CHAPTER IV

CONTRAPUNTAL READING OF CHAUDHURI’S WRITINGS

"It is not Chaudhuri the scholar who wrote these reckless sentences but the other Chaudhuri, the man of tall prejudices, whose self-pitying moralism taints so much of his intellectual output."

— Nissim Ezekiel, Scholar Extraordinary

"As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to read it not univocally but contrapuntally," wrote postcolonial critic Edward Said. (Culture and Imperialism 59) His usage of the adverb ‘contrapuntally’ is borrowed from musicology. In music, the word means ‘combining of melodies’ and Said used the term to mean ‘combining of readings’. By ‘contrapuntal reading’, what he meant was a reading that would dig out a literary text’s socio-political issues rather than its artistic ones. Such a reading illuminates the subterranean thought processes of a text which might not be apparent otherwise. In the process, it brings to light the many assumptions which every author invariably makes while composing the text.
Contrapuntal readings have been helpful in post-colonial criticism of literary texts. They have helped in raising serious post-colonial issues in apparently innocuous contexts. For example, a contrapuntal reading of Arthur Conan Doyle's short story *The Speckled Band* raises an issue of ecological imperialism — the export of Indian animals to Britain — in what is otherwise a murder mystery of the Sherlock Holmes series. Similarly, a contrapuntal reading of Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* can raise grave post-colonial issues in an autobiography, which is generally assumed to be a 'personal' genre. In order to examine such issues, this chapter presents a contrapuntal reading of all English writings by Chaudhuri.

4.1 CHAUDHURI'S TAKE ON POSTCOLONIAL ISSUES

It is surprising that Nirad Chaudhuri, whose writing "ranged from Plato and Pascal to apples and acoustics" ('Indian Express' 2 August 1999), did not write even one complete article on the postcolonial theory. Had he written one, surely it would have been denunciatory and not appreciative. That he would have taken a dim view of postcolonialism may be assumed from his opinion on related issues which are scattered all over his works. Hence, despite the absence of a formal critique, it is required to analyze his objections to the theory. The analysis of Chaudhuri's views on postcolonial issues is provided below.
Many students of postcolonial theory mistake the term 'colonialism' for 'imperialism' and vice versa. Between the two words, there is a fine difference which is often overlooked. The fact is that 'colonialism' was the process of settling down in the concerned colony whereas 'imperialism' was only the process of ruling it. The former involved displacing or even slaughtering large sections of the indigenous population. The latter, however, did not involve those inhuman methods. Colonialism gave rise to 'settler' colonies like those in Australasia and America. Imperialism, on the other hand, gave birth to 'occupier' colonies mostly in Asia and Africa. Consequently, one more difference sprung up between the two. Racism was more prevalent in colonialism than in imperialism. Nirad Chaudhuri, being a meticulous scholar, was careful enough to avoid mixing up the terms. He was clear that what existed in India was not colonialism but imperialism. Trying to distinguish between the two, he argues that the latter was an administrative project of Europe unlike the former which was a demographic one. In his words:

I never forget the distinction between European imperialism and European colonialism. Imperialism, far from being the enemy of subject peoples, has always protected them. This was first shown by the creators of true imperialism, the Achaemenid Persians, and the British in India only continued in the same tradition. . . . No empire seen in the entire history of mankind has exterminated the original inhabitants of a country in the manner of the Americans. (Thy Hand 778-79)
As far as postcolonialism is concerned, Martiniquan psychiatrist-turned-activist Frantz Fanon is a fountain of inspiration. He has set in writing the discrimination which black persons like him encountered in French society. When white people on the streets of Paris pointed out at him saying ‘Look, a Negro!’, Fanon felt "completely dislocated". (Black Skin 112) Similar remarks were thrown at Nirad Chaudhuri, too, when he visited West Europe in 1955 but his reactions were very different from that of Fanon. A British boy in a public place had cried out to Chaudhuri 'You're from Africa!' but the latter simply shouted back, "No, from India!" (A Passage to England 125) In fact, Chaudhuri says that he did not want to feel victimized by the boy's comment and that is why his reaction was so matter-of-fact. 3 He dismissed such incidents as cases of mistaken identity, not instances of racial humiliation. To prove the innocuous nature of these statements, he narrates an incident which happened to him in Paris. While sitting on a flight of steps beside River Seine, a French worker mistook him not for an African but for an Englishman! It convinced Chaudhuri that European comments about identity are not necessarily racist. Often they are incidental mistakes and not intentionally mischievous. Hence, not wanting to attach any socio-political importance to those remarks, Chaudhuri just corrected the Frenchman the way he had corrected the British boy earlier. One notices that neither did Chaudhuri feel elated when called a Briton, which is what one would expect him to feel because of his unabashed Anglophilia, nor had he felt dejected when called an African. Clearly, in this regard, Chaudhuri's poise is in stark contrast to Fanon's grief. In the words of Chaudhuri:
I looked up and saw a French workman perched half-way up the steps. Then he asked, 'Monsieur est anglais?' I was taken aback by his idea of the size and looks of an Englishman, and replied, 'Mais non, indien.' 'Ah oui, indien!' he replied and showed such readiness to open a conversation that I, having fears for my spoken French, ran away, still wondering how he could have said what he had said. (A Passage 126)

