issue of his magazine with a picture pull-out of sixteen pages on the inspirational Dandi March. In Chaudhuri's words, "For the first and last time I became a Gandhian." (Thy Hand 251) This issue, dated May 1930, was so anti-colonial that it was proscribed by the British government. Around the same time, two of his younger brothers served six months of simple imprisonment for shouting Vande Mataram [Hail Mother] at street corners.

With a modest job in hand, Nirad Chaudhuri decided to get married. Having failed to choose his spouse himself, he wed a girl chosen for him by his father. His eccentricity, though, could have put their conjugal compatibility at stake. On their first night after marriage, he asked his wife, "Have you listened to any European music?" (Thy Hand 351) The college-educated bride replied in the negative but spelt music composer Beethoven's name correctly! It reassured the Anglophile groom that his partner was not totally ignorant about Western culture.

Nirad Chaudhuri's wedded life took off precariously. Chaudhuri left The Modern Review for another publication as its editor. That publication wound up within a few months due to its owner's indifference and, consequently, Chaudhuri lost the job. The resulting crisis was made even more acute by the fact that he already had two children by then. Regarding his pecuniary status, Chaudhuri
writes figuratively, "It was like being on a raft after being shipwrecked, and drifting on the off-chance of being picked up by a ship." (Thy Hand 364)

Nirad Chaudhuri's saviour ship appeared in the form of Calcutta Municipal Corporation. He got a temporary job there. However, it was not only a breather but also an eye opener for him. He was shocked to see the corruption and nepotism in the civic body. It was at this stage that he formed his personal theories about India's past, present and future which he propagated for the rest of his life.  

Nirad Chaudhuri lost the temporary job at Calcutta Corporation in 1936. Then, he had to take up three part-time assignments simultaneously for his financial survival. He became a part-time literary assistant to the Sheriff of Calcutta, a part-time private secretary to the President of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee and a free-lance commentator at All India Radio. The last two jobs were particularly significant for him. As a radio commentator, he wrote on international affairs, thereby widening his intellectual horizons. As a private secretary to the Congress leader, Chaudhuri was privy to the goings on within the Indian National Congress.  

He had the rare opportunity of seeing from close quarters the leaders of India's freedom struggle, as if he "saw something of the greenroom behind the lighted stage, and the actors without the makeup as well as with its application." (Thy Hand 434) Familiarity with them bred contempt in him. The years were deeply disappointing, his only ray of hope being the birth of his third and youngest child.
Nirad Chaudhuri's temper was as short as his height. The short temper showed itself in bouts of physical aggression. Once he gave his doctor brother a blow for insulting him about his joblessness. He also kicked a young man down a staircase for accusing him of taking bribes as private secretary. In yet another incident, he beat a young writer in the face with a slipper for calling him a "servant" in the house of the Congress leader. (Thy Hand 574) He also declared his intention of fighting fellow Bengalis in case they tried to lynch him for his anti-Bengali utterances!

Nirad Chaudhuri subsequently left Bengal for Delhi, never to return to his home state again. This was the second step in his life's westward journey. In Delhi, he joined All India Radio's News Division as a script-writer and his brief was to write English commentaries on international issues like the raging World War II (1939 – 1945). After moving to Delhi, he did two things for the first time in his life — he wore European clothes and he studied Islamic architecture. Having seen the city's Islamic monuments, Chaudhuri understood "what relationship architecture bears to imperialism, which I had known only in theory from my reading of Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman history." (Thy Hand 736)

As British imperialism withdrew from India and the newly-created Pakistan, ferocious riots broke out in the sub-continent. Nirad Chaudhuri was so unsettled by those massacres of 1947 that he could not appreciate India's independence.
Weeks after Independence Day, he spotted Hindu men breaking shops at Connaught Place and looting articles. The next day he saw an old Sikh, whose stomach had been ripped open by a Muslim tonga driver. A couple of days later, he helped a Muslim man whose whole back had been "cut up and covered with blood which was congealing like jelly". (Thy Hand 847) Another day, he saw murdered corpses on a hospital footpath and at a railway station. A friend told him how a Muslim boy in Calcutta was forcibly drowned in a pond by Hindu men. A man was found tied to an electric pole, with a hole made in his skull so that he would bleed to death. In still another incident, Chaudhuri's brother tried in vain to prevent the murder of a poor old Muslim fruit-seller in his locality. Chaudhuri could never forget these horrors and they made him feel ashamed to be an Indian.¹⁰

Partition and independence made 1947 a landmark year in the history of the Indian sub-continent. The year was a turning point in the life of Nirad Chaudhuri as well. On a midsummer night, he got the idea of writing an autobiography in order to "write the history you have passed through and seen enacted before your eyes". (Thy Hand 868) It was a bizarre idea because autobiographies are generally written by famous people whereas he was yet to be so. Nevertheless, he started writing it the next morning. When he mailed the half-finished typescript to British publisher Hamish Hamilton for an advance opinion, the response from the latter was encouraging.

After it was completed, however, the manuscript was rejected by Hamilton.
Other well known publishers like Faber and Faber refused it too. Macmillan, another British publisher, finally published *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* in 1951 on the recommendation of literary critic John C. Squire. After that, ironically, the autobiographer did not remain unknown any more. The book was acclaimed and declaimed with equal vigour. For instance, writer Anita Desai appreciated it because of "its almost unique achievement in charting the development of a complex mind made up of its native Bengali and alien European languages". (jacket of Viking Penguin edition of *The Autobiography*) On the other hand, many readers denounced the book because of its pro-colonial remarks. ¹¹

Not only literary criticism, Nirad Chaudhuri also faced professional reprobation due to his book. Soon after the book was published, All India Radio (AIR) reprimanded him on a procedural matter. Then, the organisation compelled him to retire from service at the age of fifty-five without gratuity and other termination benefits. Chaudhuri was blacklisted as an external broadcaster too, ignoring his experience of fifteen years in the field. The premature retirement hit Nirad Chaudhuri where it hurts the most — finances. No offer was forthcoming, either from Indians or even from the British. In this situation, the French came to Chaudhuri's rescue. The French Ambassador in India offered him the editorship of the embassy's English bulletin. "What I could see was that he respected my literary ability," writes Chaudhuri, "and also deeply appreciated the love of France and French culture that I displayed in my writings." (*Thy Hand* 937)
It took another two years for the British establishment to acknowledge Nirad Chaudhuri. In 1955, the British Broadcasting Corporation offered him a sponsored trip to England in exchange for a series of talks on that country. "This, I was told, was an experiment," writes Chaudhuri, "and a very risky one it was, for they were backing a completely dark horse." (A Passage vii) Nevertheless, he took up the offer and visited England for the first time ever at the age of fifty-seven. It was his maiden visit to Europe but he could still give road directions to taxi drivers, so detailed had been his knowledge of the famous cities of the continent. Chaudhuri's radio talks and some related articles were later published as his second book, A Passage to England (1959).

Nirad Chaudhuri's third book, The Continent of Circe – Being an Essay on the Peoples of India (1965), was on India. It won the Alfred Duff-Cooper Memorial Prize, a prize given to the year's best work in English or French in the areas of history, political science or biography. Chaudhuri made his second trip to Britain, this time to receive the coveted prize.

Nirad Chaudhuri wrote a fourth book in English, The Intellectual in India (1967), before publishing his first ever Bengali work. It may be noted that in Bengali, Chaudhuri wrote his name differently from that in English. While in English he initialized his middle name and signed as "Nirad C. Chaudhuri", in Bengali he used his full name and signed as "Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri". This minor difference could, perhaps, have been the symptom of a major dichotomy —
it might have been a sign of Chaudhuri's identity crisis. The issue of his split personality will be dealt with in Chapter IV of this thesis.  

Nirad Chaudhuri emigrated permanently to Britain in 1970, initially to research European Indologist Friedrich Max Muller's documents in the University of Oxford. It was the final step of his life's west-bound journey and was made possible by a rich Cambridge sociologist, Professor Edward Albert Shils, who gave him a handsome loan at the time. Regarding the help he received from different people, Chaudhuri wrote, "This outside help came to me unsolicited, given freely to me by some of my countrymen but mostly by individual Englishmen, all of whom perhaps saw something in me which was worth supporting." (Thy Hand xi) Thenceforth, the Chaudhuri couple lived at 20 Lathbury Road of Oxfordshire county.