Just as Nirad Chaudhuri's point of view was unlike that of Frantz Fanon's, it was also unlike Edward Said's. Said describes Orientalism as "a western style for dominating, restucturing, and having authority over the Orient". (Orientalism 3) In this sense, Orientalism served to strengthen the West's control of the East. However, Chaudhuri's opinion of the subject is quite different. He thinks that, as far as India is concerned, Orientalism reinvigorated the country's nationalism. 4 Chaudhuri argues that India's memory of her pre-Mughal civilization was hazy till the time Orientalists excavated her past. British numismatist James Prinsep, who worked himself almost to death, deciphered the Brahmi script of Emperor Ashoka's rock and pillar inscriptions. British archaeologist Alexander Cunningham was the first to publish a report on the unicorn seal found at Harappa village in Punjab's Montgomery district. Thereafter, the British Viceroy set up the Archaeological Survey of India (A.S.I.) in 1905. Fifteen years later, the A.S.I. director John Marshall led his staff in excavating some ruins at Harappa and a mound at Mohenjo-daro, measures which finally unearthed the proto-historic Indus Valley
Civilization. These and many other steps by western scholars helped in the modern reconstruction of India's national history. Hence, Nirad Chaudhuri asserts that Orientalists fostered Indian nationalism. Trying to criticize them appeared to him as an attempt to bite the hand that feeds. Chaudhuri writes:

The contribution made by the European Orientalists to Indian nationalism is now recognized by all. The Hindus had created their own brand of nationalism, a basic chauvinism so to speak, long before the coming of European influences to their country. . . . But it had no historical basis, and could not be accepted in its traditional form by the Indians who were receiving a western education. They wanted a nationalism which would be tenable historically. The Orientalists of Europe supplied the historical basis by revealing to modern Indians their past history and achievements. (Scholar Extraordinary 311-12)

Postcolonialism is, of course, closely associated with nationalism but the precise origin of the idea of nationhood has been a matter of controversy among critics. Benedict Anderson says that anti-colonial nationalism used “the models of nationalism, nation-ness, and nation-state produced elsewhere in the course of the nineteenth century”. (Imagined Communities 116) Historian Partha Chatterjee, however, counters this suggestion that the concept of nationalism was originally imported from western Europe. He asks, "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already
made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?” (The Nation 5) As one would expect, Nirad Chaudhuri would not be convinced that modern Indian nationalism was essentially indigenous. He was sure that it was of European origin. The inspirations behind India’s nationalist movement, as identified by him, were exclusively western:

Certain modern personalities and movements contributed powerfully to our political consciousness, of which there were two clearly discernible facets. The first and rational facet was indoctrinated by Burke and Mill, but shaped in its practical expression by the liberalism of Gladstone and Lincoln. The second facet was purely emotional, and its inspiration was furnished by Rousseau and Mazzini besides the Ancients. The methods of political action were suggested by the leaders of the American Revolution, the Italian Risorgimento — particularly Garibaldi — and the Irish nationalists. The entire course, of English constitutional history and, more especially, the turmoils of the seventeenth century, together with the American, French, Italian, and Irish movements were freely drawn upon for precedents and also for operational hints. (The Autobiography 209)