After Nirad Chaudhuri settled in Britain, he taught at the American universities of Texas and Chicago as a visiting professor. For somebody who could not be a professor in India because of inadequate qualification, it would have been a dream come true. He also became the subject of a documentary film, Adventures of a Brown Man in Search of Civilization (1972), directed by James Ivory of Merchant-Ivory Productions.  

The film's title was taken from a chapter in Chaudhuri's A Passage to England. Chaudhuri's conceit was that he was in England to show Englishmen "how their fathers dressed, how their fathers ate and drank and how their fathers wrote English." (The Spectator September 1988)
Nirad Chaudhuri's first book from Britain was a biography of a famous Indology scholar, Max Mueller. Titled Scholar Extraordinary — The Life of Professor the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Muller, P.C. (1974), the book won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975 as the year's best work in Indian English. Chaudhuri's second, and last, biography was Clive of India — A Political and Psychological Essay (1975). There would have been one more biography by Chaudhuri had he accepted an offer by Jacqueline Onassis, the widow of former American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Chaudhuri declined to write a biography of her second husband, the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis. Refusing such a high-society offer was an act of intellectual arrogance by Chaudhuri. He also publicly refuted a remark of British politician Norman Beresford Tebbit. The latter had suggested that love of cricket was the acid test of English patriotism. Chaudhuri, however, wrote back that the love of Kenneth Grahame's novel The Wind in the Willows (1908), Stilton cheese and the opera were the three real tests for authentic Englishhood.

Nirad Chaudhuri wrote four more books in English, apart from a number of essays. One of these books was his autobiography's sequel, Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921 — 1952 (1987). These two books put together make his autobiography the longest in English. In that sense, his two-volume autobiography holds a record of sorts. Another achievement of Chaudhuri was his last book, Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse (1997). It was written at the age of
ninety-eight. In his words, "I have never read or heard of any author, however great or productive in his heyday, doing that." (Three Horsemen Preface)

An academic achievement of Nirad Chaudhuri was that even without a post-graduate degree, he received two post-doctoral degrees from the universities of Oxford and of Stirling. At the Oxford ceremony for conferring a honorary Doctor of Letters degree, the Public Orator said, "The eminent Bengali whom I now present is thoroughly versed both in English and European poetry and has interpreted Indian society and customs to us with great intellectual ability, illuminating incidentally several aspects of our society." (translated from Latin) In 1992, Queen Elizabeth II made Chaudhuri an Honorary Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. 15

In a fortunate turn of events, Nirad Chaudhuri was forgiven by India's intelligentsia. The Visva-Bharati university at Santiniketan bestowed on him its highest honour, the Desikottoma. President K. R. Narayanan expressed a wish that Chaudhuri's "sharp intellect and scintillating pen continue to enthral and instruct the world." ('Nirad felicitated' The Indian Express 22 November 1997) Prime Minister I. K. Gujral greeted him on his centennial birthday. Chaudhuri, a widower in the last five years of his life, died at the age of one hundred and one years. He left behind three sons — Dhruba, Kirti and Prithvi — and grandchildren, all of whom are well-settled in their lives.
Nirad Chaudhuri seems to have borrowed his cynical attitude from the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes (412 – 323 B.C.), the one who walked the streets with a lamp in daytime looking for a human being. Both of them were born in small towns of their respective countries but moved on to live in big cities. Diogenes was influenced by the Oracle at Delphi just as Chaudhuri was by The Scholar Gypsy. They were also similar in audacity to the high and mighty of their times — Diogenes refused to entertain Alexander the Great and Chaudhuri refused to oblige Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, as has been mentioned earlier. Neither Diogenes nor Chaudhuri was interested in any national identity, both were cosmopolitan in the true sense of the term.

1.2 HIS CONTROVERSIAL CREATIONS

The previous section outlined the life of Nirad Chaudhuri, with a look-out for his pro-colonial leanings. This section outlines his works, again with an eye on his pro-colonialism. His works will be introduced and his colonial sympathies highlighted. Chaudhuri was a writer of non-fiction. In fact, he concentrated so much on non-fiction that he never published the lone piece of fiction which he happened to write once upon a time. Within the gamut of non-fiction, however, Chaudhuri wrote in various genres. His favourite genres were autobiography and socio-political criticism though he has also written biography, travelogue and literary criticism. These works are spread across sixteen books and a number of
articles. All his books and anthologies of selected articles are listed alphabetically in the Select Bibliography at the end of this thesis.

Nirad Chaudhuri's maiden book was *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951). The title, with uncharacteristic modesty, admits that the autobiographer was not a known personality. At that time Chaudhuri was one of All India Radio's news writers, practically a non-entity. His gigantic ego, though, had egged him to write an autobiography. The book is strange in many ways. For one, it covers only the first twenty-three years of the autobiographer's life although he was already fifty-three years old. A second oddity of the autobiography is that it is not wholly autobiographical, but partly historical. In this part-autobiographical, part-historical book, he considered the British Empire in India as more a regenerative era than an exploitative one. He felt that Britain had sped up rather than slowed down India's social and material progress. Hence, he took it upon himself to express the 'gratitude' on behalf of all Indians. As an expression of that peculiar gratitude, Chaudhuri dedicated his book to the memory of British imperialism. The only grudge he nursed against imperialism was that it did not give us British citizenship. That highly controversial dedication, which Khushwant Singh later called a "bait" for wogs, reads:-

To the memory of the

British Empire in India

Which conferred subjecthood on us

But withheld citizenship;
To which yet
Every one of us threw out the challenge:
‘Civis Britannicus Sum’ [Citizen of Britannia I am]
Because
All that was good and living
Within us
Was made, shaped, and quickened
By the same British rule. (The Autobiography v)¹⁷

Even after writing the long Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Nirad Chaudhuri continued to write about himself. In 1987, he published a massive sequel to it, named Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921 – 1952. The main title “Thy Hand, Great Anarch!” is extracted from Pope’s mock-epic The Dunciad (1728). That eighteenth century satire ends with the couplet: “Thy hand! great Anarch! lets the curtain fall / And universal darkness buries all.” Obviously, Chaudhuri’s title implies that India fell to anarchy and plunged into darkness during the period 1921 – 1952. Most Indians, on the contrary, believe that the period was the one when India’s nationalist movement grew from maturity to fruition. The reason for Chaudhuri’s unconventional take in this regard is complex. He had been so shocked by the wrongdoings of average Indian politicians that he refused to understand the righteousness of their professed nationalism. The hypocrisy and corruption of Indians, which he saw aplenty, did not allow him to be an enthusiast of pro-Indian nationalism. For instance, he had seen random malpractices at
Calcutta’s municipal corporation. It was the only organisation under Indian control in the first half of the twentieth century, and consequently, without British supervision. The absence of British control emboldened the presence of Indian corruption, according to Chaudhuri. As he saw power corrupting Indians, he feared that absolute power would corrupt us absolutely. Thus, he felt that India would be ruled worse by Indians than by the British. Chaudhuri forebode:

I anticipated that transfer of political power to Indians would make the Indian people victims of an insidious exploitation unparalleled even in the long history of their sufferings. I became opposed to the idea, and said to myself in the words of the cliché that India in that event would become Calcutta Corporation writ large.