Edward Said rues the fact that, knowingly or unknowingly, European writers “promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’).” (Orientalism 45) He says that such differentiation resulted in the geographical West being considered more ‘western’
than it really was and also the geographical East being assumed to be more ‘eastern’ than it was in reality. However, Chaudhuri’s opinion on the culpability of the West in this regard is poles apart. He did not think that western writers always hyped the so-called differences between the people of the East and those of the West. Chaudhuri argued that, many a time, they harped on the similarities instead. To prove his argument, he takes the example of Rudyard Kipling. Although accused of harbouring a colonial mentality, Kipling had written, “But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!” (‘The Ballad of East and West’) Evidently, in this final couplet of the ballad, the poet highlights the similarity rather than differences between the eastern and the western hemispheres of the world. Chaudhuri quotes another poem of Kipling to show that the latter did not emphasize the divergence between the two parts of the globe. In this poem, Kipling questions the artificial differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’:

All good people agree,
And all good people say,
All nice people, like Us, are We
And every one else is They:

But if you cross over the sea,
Instead of over the way
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We
As only a sort of They! [quoted in Thy Hand 604]
Said wrote that while orientalism helped scholars in understanding the Orient, it also helped colonialists in controlling the Orient. In his words, "It is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world." Nirad Chaudhuri, too, admitted that orientalism had become a colonial tool. He knew that the famous orientalist Freidrich Max Muller intended not only academic development but administrative development as well:

He derived from the English Orientalists his conviction of the practical importance of Sanskrit for British administrators as well as for contemporary Hindus. He thought and said that British rule would be more understanding and sympathetic, and therefore more productive of good for the Indian people if the ruling order became familiar with their culture. (Scholar Extraordinary 134)

According to Said, scholars in orientalism had created "a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe". The orientalism of western scholars, which became the subject for Said's orientalism, was remarked upon by Nirad Chaudhuri in great detail. He named some of the major orientalists on Indology, many of whom were professional British administrators:

It was actually sustained and developed by the objective and
painstaking work in India of a number of English Orientalists who, in
whatever leisure they could secure from their administrative work,
tried to recollect as much reliable information about the history and
civilization of their Hindu subjects as they could; men like Sir William
Jones, Wilkins, Colebrooke, Halhed, to mention only the important
figures. They were aided and encouraged in this work by the policy
of Warren Hastings, who believed in and patronized Oriental learning
. . . These scholars founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784,
began to publish their work in its journal, Asiatic Researches, and
within ten years a number of important Sanskrit works in translation
made it possible for men of letters in Europe to form some adequate
idea of what Sanskrit literature was like. (Scholar Extraordinary 126)

However, despite the many dissimilarities between Nirad Chandra
Chaudhuri and postcolonial critics, there are a few surprising similarities between
him and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. Some of the similarities between Chaudhuri
and Spivak are biographical. Both of them were upper caste Hindus from middle
class Bengali families. Both graduated with Honours in the First Class from the
University of Calcutta. Both settled in England subsequently and taught in western
universities. What is really astonishing, though, is that Chaudhuri and Spivak
seem to have some intellectual similarities as well. For instance, both recognized
the existence of subaltern sections within the colonized people. 7 Both wondered
whether such subalterns got a fair deal from the elite sections within the colonized
community. In fact, Spivak famously concluded that the subaltern voice has been so subdued that it cannot be heard at all. She wrote, “The subaltern has no history and cannot speak.” (‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’) Chaudhuri, on his part, felt much the same. He argues that India’s lower class understood that the country’s middle class were no friends of theirs, but potential enemies. He says that many people of the lower class wished the continuance of British rule because of the maltreatment by other Indian classes. He narrates an incident he saw which demonstrates the class conflict between the Indian proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. It was a sharp exchange of words between two co-passengers, in early 1948, who evidently belonged to different classes: ‘

I heard a declaration of faith in the English from a man of the people a few days ago in a bus. He was standing between the benches and had apparently been ill-treated by a well-dressed passenger, a fellow Indian, of course. I had not paid much attention to the preliminaries of the incident, but suddenly I heard the man raising his voice and saying with quivering passion: “The English have not yet left. When they will have left and your Raj come I know what you will do to the poor. But not till then shall I tolerate your doing this.” (Thy Hand 858)