I saw that happening in Bengal and in all the other provinces of India in 1937 with the introduction of provincial autonomy by the British Act of 1935, and after 1947 I saw that phenomenon in the Central Government. (Thy Hand 382-83)

Nirad Chaudhuri’s censure of Indians was not confined to his two-volume autobiography. It overflowed onto his socio-political criticism, a genre in which he wrote six books. The first of his socio-political books was The Continent of Circe—Being an Essay on the Peoples of India (1965). Its main title, “The Continent of Circe”, refers to Homer’s Odyssey. In that epic, Circe was the name of a sorceress with a magic drink which transformed Ulysses’ men into swine. Chaudhuri’s title implies that the sub-continent of India was possessed by Circe and that the British
imperialists had been transformed into porcine creatures. Another noticeable aspect of the book is its sub-title. It refers to the people of India as "Peoples of India". This highlights their plurality instead of singularity, their heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. It seems that Chaudhuri did not find much unity in India's diversity, and hence, the different communities of India are discussed separately in the book. As a strange example of negative secularism, Chaudhuri writes ill of each of them! He thinks of the middle and lower class Hindus as double-faced, upper middle class Hindus as the dominant community, Muslims as a false minority, Christians as a hybrid community, and Parsis and Sikhs as foreign and political communities respectively. Chaudhuri also accuses the ancient Aryans of a superiority complex against their contemporary indigenes. He claims that their mentality was as poor as that of the British against Indians. He equates the Aryans with the British on the ground that both races had virulent anti-native attitudes. In Chaudhuri's words:

They called themselves 'Arya' (Aryan), which signified 'nobly born', and the pre-existing people 'Anarya' (not Aryan), and they made the boundary line between the two absolutely impassable in theory, and very difficult to cross in practice. The notion of racial superiority, which was present in this distinction from the outset, was later widened to include that of moral superiority. The Hindu said to a fellow-Hindu, 'You are Arya,' in the same tone as that which an English colonial assumed when he said to a fellow-colonial, 'You are White.' Any dishonourable act or conduct was described as being
unworthy of an Aryan, or befitting only a non-Aryan. The Sanskrit phrase Anarya-justha (Na+Aryajustha or Anarya+jushta) might have meant either. (The Continent 41)

After having discussed the ethnic communities of India, Nirad Chaudhuri turned towards India's intellectual community. This time it was in his second socio-political critique, The Intellectual in India (1967) — his first book to be published in India. In the book, he attributes social reformer Rammohun Roy's intellect to western liberalism. Chaudhuri argues that Roy could realize the need for social reform due to his occidental learning. Thereafter, Chaudhuri goes on to detail other influences of western thought. He says that while ancient and mediaeval India had been inspired by Hindu and Muslim scriptures respectively, pre-independence thought was influenced by western literature. He hints that the prose form was largely unknown to Indian languages in the pre-British ages. According to him, prose was a gift from European literature and it spread like water hyacinth in the stagnant pool of Indian expression. As prose swamped the literary scene, Indians outgrew their liking for indigenous forms. Chaudhuri notes:

Prose was created for the first time in all the literary languages, which had so far embodied all their creation in poetry. Genres of European literature — fiction, short-story and novel, essays, literary criticism — were all introduced and acclimatized, and its readers gradually lost all taste for writings of the traditional type. (The Intellectual 11)
Nirad Chaudhuri's third socio-political critique was less formal than his previous ones. It was on the family life of Indians, titled *To Live or Not to Live! — An Essay on Living Happily with Others* (1970). The main title, "To Live or Not to Live", was adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600). However, Chaudhuri's intention was more Puckish than Hamletian. Whereas Hamlet had questioned the necessity of his being, Chaudhuri intends to question that of others. He cannot understand why some people continue to exist! This impish query is revealed in the book's introduction where he writes:

I would not deal with social and family life without raising the basic question: Do we live at all?

This would seem to be an absurd question, for none of us commit suicide, though, to be honest, I would confess that I have come to feel that a large majority of the persons I know should do so, because I cannot see any point in their remaining alive. . . . We live uncritically, without paying any heed to Plato's famous dictum: The uncriticized (or un-examined) life is not worth living. That is why when I exercise some self-criticism, both as an individual and as the member of the collective entity called Indian, I am denounced as unpatriotic. (*To Live* 7)

Nirad Chaudhuri's fourth socio-political critique was the less than serious *Culture in the Vanity Bag — Clothing and Adornment in Passing and Abiding India* (1976). Incidentally, this is the only book in which he takes the help of artist's
sketches for explaining his point. The book, as its title indicates, is a study of Indian culture in terms of clothing. Divided into three parts, it describes the evolution of clothes in the country. The first part is about the orders and taxonomy of clothing. Here, Chaudhuri suggests that Indian clothing lacks any specificity and is only a motley collection of different traditions. The second segment of the book discusses what, according to the author, are the conflicts in Indian dressing. In this part, he examines the dressing patterns of the Muslim and the British periods. The book's last part is regarding the fashion scenario in the India of the nineteen seventies and Chaudhuri shows its decline and rootlessness. The overall tone of the book is as critical as the other ones, his main idea being to lament the absence of originality in Indian dressing. As is his wont, Chaudhuri cannot forget the West even while writing about Indian clothes. He rubs in the point that Western clothing has been catachretized in the Indian sub-continent:

> The influence of the West on clothing in India is seen most obviously, of course, in the presence everywhere of the European suit, the masculine garment *pur sang*. But far more significant is the visible stamp of Westernization on all city clothing of the native types. . . . The European garment which is most widely seen in India and has been most thoroughly acclimatized is the shirt. (Culture 5)

Nirad Chaudhuri was back to his serious self in his fifth socio-political book. It was another critique named *Hinduism: A Religion to Live By* (1979). The title of this book is deceptive because it appears as if Chaudhuri is writing in favour of
Hinduism after having been against it for long. In fact, the book throws light on the cults of Siva, Durga-Kali and Vishnu-Krishna as found in texts like the Mahabharata, Bhagavata Purana, Brahmavaivarta Purana, Bhagavata Gita, Gita-Govinda, Harivamsa and Vishnu Purana. Nevertheless, Chaudhuri repeats his old charge about Aryan xenophobia. He is of the opinion that this phobia against others had made Aryans insular, that it hindered any cultural exchange between them and the indigenous Indians. He says that ancient Hindus were over-conscious of the alleged inferiority of non-Aryans. In his words:

If the whole of Sanskrit literature, sacred or profane, makes one thing clear it is that there was one line no Hindu would cross, and that was the line which separated the Aryan in India from the non-Aryan. . . . The non-Aryans were beyond the pale of Hindu society, and therefore untouchable. The Aryan Hindus regarded them with fear, hatred, contempt, disgust, but at times these feelings were mixed with some admiration for their physical strength, frankness, and joyousness. (Hinduism 96-7)

Nirad Chaudhuri's sixth and last socio-political critique was Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse (1997). The title is adapted from 'Apocalypse', the last book of the New Testament in the Bible. (King James Bible, 6.2) However, the holy book speaks of four horsemen whereas Chaudhuri's book names only three. For him, the three "horsemen" are individualism, nationalism and democracy. He is scared that they would usher decadence in India, Britain and the United States
of America. In this book, Chaudhuri formulates a narrow definition of colonialism — to him the settler colonies in America, Africa and Australasia were the only examples of modern colonialism. It was because the demographics of those continents, along with their administration, had been altered by the phenomenon. For Chaudhuri, the occupier colonies in Asia and Africa were no colonies at all. His reasoning is that only the administration of these countries, not their demographics, were affected by Europeans. He meant that British India was not a proper case of colonialism because the rulers never wanted to settle here permanently. Since the British merely ruled India without any intention of permanent settlement, this was only a case of imperialism. Chaudhuri differentiates between colonialism and imperialism thus:

The Europeans were colonists in North America and South America, and brought about the same ethnic transformation. They were colonists in North Africa, east Africa and South Africa. They were also colonists in Australia and New Zealand.