The population of no country, whether colonizer or colonized, is homogenous. There are the haves and the have-nots, the elites and the subalterns. Historian Ranajit Guha suggests that “the biggest feudal magnates, the most important representatives of the industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and
the native recruits to the uppermost levels of the bureaucracy" form the elite classes within Indian society. (Subaltern Studies 8) Nirad Chaudhuri's description of the Indian elite, whom he called 'Anglicized Hindus', was almost the same as Guha's. Chaudhuri felt that this westernized class was a dominant minority because it acts like a power group in the country's structure:

The Anglicized Hindus can be divided into four groups: I — The Officers of the Armed Forces; II — The Bureaucratic, Managerial, and Professional Elite; III — The Technicians; and IV — The Youth in Schools and Colleges. I shall describe the dominant minority in these categories, which are also the most convenient and apposite for praising their role in Westernization. (The Continent 341)

If Chaudhuri is in agreement with Spivak's concern for subaltern groups within the colonized people, he is also not in disagreement with Aijaz Ahmad's description of colonialism. Ahmad calls colonialism "a transhistorical thing, always present and always in process of dissolution in one part of the world or another". ('The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality') Ahmad points out that either colonialism or imperialism has existed always and everywhere. Imperialism has been there in the Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Ages. It has also been seen in all continents except the uninhabited Antarctica. Superpowers, like the United States of America, are accused of neo-imperialism even today. Regarding the historical and geographical range of colonialism, Nirad Chaudhuri had put forward a similar argument. He was so conscious of ancient and mediaeval colonies, that their
modern version did not strike him as anything new. In fact, he insists that the Aryans were the first colonizers in India whereas the British were merely imperialists. Chaudhuri writes:

Colonization is the settlement of foreign people in a country which had a truly national population, at times resulting in the total disappearance of the native population, at others in reducing it to a servile status.

The so-called Aryans or Indo-European-speaking people were foreign and certainly European colonists in India. Wherever they settled they reduced the original population to a servile and untouchable status. The 'pre-Aryan' natives of India were left free only in those ideas in which the Aryans did not settle, mostly the hilly regions of southern and central India. (Three Horsemen 57)

Another controversial issue for postcolonial writers concerns each one's choice of language. There is a running debate on whether they ought to write in their vernaculars or in the European languages. Nirad Chaudhuri, as an Indian writer, had to encounter this linguistic conundrum. To wriggle out of it, he chose the route of bilinguality which had been tried previously by many writers. Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, for instance, wrote initially in English before giving up the language like Ngugi wa Thiong'o has done in the late twentieth century. Chaudhuri's first article and book were also written in English but he never gave it up, just like Chinua Achebe. Moreover, Chaudhuri
wrote in Bengali too although his first book in the language was published after four in English. However, postcolonial critic Albert Memmi says "colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguistic dualism . . . but actually means participation in two psychical and cultural realms". (The Colonizer 173) In this regard, Chaudhuri is quick to remind us that such dilemma is not faced only in colonized countries. Even West European writers like John Milton had difficulty in choosing between their national languages and Latin. In Chaudhuri's words:

As in the case of Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Milton, so in Dutt's also, a consummate philological culture had brought back an assiduous student of foreign languages to his mother tongue. . . . It was not a very easy decision to take, for our political status was always imposing bilinguality on us. (The Autobiography 179-80)

One postcolonial issue yet to be satisfactorily resolved is the theory's relationship with feminism. The bone of contention between the two theories is the role of women in colonial times. While postcolonial critics think that white women were complicit in colonialism because they belonged to the First World, feminist critics think that white women were helpless because they belonged to the Second Sex. Postcolonial feminist Jenny Sharpe gave the controversy a new twist. She said that whenever white men alleged that white women had been raped by colonized men — the allegations, whether correct or otherwise, created a fear psychosis in colonized men as well as white women. Both were too scared to contradict the charges, even if they were untrue. As a result, colonized men and
white women ended up toeing the colonial line. Sharpe meant that white women were used by white men as psychological weapons in colonial battles. Nirad Chaudhuri, on the other hand, implies that British women were used by Indian men as psychological targets in the colonial tussles. What he means is that abuses were heaped on British women by Indian men for the purpose of vicarious satisfaction. Chaudhuri gives a number of examples to show how abusive language targeted white women behind their backs. Perhaps such expressions warmed the cockles of Indian hearts, felt a disgusted Chaudhuri. One of his examples, of unparliamentary words being used against Englishwomen, runs as follows:

When I was a student of the higher school classes a university student whom I knew told me that another university student he knew had written in his examination paper of the ‘leprous white Englishwomen’ and had been punished with rustication for that offence. The way the student narrated the story left no room for doubt that he considered the writing an act of great moral courage and the student who wrote it as a martyr to patriotism. (The Autobiography 114)

The situation of coloured women in colonized societies has been less controversial than that of the white sorority. It has been generally accepted that coloured women suffered on both counts of colonialism and gender. They were stereotyped by European colonizers, says Helen Carr: “Either they are ripe for
government, passive, child-like, unsophisticated, needing leadership and guidance, described always in terms of lack — no initiative, no intellectual powers, no perseverance; or on the other hand, they are outside society, dangerous, treacherous, emotional, inconstant, wild, threatening, fickle, sexually aberrant, irrational, near anima, lascivious, disruptive, evil, unpredictable.” (‘Woman/Indian, the “American” and his Others’) Nirad Chaudhuri tells his readers that even the Aryan civilization, and not only European colonialism, stereotyped native women in this way. He summarized the story of ‘Chandalika’ to prove his point:

In a Sanskrit story, written probably in the seventh century of the Christian era, the daughter of a king of hunters comes to seek audience of an Aryan king . . . The princess of low birth overwhelms the king and his court by her beauty. All the imagery of admiration which occurs to them is drawn from the highest levels of the Hindu aesthetic and religious feelings.

She is like a moving statue of sapphire; like the night lit up by the moon; like the river Yamuna, dark and still; like the spouse of Siva in the robe of a huntress; like the Lakshmi with a blue sheen reflected from the body of Vishnu; and with her hands and feet dyed red with lac, she is like the great goddess Durga after she had slain the demon Mahisha. The similes roll out in florid Sanskrit to describe the dangerous attractions of a hunter maiden for the Aryan, who could not even touch her without insulting and sullying his Aryan birth and honour. (The Continent 70)
Women constitute more or less one half of the human population. Despite that huge strength, their role in the nationalist movements has been underrated because of critical oversight. Frantz Fanon had admitted his ignorance about the colonized woman: "I know nothing about her". (Black Skin 180) Nirad Chaudhuri, however, knew well about the nationalist woman. For instance, he wrote appreciatively about the martyrdom of a female militant who had participated in a raid on a government armoury at Chittagong in early 1930. Chaudhuri contrasted her brave death, after she was challenged by the police, to the meek surrender of many male militants:

There was . . . one incident which redeemed the miserable Chittagong raid, so far as such a fiasco could be redeemed. One young girl being pursued had taken shelter in a house near Chittagong with a young man. They were surprised there and surrounded by the police. In normal circumstances Bengali terrorists surrendered even with revolvers in their hand [sic]. But the girl tried to fight her way out and was shot dead with her companion. Her name was Priti Ohdedar. (Thy Hand 298-99)

Colonialists, at times, hit below the metaphorical belt of the colonized by attacking their sexual life. The former libelled the latter on grounds of 'hypersexuality' and 'homosexuality'. Anne McClintock calls such sexual writing "a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden
sexual desires and fears". (Imperial Leather 22) Nirad Chaudhuri would agree to this denouncement of European writing, at least in the respect of Katherine Mayo's Mother India (1927). He was clearly disgusted with the book:

Katherine Mayo showed India as an aged whore keeping a brothel. The reviewer of the London Times got that impression and wrote:

'From reading the earlier chapters of the book one gets the impression — probably not intended, for Miss Mayo is only driving home her point — that all India must be peopled by over-sexed, degenerate folk which only the survival of the least unfit has prevented from disappearing.' . . . At every turn it was suggested that on account of their low morals, especially in sexual life, Indians were not fit for self-government. (Thy Hand 256)