But they were not colonists in West Africa, India, Burma, Malay, Indonesia and Indo-China. These were regions of European imperialism. This fundamental distinction between the two forms of European expansion in the world should never be overlooked. (Three Horsemen 58)

Apart from autobiography and socio-political criticism, Nirad Chaudhuri wrote biography and travelogue as well. He wrote two biographies, one of which is
said to be the best in Indian English. It was Scholar Extraordinary – The Life of Professor the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Muller, P.C. (1974). The book was on European Indologist Friedrich Max Muller. It describes Muller’s contribution to Indology, such as his translations of *Hitopadesa* and *Meghaduta* to German and of *Rig-Veda*, *Dhammapada* and *Upanishad* to English. Although Muller was vastly knowledgeable about India’s past and warmly affectionate about her present, Chaudhuri points out that he was not very confident about India’s future. It seems that the German scholar was uneasy about the anti-British sentiments brewing in India. To prove that unease, Chaudhuri quotes a letter of Muller to social reformer Behramji Merwanji Malabari (1853 – 1912). In the letter, Muller suggests that India’s true interests lie with Britain:

‘I wish there was more English feeling in India, and that it would show itself in words and deeds. What is the use of haggling over the pay of an Indian regiment in Egypt? It is a mere nothing compared with the true interests, the peace, and prosperity of India. I can understand Indian patriots who wish to get rid of England altogether, but those who see what that would mean should take to their oars manfully, and pull a good English stroke.’ (quoted in Scholar Extraordinary 342)

The other biography written by Nirad Chaudhuri was Clive of India – A Political and Psychological Essay (1975). The main title, “Clive of India”, is confusing because Clive was not of India but of England. In fact, he was an
Englishman who defeated an Indian nawab in the decisive Battle of Plassey. The book's sub-title, "A Political and Psychological Essay", clears that confusion — it indicates that the book is not strictly historical. One weird feature of the biography is the way it defends Lord Clive against charges of corruption. Clive had been accused of corruption by other Englishmen and taken to court. While the courts acquitted Clive due to lack of evidence, Chaudhuri defends him by a mere technicality. He writes, "The acceptance of gifts was not contrary to the regulations then in force." (Clive 260-61)

Nirad Chaudhuri wrote only one travelogue, A Passage to England (1959). The title was in imitation of A Passage to India (1924), a novel by Edward Morgan Forster. Chaudhuri's book contains his impressions of England during a trip of five weeks. It turned out to be the first book by an Indian author to appear on the bestseller lists of England. One of the travelogue's anecdotes throws fresh light on Indo-British issues. It is about Chaudhuri's reaction to a British boy's words at the Canterbury Cathedral in Kent. The child called him an African but Chaudhuri did not suspect any racism in that remark. He corrected the boy instead, as if the latter had made only an innocent mistake:

When I came near him he began to rise slowly on his knees, and while still half kneeling raised his arm, pointed a finger at me, and cried out in his sharp treble, 'You're from Africa!' This was the moment for me to scream 'Colour prejudice!' and send a bitter letter to one of our newspapers, for there is nothing a Hindu resents more
than being taken for a negro by a white man. But I shouted back, 'No, from India!' The boy dropped on the grass and kept his eyes fixed on it. (A Passage 125)

Not only eleven books in English, Nirad Chaudhuri also wrote a number of articles in this language. Some of them were re-published under the title The East is East and West is West (1996). His major articles in English are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Nirad Chaudhuri's first ever article, 'Bharat Chandra', was in English. Published in The Modern Review in November 1925, it was literary criticism — a reappraisal of an eighteenth century Bengali poem. The article was indicative of Chaudhuri's later works in two ways. Firstly, it flagged off his unconventional attitude by swimming against the tide of contemporary opinion. The concerned poem had been condemned by other critics on grounds of vulgarity. Chaudhuri, however, defended its alleged obscenity on the premise that "The poet or the novelist's idea of love, whether as something ethereal and disembodied or something frankly carnal, is not the outcome of a scientific investigation." Secondly, the article indicated Chaudhuri's internationalist tenor — it referred to the Bengali poet's French contemporaries like Voltaire, Diderot and Laclos and also to Baudelaire, Anatole France and Maurice Barres. He quoted lines from Gautier and adapted an ode by Schiller, while discussing the Bengali poem.
On Indo-European issues, Nirad Chaudhuri wrote a large number of articles. In his maiden article, he argued that the people of India did not have a distinct concept of nationalism before the British ruled them. Indian nationalism was purely a result of British imperialism because the only thing that the people in India had in common was their British rulers. Moreover, Chaudhuri goes on to say that the concept of Indian nationalism was merely a hotchpotch of incongruous notions like Hinduism, Christianity, Fascism and Communism. He feared that those notions could pull in different directions at some point in time. In his words:

> The nationalism of Indian thought is a composite product possessing unity from this point of view alone that it is aimed at the system of authority which the British have established in India. Provided a system of thought or an institution is likely to prove an intellectual dissolvent of British power, the nationalist thinkers are eclectic enough not to worry whether it comes from the Gita or the Bible, Fascist Italy or Communistic Moscow. (The Statesman 15 January 1926)

Nirad Chaudhuri published another article on Indo-European issues in January 1926. There he made a hair-splitting distinction between the British civilization and individual Britons. If the former was the whole and the latter were its parts, then he suggested that the whole was infinitely greater than the sum of its parts. He was not ready to condemn an entire civilization for the misdemeanour of its individual citizens. His logic was that just because a few people are bad, it does
not necessarily mean that their country is not good as a whole. Chaudhuri laments that the relationship between Indians and the British was a love story turned sour. According to him, most educated Indians initially felt at home with the British civilization. Subsequently, though, they felt at sea if they faced uncivilized behaviour from any Briton. In Chaudhuri’s words:

When after reading Bergson or Benedetto Croce, Mr Hardy or Mr Wells with a sense of intellectual kinship, an Indian comes across some instance of ignorant superciliousness in a European — be it in the shape of a remark in a book or a personal affront at the hands of a police-sergeant or a tactless European merchant on the Maidan — he returns home in bitterness and wrath, and his previous enjoyment of a European writer becomes to him a cankering reminiscence of his humiliation. (quoted in *Thy Hand* 500)

In still another article on Indo-European issues, Nirad Chaudhuri criticized the British policy regarding the Indian Army. The article was titled 'The Martial Races of India' and published in four parts in *The Modern Review*. The British policy had been to recruit soldiers mostly from Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province because of their so-called martial aptitude. Chaudhuri’s article exposed the question of martial aptitude as a myth. He proved that those states were preferred in recruitment mainly because of their British loyalties. Chaudhuri pointed out that the rulers of Nabha, Patiala, Jind and Kapurthala, among others, had helped the British with men and money during the revolt of 1857-58. Hence,
the Indian Army was deliberately overpopulated from the north-western states after the revolt.

Nirad Chaudhuri resumed his criticism of Army-related policies in an article published in the October 1931 issue of The Modern Review. The Indian Military College Committee, chaired by Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, had submitted a report to the British Government about setting up a military college for Indians. Chaudhuri picked holes in that report, notwithstanding the fact that the Field Marshal was then the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Chaudhuri accused the committee of defeating its purpose. He said that its report tried to slow down, rather than speed up, Indianization of the Army's officer cadre. In his words, "The military authorities in India have secured through it what they wanted: the restriction of the number of Indians to be admitted to their co-fraternity to a negligible fraction of the total number of commissioned officers in the army and the careful sterilization of the men to be taken in."

Nirad Chaudhuri was so critical of the military policies of the British that even the Indian National Congress harnessed his service for writing a booklet on Indianization of the Army. In the booklet, Chaudhuri expressed concern firstly over the denaturing of Indian cadets who were forced to adapt themselves to a British style of living during their training courses. Secondly, Chaudhuri warned against limiting cadet selection to the elite class only. He was of the opinion that the clout of this class in the corridors of power had made it too selfish and lazy for
meaningful service. Thirdly, Chaudhuri was worried that candidates from poor socio-economic backgrounds were being left out by the selection procedure. He was anxious that there were countless young men who would never get selected only because of their weak family positions. The essential qualifications for military leadership, that is psychological and physical fitness, were being eclipsed by non-essential considerations like the knowledge of English language and of English lifestyle. The non-essential factors inevitably shrunk the number of eligible candidates. Chaudhuri wrote:

Though it might be possible to find in India a fair number of young men who approximate the British type in character and outlook, the number of those who satisfy this test and have in addition the requisite economic status, familiarity with spoken English and the English mode of living, and contacts in Government circles, must necessarily be very few. 30 (Defence of India or Nationalization of Indian Army 1935)

When not writing against British policies, Nirad Chaudhuri wrote against Indian attitudes. In an article published in The Statesman of 18 March 1940, he said that Indians were selective about believing the news during World War II — that reports of British reverses sounded truer to them than those of German setbacks did. He complained that Indians were more willing to believe that German airplanes flew in the Mersey sky than that British aircraft snooped over Berlin. Such biased beliefs betrayed that the real sympathies of Indians lay with
the German-led Axis Forces. The Indian vision seemed to be so jaundiced by anti-British sentiments that they refused to read the writing on the wall, hinted Chaudhuri. His faith in the eventual victory of Britain-led Allied Forces turned out to be correct, of course, at the end of the war.

Another article showing Nirad Chaudhuri's lack of faith in Indians appeared in The Statesman. This was on independent India. Chaudhuri argued that the more things change, the more they remain the same. He implied that the joke was on Indians who thought that British rule would disappear with the British rulers. His point being that the British system had become permanent in India, Chaudhuri wrote:

> The immense noisy crowds that greeted the end of British rule in India with deafening shouts of joy on August 15, 1947, did not recall the old saying; they thought nothing of British rule would survive in their country after the departure of the white men who had carried it on. They never perceived that British rule in India had created . . . a system of government for which there was no substitute. 31. (‘British Rule is Dead, Long Live British Rule’ The Statesman 15 August 1994)

Nirad Chaudhuri wrote two articles on Gandhi and Nehru's influences on independent India. In an article on the Father of the Nation, he said that the Mahatma was not forgotten. However, Gandhi was being remembered not so
much as a national leader of India but as if he were a new god of the Hindu pantheon. In other words, Gandhi was being more worshipped than followed. Chaudhuri also felt that the Mahatma's memory was cynically exploited by the ruling class of independent India. Both his life and death happened to be very conveniently timed for them. In Chaudhuri's words:

So, during the minutes of silence on 30 January, they must be thinking what a providential thing it was that Mahatma Gandhi lived only so long as it was necessary for them to be put in power and died exactly when he would have become embarrassing and inconvenient. Even now they cannot do without him as the moral sanction behind their power and prosperity, and they go on speaking about him. ('Have we forgotten the Mahatma?' *The Illustrated Weekly of India* 1 June 1959)

Nirad Chaudhuri's article on Nehru was published by fellow writer and editor Khushwant Singh. Chaudhuri predicted that after Nehru, India would suffer a splintering of statesmanship because no other politician had his comprehensive qualities. Chaudhuri opined that western democracies counted Nehru among their own due to his global outlook. The article commended the then Prime Minister for becoming "India's representative to the great Western democracies, and, I must add, their representative to India. The Western nations certainly look upon him as such and expect him to guarantee India's support for them, which is why they are so upset when Nehru takes an anti-Western or neutral line. They feel
they are being let down by one of themselves." (The Illustrated Weekly of India 30 May 1953) It is obvious that Chaudhuri's regard for Nehru was mainly due to the latter's internationalist approach.

Nirad Chaudhuri, knowledgeable in international relations, wrote a couple of articles on Indo-Pak issues. In an article in The Statesman in 1954, he sought to dispel fears that the fledgling alliance between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the United States of America would eventually work against India. His premise was that a purposive nation like the U. S. of A. would not tolerate any frittering away of her provisions to Pakistan as long as the threat from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics existed. Chaudhuri implied that the prevalent situation favoured India instead of Pakistan. It is noteworthy that his reassurance was based not on any confidence in Indian strength but on the estimation of American strength and Pakistani weakness. Moreover, Chaudhuri underestimated the deviousness of the Pakistani leadership who managed to hoodwink their American benefactors. It is well known that Pakistan diverted against India a substantial portion of the military aid that was received from the West.

Another article by Nirad Chaudhuri on the Indo-Pak question was published in the same year in The Times of London. It tried to explain India's discomfiture at USA-Pak proximity. Chaudhuri wrote that India was displeased because she wanted Pakistan to be isolated from the rest of the world. He alleged that India had a vested interest in enfeebling the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He also
suspected that India's original plan might have been to invade her western neighbour but it could not be executed because of a pre-emptive intervention by western powers. However, Chaudhuri failed to substantiate his suspicion with verifiable facts and thus his allegation remained in the realms of conjecture.

Many of Nirad Chaudhuri's other articles have provocative titles like 'A Sterile Intelligentsia', 'The Hindu-Muslim Confrontation in India', 'Sex on the Mind Fear in the Heart', 'Communism is the Opium of Failure', 'Why Ape the Lechery of the West?', 'My Way of Being Pro-British' and 'Why I Mourn for England'. They appeared in various Indian and western periodicals including The Times of India, Atlantic Monthly and Encounter. All his books and articles, as introduced in the preceding paragraphs, will be referred to in the subsequent chapters of this thesis for the purpose of post-colonial analysis.

In Bengali, Nirad Chaudhuri wrote only four books as against the eleven in English. His first book in Bengali was published after four in English. That he wrote his name in full while writing in Bengali, unlike in English, has already been pointed out in Section 1.1. Nevertheless, one thing remained constant in both the languages — Chaudhuri's clear preference of non-fiction over fiction. The non-fictional genres that he wrote in Bengali were socio-political commentaries, literary criticism and autobiography. He wrote many articles, too, in the language.

Nirad Chaudhuri's maiden Bengali book, written at the age of seventy one,
was *Bangali Jibone Ramani* [Ladies in Bengali Life]. The book is about the relationship between the two sexes in contemporary Bengal. Its ambit is so wide that it includes Platonic love on the one hand and masturbation on the other. Chaudhuri’s treatment of the topic is uninhibited, as is his wont. Chaudhuri’s second Bengali book was published twenty years after the first. It was again a socio-political critique, *Atmaghati Bangali* [Suicidal Bengali]. In the book, he says that the decline of the Bengali community was hastened by the Government of India Act 1935. However, Chaudhuri holds the Bengali nature to be primarily responsible for the state’s downfall.

Nirad Chaudhuri’s third Bengali book was his only on literary criticism. Titled *Atmaghati Rabindranath* [Suicidal Rabindranath], it was published in two volumes in 1992. The book is about poet Rabindranath Tagore and his travails in life. Chaudhuri calls Tagore ‘suicidal’ in the sense that the latter was unduly perturbed by the negative reactions of Indians to his work. Chaudhuri’s fourth book in Bengali was his vernacular autobiography, *Aji Hote Shatabarsha Aage* [Hundred Years Ago]. Although not a translation of his English autobiography, it is substantially the same. It happened to be his last book ever. Some of his Bengali essays, though, were later anthologized under the title *Aamaar Desh, Aamaar Shatak* [My Country, My Century].

As far as literary art is concerned, prose writer Nirad Chaudhuri had certain artistic similitudes with poet William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850).
Wordsworth's magnum opus is a semi-autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, while Chaudhuri's masterpiece was *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Both wrote long prefaces to their works, prefaces which explained their respective theories. Most importantly, the lyrical quality of Chaudhuri's prose is reminiscent of that in Wordsworth's poetry. The former's description of Bengal's village boats at night is a case in point:

They [the boats] themselves could be seen only as blurred masses, for their little kerosene lamps could never break the nearly solid darkness around them, but the reflections of these lamps seemed to set the fringes of the river on fire. When the water was still, there appeared to be an illumination going on two or three feet below the surface of the water, and with breezes and ripples swaying ladders, spirals and festoons of amber-coloured light made their appearance. *(The Autobiography 7)*

1.3 THE DIVIDED JURY

While the last section offered an introduction to Nirad Chaudhuri's works, the present section will summarize the works by other writers on him. Some of these works are in the form of books and the others, as articles. There is, however, no unanimity on Chaudhuri's merits or demerits. It seems that the jury is still out about him.
The earliest book written on Nirad Chaudhuri was C. Paul Verghese's *Nirad C. Chaudhuri* (1973). It was published after Chaudhuri had settled in Britain. Verghese calls *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* Chaudhuri's *magnum opus* and *The Continent of Circe* his *crux criticorum.* However, the critic feels let down by the sociology and history in the latter book. He accuses Chaudhuri of factual distortion, of forcing the square peg of acknowledged facts into a round hole of personal theory. Verghese writes,

His is a case of an erudite scholar who in his anxiety to defend his own ideas builds a superstructure of theories and in the process becomes a pseudo-historian and pseudo-sociologist and throws away huge bricks of solid history. The main weakness of *The Continent of Circe* consists in the fact that the sociologist in Chaudhuri conceived a theory about the Hindus and the aboriginals of India and the historian in him started looking for facts and when he did not find them, he depended on pseudo-history. (115)

The second book written on Nirad Chaudhuri was *Goa and the Continent of Circe* (1973) by Robert de Souza. de Souza thinks of Chaudhuri as one who has identified the problems of Indian society accurately but is unable to provide any viable solution. Disappointed with Chaudhuri for failing to prescribe medicine for the social ills even after diagnosing them correctly, de Souza says, "His criticism of the peoples of India may be welcome to certain extent and in due proportion, but it will not serve a healthy purpose. He satirically criticizes the peoples of India but
does not suggest adequate means to remedy the situation.” (194) de Souza is particularly unhappy with Chaudhuri’s unfavourable description of Goan Christians as a half-caste minority. 