Colonialists used derogatory terms, like 'barbarian', 'savage' or 'cannibal', to describe the colonized. Hayden White says that such sub-human images drew "a distinction between presumed types of humanity on manifestly qualitative grounds, rather than such superficial bases as skin color, physiognomy, or social status". (Tropics of Discourse 17) Nirad Chaudhuri, on the other hand, reminds us that derogatory terms were used also by the colonized to describe the colonizers. He offers a basket of such insinuations as were used against the English by Indians:

Uncomplimentary comparisons of Englishmen to monkeys and other despised or malevolent animals, an example of which I have already given and the stories about and reflection on their fair complexion, of
which too I have given an example and some indication, were two very common forms. To give only a few additional examples, the others were: defacing the pictures of the Mogul emperors and English Governors-General in our text-books and pummelling them; writing abusive epithets like 'forger' or 'thief' below the portraits of Clive and Warren Hastings; declaring that the English language was only a borrowing from Bengali; believing and telling others, as our teachers also did, that all that the history books taught were lies; writing of the Black Hole as a tragedy and the battle of Chillianwallah as a draw in examination papers, convinced all the while that the first was a myth and the second a defeat for the English; telling one another that there was not one chaste woman in the whole of the British Isles; slyly suggesting that the alleged ground of the resignation of Lord Curzon was only eyewash and the real ground was, not disagreement over the position of the Supply Member, but (repeated in a voice stiller and smaller than that of conscience) an affair between the bachelor Lord Kitchener and Lady Curzon. (The Autobiography 388)

Since colonialism affected almost every aspect of the native peoples, none of them could be indifferent to the anti-colonial movement. Whether they supported it or not, nationalism was an inescapable concern for the colonized. In his well-known essay 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital' (1986), Frederic Jameson said that "the telling of the individual story, the individual
experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself". (Social Text 15: 85-6) Nirad Chaudhuri's writings are examples of Jameson's thesis that even individual stories of the colonial era tell of a collective experience. Chaudhuri, himself, explains why his two-volume autobiography could not have been a purely personal work. He says that public issues were so intertwined in the private lives of pre-independence Indians that the two became inseparable:

The very conception of the work was bound to make it a kind of political and cultural history. But even if I had intended to write only an autobiography I could not have excluded the public and collective themes because they were part and parcel of the personal lives of all Indians of that age. Above all, politics was the main preoccupation of the mental life of all of us, the vortex of all our thoughts and emotions. . . . It impinged even on our workaday life. (Thy Hand xvi)

Pro-colonial writer Octavio Mannoni had justified colonialism when he wrote, "To my mind there is no doubting that colonisation has always required the existence of the need for dependence." (Prospero 85) While he tried to argue that the "dependence complex" of non-European nations was the cause of European colonialism, postcolonial critic Frantz Fanon countered him by arguing that the "inferiority complex" of the colonized was actually the effect of colonialism. (Black Skin 18) What Mannoni called the cause of colonialism was debunked by Fanon as the consequence. 11 In fact, Fanon was so confident that it was the colonizers to
be blamed for the problem, that he justified even the violence of the colonized against them. With regard to the Algerian protests against French colonialism, he wrote, "The Algerian's criminality, his impulsivity, and the violence of his murders are therefore not the consequences of the organization of his nervous system or of the characterial originality, but the direct product of the colonial situation." (The Wretched 250) Nirad Chaudhuri argued, apparently as Fanon did for Algerians, that the corrupt tendencies of Indians are the effect of colonialism. Nevertheless, there is a major difference between Fanon's and Chaudhuri's arguments. The former saw Algerian crime as a "conscious sabotage of the colonial machine" but Chaudhuri saw Indian corruption as a way of making up for lost time. (The Wretched 239) Chaudhuri says that one reason for Indians taking to misusing power as soon as they became autonomous was that they had not enjoyed it for long:

The immediate reason why political power was seen by all Indians as a means of personal aggrandisement lay in the fact that for two centuries they had had no political responsibilities. When these were laid on them, they naturally acted along the pattern of their private behavior, which was to get on in the world. . . . Even after only a few months of the working of the provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act of 1935, I was convinced of the truth of La Rochefoucauld's maxim: 'It needs far greater virtues to bear good fortune than ill fortune.' (Thy Hand 457)
The authenticity of orientalist research has been questioned by Edward Said. He was skeptical about the reliability of works like *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, supposed to be a westerner's guide to Egyptology. Said felt that its writer, Edward William Lane, did not live in Egypt long enough to produce an authoritative book on her. However, Nirad Chaudhuri did not subscribe to this logic. He regarded Max Muller's Indology highly despite the fact that the German scholar had never visited India:

'Residence in India,' he pointed out, 'had its dangers as well as its advantages.' Firstly, India is a large country and not even twenty-five years in Calcutta, Bombay or Madras would justify an experienced civil servant in beginning a single sentence with 'the people of India' . . . An observer might be too near as well as too far, and nothing was more difficult than for a soldier to see the battle in which he is fighting as a whole, or for Bismarck to write the history of his time.