The nineteen eighties saw three books on Nirad Chaudhuri. They were Chetan Karnani’s *Nirad C. Chaudhuri* (1980), Tara Sinha’s *Nirad C. Chaudhuri: A Sociological and Stylistic Study of His Writings during the Period 1951 – 72* (1981) and Basavaraj S. Naicar’s *Critical Articles on Nirad C. Chaudhuri* (1985). Of these, the first was a biographical critique, the second was a published thesis with a foreword by renowned academician Bhabhatosh Chatterjee and the third, a compilation of essays.

Basavaraj S. Naicar introduces his book, *Critical Articles on Nirad C. Chaudhuri*, as “an attempt to understand Mr. Chaudhuri’s works from a sympathetic point of view and to counterbalance the unsympathetic approach of anti-Chaudhuri readers and critics.” (viii) He deals with Chaudhuri’s works, one by one. Naicar is impressed by the unanticipated success of Chaudhuri’s *The Autobiography* as the book was the latter’s maiden venture. He justifies the pitiless tone of *The Continent of Circe* on the ground that it was constructive rather than destructive. In Naicar’s words, “The bitterness and anger are the obverse side of Chaudhuri’s love and concern for his countrymen.” (71) He also finds *The Intellectual in India* to be as original in attitude as the writer’s other books. About *The Intellectual*, Naicar writes:
As usual Mr. Chaudhuri expresses his own distinct view about this issue which are not mere imitation of other's ones. His views on this problem are strongly supported by his own knowledge of history of India in particular and of the world in general. Again his views are marked by the extraordinary freedom from inhibition and chauvinism that is typical of his personality. . . . Tracing the intellectual traditions in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mr Chaudhuri points out the absence of purely intellectual pursuits in the country. He shows how the Hindus' concept of intellectual life consisted merely in the personal pursuit of philosophical or Vedantic knowledge which had no direct bearing on the day to day life. (93)

Another book on Nirad Chaudhuri was Raj Kumar Kaul's *Nirad C. Chaudhuri: The Renaissance Man* (1998). It highlights the nuances of Chaudhuri's descriptive passages, even as it points out the occasional lapses of his diction. The chapter titled 'Of imagination all compact' is appreciative of Chaudhuri's style, of his "accurate and minute observation, with the eye of a painter." Nevertheless, Kaul is skeptical about the historical validity of the author's viewpoints, "in spite of monumental scholarship, Chaudhuri's formulations about Indian history and culture are essentially unsound." Although the book laments the "acute Anglophilia" of Chaudhuri, it gives him an overall thumbs up. (54) Kaul steers clear of the overawed adulation heaped on Chaudhuri and also of the thoughtless condemnation hurled at him, thus separating the grain from the chaff and giving
The last book exclusively on Nirad Chaudhuri was published to mark his birth centenary. It was *Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The First Hundred Years: A Celebration* (1997) edited by Swapan Dasgupta. Dasgupta introduces Chaudhuri as a supporter of the Hindu revivalist movement, ignoring Chaudhuri's trenchant criticism of Hindus. In the book, Ian Jack's essay 'The World's Last Englishman' gives snippets of Chaudhuri's obsession with English correctitude. Harish Trivedi's article 'The Last Bengali Babu' compares Chaudhuri's "delightful" English with his *sadhu bhasha* (classical Bengali). Khushwant Singh, in his essay 'A Scholar Extraordinary', recounts his interactions with Chaudhuri and also the ways by which the latter's anti-nationalist expressions had been sought to be gagged by the Indian establishment. Amita Malik gives Amiya Chaudhurani her due by saying, "Nirad Chaudhuri would not have been what he is without the patience and unfailing support of his wife." (58) While Keki N. Daruwalla compares Chaudhuri with Naipaul, Shrabani Basu tells us of Chaudhuri's views on Austen. Other contributors like Nabaneeta Dev Sen and Meenakshi Mukherjee give accounts mostly of Chaudhuri's oddities. Krishna Bose's 'Mejokaka' is about Chaudhuri's deep pain at his anachronistic existence:

He lives mentally in Jane Austen's age. Hence his eccentricities, such as dressing up in period costume, which embarrasses his relatives and is considered bizarre by the contemporary British. He would doubtless have been happier to celebrate his hundredth
birthday in the year of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign
than on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian
independence. (12)

Other than the books discussed above, a host of articles have been written
on Nirad Chaudhuri. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote an article titled 'Three Prose
Writers' (1972). In it, he comments that Chaudhuri's strength and weakness both
sprang out of the same source — the latter's self-imposed intellectual exile.
According to Iyengar, the Chaudhuri of The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian
was an instrument for detecting social hypocrisy. 40 A Passage to England, feels
Iyengar, is a link between the countries of Britain and India. Though Iyengar is
appreciative of Chaudhuri's erudition, his final verdict is based on the latter's flair of
writing and his courage of conviction:

When all caveats have been made, however, Nirad Chaudhuri
remains the Grand Solitary, the master of a prose style that has often
a fascinating spidery quality, a writer and a thinker and a universal
Momus who stands apart from the muddy mainstream. His great
merit as an intellectual is that he isn't ever too lazy to avoid doing his
own thinking or too timid or hesitant to give outspoken expression to
his own views. Above all, he has the supreme faith of the moral man
in an amoral (if not immoral) society . . . (Indian Writing in English
593)
In 1984, an article titled 'Growing to Manhood' by C. V. Venugopal was published. What the commentator misses in Chaudhuri's works are word pictures of his wife and children, the way they have been drawn for his parents. In fact, Venugopal asserts that The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian is more appropriately read as literature than as history, although Chaudhuri himself intended otherwise. To prove the literary merits of the book, Venugopal ferrets out a number of passages in it and says:

Nowhere is this delightful element more obvious than where Chaudhuri is telling us about his early days, at Kishorganj or Banagram or wherever it is. The pictures we get of Chaudhuri and his playmates after they bathe in the river and paddle in it: "... when we got dry after our bath we looked fairer than we really were with a coat of fine white sand" (p. 2); or their general predicament during the rainy season: "Neither we nor our clothes were ever properly dry. When we were not slushy we were damp" (p. 6) give us but an inkling of how Chaudhuri must have enjoyed his childhood days. The ecstatic moments he must have enjoyed as the rain came down in "what looked like closely packed formations of enormously long pencils of glass and hit the bare ground" would be the envy of any toddler... (Perspectives 214-15)

Sudesh Mishra's article 'The Two Chaudhuris: Historical Witness and Pseudo-Historian' (1988) bisects Chaudhuri as an author. It says that the
Chaudhuri of *The Autobiography* was history’s witness who “operates largely as a chronicler recording incidents and events to which he has borne personal witness.” Nonetheless, Mishra writes that the Chaudhuri of *The Continent of Circe* was a historian who “evaluates history biologically, psycho-culturally, racially, philosophically and idiosyncratically by postulating his personal dilemmas as representative of the Indian people’s collective predicament, and in particular of the Hindus.” (Journal loc. cit.) From the article’s tenor it becomes clear that Mishra is no admirer of Chaudhuri.

David Lelyveld of Columbia University published an article titled ‘The Notorious Unknown Indian’ in *The New York Times* on 13 November 1988. He valued the personal testimony of Chaudhuri. He writes, “As a historian Mr. Chaudhuri is useful insofar as he recounts personal experience — for example, his accounts of the Bose brothers or of Hindu-Muslim riots at the time of partition.” 42 Regarding Chaudhuri’s personal theories, however, Lelyveld considered them more literary than historical. According to him, “Great cascades of flowery erudition, allusions to the histories of ancient Greece and endless quotations of French poetry are of interest mostly as evidence of Mr. Chaudhuri’s artfully constructed persona.”

Poet Nissim Ezekiel reviewed Nirad Chaudhuri’s *Scholar Extraordinary* in 1992. Incidentally, the review had the same name as Chaudhuri’s biography. Of Chaudhuri’s weaknesses, he writes that the book contained a “number of
statements about Victorian love and sex which are very unsatisfactory, besides contradicting one another". (Selected Prose 156) About the book’s strengths, Ezekiel mentions its unbiased defence of its subject:

I cannot imagine any criticism, however valid, of special insights or even of the treatment in general undermining the worth of this biography as a whole. Chaudhuri’s admiration for Muller, which he declares without reservations, leads him to defend Muller against all detractors. But he defends persuasively, and always with a fair statement of their position. This means that at times one may disagree with Chaudhuri and still not feel that he is unduly partisan. (Selected Prose 154)

Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah compared the autobiographies of Nirad Chaudhuri and Jawaharlal Nehru. Though he declares Chaudhuri’s biography of Muller to be “an excellent work of scholarship”, Narasimhaiah is thoroughly dissatisfied with Chaudhuri’s autobiography. According to him, it was too autobiographical to be meaningful — he complained against Chaudhuri’s tendency to “magnify things that have any relation to him whether it is the house he lived in, his mode of living, the fairs he visited, the festivals he celebrated, the books and paintings he owned and admired and the tastes he cultivated.” (Essays in Commonwealth Literature 67) Narasimhaiah is, thus, a virulent critic of Chaudhuri.
Author Pankaj Mishra wrote Nirad Chaudhuri's obituary titled 'The Art of Inquisition'. Mishra regrets that Chaudhuri had become too distant from the modern world to be relevant. Hence, according to Mishra, Chaudhuri’s last English book is “a sad record of his alienation.” (Outlook 16 August 1999) However, the obit ends with a generous tribute to Chaudhuri:

After several national trysts with defeat and disillusionment, Chaudhuri now appears right about many things. . . . But ultimately, it is as a connoisseur — of cultures and civilizations — that Chaudhuri will be remembered: someone who brought the purest energy and dedication to the almost forgotten art of self-cultivation. The last Indian of his kind, Chaudhuri was also the last of the great public intellectuals of this century. Attached to no cause or institution, he lived and ennobled the free life of the mind till the very end, and died, fittingly, in exile from both his home and adopted country.

Interestingly, V. S. Naipaul has professed two diametrically opposite opinions about N. C. Chaudhuri at different points of time. About The Autobiography, Naipaul wrote in superlative terms: “No better account of the penetration of the Indian mind by the West — and, by extension, of the penetration of one culture by another — will be or now can be written.” (The Overcrowded Barracoon 59) Naipaul was also a member of the jury that awarded the Duff-Cooper Prize to Chaudhuri's The Continent of Circe. However, this approach of Naipaul in the middle of the twentieth century was totally reversed towards the end
of that century. In Chaudhuri’s epitaph for the Royal Society of Literature, Naipaul ran him down as merely a flash in the pan. He wrote, “He wrote one good and unexpected book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, and then took to clowning.”

Prema Nandakumar reviewed Nirad Chaudhuri’s *Hinduism — A Religion to Live By*. In an article titled ‘Reinterpreting Hinduism’, she acknowledged Chaudhuri’s depth, “what Nirad has read, he has read well with a scholar’s grip on facts.” However, she was unsure about Chaudhuri’s width because “he ignores completely the Sangam segment of Indian religious world, has no clue to the Siddha cult and is a stranger to the Mother Goddess icon of Kotravai.” Clearly, Prema Nandakumar is not as impressed with Chaudhuri as was her father, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

Articles on Nirad Chaudhuri have also been written by others including academician M. L. Raina and columnist Kunwar Natwar Singh. However, it is obvious from the works by other writers on Nirad Chaudhuri that none of them have explored his writings from a post-colonial perspective. This lacuna in academia is surprising since he wore his pro-colonialism on his sleeve. There is a critical need to plug that loophole in order to take a meaningful re-look at him. Hence, the colonial expressions of this Anglophile Indian need to be subjected to critical scrutiny.
1.4 PLAN OF THE THESIS

This thesis proposes that, from a postcolonial perspective, Nirad Chaudhuri’s writings are ambivalent rather than merely pro-colonial. In other words, the thesis seeks to prove that his writings have an undiscovered duality beneath their well-known colonial exterior. By establishing Chaudhuri’s colonial ambivalence, the thesis intends to make a modest contribution to the world of literary knowledge. It is pertinent to mention that, in the world of academics, the general impression about his works is of abject pro-colonialism. While that impression is not false, it is not the whole truth either. This work highlights another aspect of Chaudhuri — his duality on the colonial situation in British India — for the purpose of offering the academia a fuller picture of him than what is ordinarily available.

Three caveats are called for at the outset. Firstly, it is clarified that this thesis is based substantially on his English writings while the Bengali works have been introduced only cursorily. Nonetheless, it is submitted that whatever assertions have been made here in connection with the English writings are equally valid for the Bengali ones as well. That is because Chaudhuri never changed his tone and tenor, irrespective of the language he wrote in, as one can vouch for after having read him in both the languages. The second caveat is that this thesis, although a project in English literary criticism, makes considerable use
of modern Indian history. The combination of literature and history was necessitated by the fact that this critique is based on postcolonial theory, an interdisciplinary exercise to a large extent. Finally, it is submitted that this thesis treats Chaudhuri’s life and his writings in conjunction simply because they cannot be separated like chalk and cheese. As he was primarily an autobiographer, his life is the foremost part of his writings.

The first chapter of the thesis is introductory in nature. The chapter begins with a detailed account of Nirad Chaudhuri’s life. However, it is not a general biography but one with an emphasis on those aspects of his life which turned him pro-colonial and cynical. The second section provides a genre-wise synopsis of Chaudhuri’s English writings i.e. two volumes of autobiography, six socio-political critiques, two biographies, one travelogue and a large number of articles. Chaudhuri’s Bengali writings are referred to briefly as also his Wordsworthian descriptions of rural Bengal. The third section is about the works on Chaudhuri by other writers. It indicates the areas of Chaudhuri’s works which have already been covered by his critics; it also reveals some of the fields which have not been adequately researched into yet. The introductory chapter ends with a plan of the thesis.

The second chapter of the thesis introduces the postcolonial theory. It offers a preview of the theory and also the relationship between the theory and Nirad Chaudhuri. The first section of this chapter summarizes the contribution of
African and Caribbean writers towards the theory. It recapitulates the relevant works of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Chinua Achebe. The next section sketches the European background of the postcolonial theory. Here the focus is on the works of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan. The third section deals with three Asian postcolonial theorists — Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Their concepts of orientalism, mimicry and subalternism are introduced in brief. The last section brings together a number of other postcolonial issues like the spelling, meaning and application of the term itself.

The third chapter analyzes Nirad Chaudhuri's pro-colonial outpourings. It tries to understand his unconventional relationship with India's anti-colonial movement. The chapter begins with a section on writers, other than Chaudhuri, who have expressed similar anti-national sentiments. It excavates a forgotten truth — that some writers, including nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji and Jawaharlal Nehru, had loyalist tendencies during the pre-independence era. The writings of Cyril James, Alan Paton and Alexander Solzhenitsyn have also been referred to. The next section of the chapter sketches the unconventional histories, including the neo-imperialist school and the subaltern school, of the pre-independence period. How they differed from the nationalist school of historiographers, just as Oswald Spengler differed from other European historians, has been explained. The third section highlights something which is least known — that Chaudhuri had once been associated with the Indian movement and had supported even extremist nationalism. The subsequent section throws light upon
an aspect of the nationalist struggle, its incidents of violence, which alienated Chaudhuri gradually. He drew a fine line between extremism and violence, and felt repelled by the latter. The fifth section is on communalism during the national movement. How the communal problem made Chaudhuri question the very basis of India's nationalism has been analyzed therein. Apart from communalism, there were other reasons for Chaudhuri to feel disenchanted with the movement. He accused the movement of hypocrisy, corruption, arrogance and negativism. These accusations have been scrutinized in the last section of the chapter.

The fourth chapter offers a contrapuntal reading of Nirad Chaudhuri's major English works. It analyzes his writings from a strictly postcolonial perspective. The first section of the chapter provides an insight into Nirad Chaudhuri's take on certain postcolonial issues. This section is important because Chaudhuri has never written on the theory as a whole. The second section of this chapter proves that Chaudhuri was a victim of colonial discourses. It identifies the allegories that influenced him and also his own appropriation of the colonial culture. The third section is on ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry. This section answers the question which puzzled Chaudhuri — why the British were none too happy about Indians appropriating the colonial culture. The fourth section examines Chaudhuri from the viewpoint of other perspectives like Marxism. It examines the matters of decolonization and neo-colonialism too. The next section demonstrates the way Chaudhuri became different from a stereotypical comprador. It shows why his writings remain interesting despite his compromised intellect. The last section of
this penultimate chapter seeks to retrace his path from being an unknown Indian to a known un-Indian.

The fifth, and final, chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the major issues analyzed in the work and highlighting the significant findings. The first portion of this chapter takes a last look at the controversial author including some of his unheeded prophecies regarding colonialism. That his many contradictions are indicative of a certain duality is emphasized here. The next two portions include recapitulations of the arguments for and against Nirad Chaudhuri’s writings. This is done in the interest of fairness prior to expressing the final opinion of this thesis. At the very end, is placed a postcolonial report on his works. It proves the point that Chaudhuri’s writings suffer from a hitherto undetected postcolonial ambivalence. For a writer who is generally thought to be pro-colonial, both by his own admission and by the charges of his critics, this detection of ambivalence is a significant revelation.
NOTES

1 Regarding his date of birth, Chaudhuri says, “It was quite impossible to come across precision in stating the age.” (The Autobiography 123)

2 About Chaudhuri’s learning of English, Chetan Karnani writes, “He inherited his verbal and lexicographic interest from his father, who had only an elementary education, but who drilled him in sentence patterns from his early days, and taught him, for example, the unique construction of the English verb ‘to have’.” (Nirad C. Chaudhuri 15)

3 Andrew Robinson notes that Chaudhuri was “fiercely independent of received opinion.” (‘Obituary’ The Independent 3 August 1999)

4 In Chaudhuri’s words, “The life I had in mind was one dedicated to pure scholarship.” (Thy Hand 76)

5 Chaudhuri writes perceptively, “The figures in every case were idealized representations of the local human types.” (Thy Hand 185)

6 Pather Panchali was picturised by film director Satyajit Ray in 1955.

7 Chadhuri’s wife, Amiya Chaudhurani nee Dhar, was a Bengali writer in her own right.

8 Chaudhuri began fearing that “power in Indian hands would be a calamity for the Indian people.” (Thy Hand 395)

9 The Congress leader was Sarat Chandra Bose (1889 – 1950), brother of Subhas Chandra Bose.
10 Chaudhuri calls the 1947 Hindu-Muslim bloodbath, "The Red Carpet for Indian Independence". (Thy Hand 804)

11 About the Indian reaction to Chaudhuri's autobiography, fellow-writer Khushwant Singh said, "The wogs took the bait and having read only the dedication sent up a howl of protest." (quoted by Andrew Robinson in 'Obituary' The Independent 3 August 1999)

12 In some of his Bengali writings, Chaudhuri used the pen-name of 'Valahak(a) Nandi'.

13 In the film, Chaudhuri talks about lack of governance in India, the lack of substance of yoga and the lack of proteins in Indian food.

14 Obviously, Chaudhuri's tridimensional yardstick for real Anglicism – literature, food and culture – was more comprehensive than Tebbit's unidimensional one.

15 In direct contrast to pro-colonial Chaudhuri's acceptance of the C. B. E., anti-colonial poet Benjamin Zephaniah refused an O. B. E. because of his anger "when I hear that word 'empire'; it reminds me of slavery, it reminds of thousands of years of brutality — it reminds me of how my foremothers were raped and my forefathers brutalised." ('Me? I thought, OBE me? Up yours, I thought' The Guardian 27 November 2003)

16 Regarding the part-autobiographical and part-historical writings of Chaudhuri, journalist Sukumar Muralidharan says, "Chaudhuri's memoirs were more than a series of reminiscences — in its detailed characterization of the ethos of a whole age and in its dissection of the process of formation of a nation's identity, it transcended the genre of the autobiography." ('Evaluating a Century' Frontline 29
Novembeber 1997)

17 Novelist Amit Chaudhuri calls the controversial dedication a "twelve-line signpost of Indian literary history, announcing its striking act of disowning while proclaiming its embarrassing allegiance . . ." (`The Moor's Legacy' The Telegraph 16 November 2003)

18 Chaudhuri called his experience at the Calcutta Corporation, "my horrible enlightenment." (Thy Hand 381)

19 In Bengali, Chaudhuri wrote two more socio-political commentaries — Bangali Jibone Ramani [Ladies in Bengali Life] and Atmaghati Bangali [Suicidal Bengali].

20 Chaudhuri held Roy in such high regard that he wrote about the latter in almost every book of his.

21 Betraying his hidden tenderness for things Indian, Chaudhuri writes, "My love of the vanished Indian world, unlike Schiller's love of the gods of Greece, is not nostalgic." (Culture 185)

22 This book, written at the age of ninety-eight, made Chaudhuri the oldest writer in English.

23 Critic John McLeod distinguishes colonialism from imperialism as "only one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location." (Beginning Postcolonialism 7)

24 Muller once said, "You know that I am generally on the Indian side." (quoted in Scholar Extraordinary 342)

25 It is ironical that pro-colonial Chaudhuri had been unperturbed on being mistaken
for an African whereas anti-colonial Frantz Fanon was shocked on being called a Negro.

Critic Radha Nag has accused Chaudhuri of writing vulgar himself. (Atmaghati Nirad Chaudhuri 70)

Chaudhuri's knowledge of French culture came in handy later in life — he was hired by the French Embassy after the abrupt termination of his job at the All India Radio.

The four-part article was published in the July 1930, September 1930, January 1931 and February 1931 issues of The Modern Review.

The Royal Indian Military College, now renamed Rashtriya Indian Military College, is in Dehradun.

It is surprising that Chaudhuri felt pro-nationalist when it came to military training. He wrote, "The first condition of success of any system of military education is that it should be suited to the national character and not try to uproot the cadets from their social environment."

Chaudhuri meant that even after independence India continues to be ruled by sahibs, the brown ones.

As Chaudhuri had forecast, the Indian National Congress split three years after Nehru's death.

Chaudhuri's books, on the other hand, had non-provocative titles.

In this book, Chaudhuri suggests that there are more Sanskrit books in Oxford than in Delhi, Benares, Calcutta and Pune put together.

About Chaudhuri's laborious scholarship, Verghese writes, "Chaudhuri is a
painsstaking writer." (13)

36 However, de Souza admits, "Mr Chaudhuri has a reputation for his enormous reading and erudition in classics and for being a successful writer." (3)

37 Naicar calls Chaudhuri's outpourings "Swiftian anger". (vii)

38 Elsewhere too, Dasgupta calls Chaudhuri "a proud Hindu". ('Ever the Gadfly' India Today 16 August 1999)

39 Chaudhuri claimed to have read Austen's Pride and Prejudice two hundred times!

40 In Iyengar's words, Chaudhuri was "the Geiger counter looking for hidden obliquities of self-deception." (591)

41 Dr. Venugopal teaches English at the Karnatak University, Dharwad.

42 The Bose brothers were the nationalist leaders Sarat Chandra Bose, whose private secretary Chaudhuri was, and Subhas Chandra Bose.

43 Pankaj Mishra writes, "Chaudhuri perhaps overstated the case in his dedication, and other writings, but he did not wish to leave unacknowledged the British role in creating — if only inadvertently — a whole new range of human possibilities in India."

44 Elsewhere, Naipaul compared N. C. Chaudhuri's The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian with C. L. R. James's Beyond a Boundary, since both were "part of the cultural boomerang from the former colonies, delayed and still imperfectly understood". (quoted by Ramachandra Guha in 'Two Brown Sahibs' The Hindu 19 December 2004)