It was the privilege and duty of the scholar and the historian, Muller declared, to stand aloof, to choose his own point of view, and to look at both sides of a question. If historians could write about the Peloponnesian or the Crimean War without being in Greece or Russia, surely a man who had studied the evidence carefully could pronounce an opinion on Lord Lawrence's or Lord Lytton's government in India? (*Scholar Extraordinary* 308)

The artistic quality of English literature had long protected it from any
suspicion of favouring the colonizers against the colonized. That protective bubble of English literature has now been pricked by a majority of post-colonialist critics. Gauri Viswanathan writes that "certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature — for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking — were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition."

(Masks of Conquest 3) That English literature shaped the character of its colonized readers, is quite true in the case of Nirad Chaudhuri. He was so moved by the natural beauty projected in Webster's poem 'Call for the robin-redbreast and the wren' that he wished to die in England:

What a magic country it was where the drowned were transformed into pearl and coral and where the robin and the wren covered the friendless bodies of unburied men with leaves and flowers, and the ant, the fieldmouse and the mole reared hillocks over them. Reading these lines of Webster, our hearts warmed up with a faith that could be described as the inverse of Rupert Brooke's. He was happy in the conviction that if he died in a distant land some part of that foreign soil would become for ever England. We had a feeling that if we died in England what would become for ever England would be a little foreign flesh, and with that faith there was happiness in perishing in an English glade, with the robin and the wren twittering overhead. (The Autobiography 108)
One would expect that travelogues would be factual accounts of travels undertaken by their writers. Unfortunately, they are not so matter-of-fact but are soaked in their respective writer's prejudices. In fact, European travelogues confirmed "Europe's differentiated conception of itself in relation to something it became possible to call 'the rest of the world'," says Mary Louise Pratt. (Imperial Eyes 5) Be that as it were, it was not expected that non-European travelogues would reinforce the 'differentiated conception' of Europe. Nevertheless, such reinforcement of European concepts was done by Nirad Chaudhuri's A Passage to England. He described the European continent, during his first trip of two months, as aesthetically and gastronomically finer than the Indian sub-continent:

In that short space of time I saw more paintings, statues, and works of art in general, more plays, fine buildings, gardens, and beautiful landscapes; heard more poetry and music; ate and drank better; and altogether had a more exciting and interesting time than in all the rest of my life. Hardly less important is the fact that among all these things were a great many that I had longed to see since my boyhood. (A Passage 1)

Though readers often complain that they are forced to read whatever writers write, writers grumble that they are forced to write whatever readers want to read. Gananath Obeysekere, in a brilliant essay "British Cannibals", Contemplation of an Event in the Death and Resurrection of James Cook, Explorer' (1992), has argued that English colonialists wrote "what the English reading public wanted to hear."
Nirad Chaudhuri, of course, never wrote what the Indian reading public wanted to hear. However, he held the Indian media guilty of this deceptive practice — it wrote what the Indian readers wanted. In August 1940, he had seen a nationalist newspaper repeat the news of London bombings while sidelining fresh news items:

Towards the end of August, on the day that the news of the agreement about destroyers between Britain and the USA appeared in the Indian newspapers I found that Suresh Majumdar's English daily had put it on a page inconspicuously, while the banner headline on the front page was about the bombing of London... I said to him: 'Today the most important news is of the destroyer deal, but your paper has relegated it to a corner while the bombings, which are now stale news, are splashed.' Suresh Babu replied: 'Your criticism is perfectly right from the journalistic point of view. But I know my readers would be mortified if they did not read every day that London was burning.' *(Thy Hand 574)*

Regarding the shortcomings of British rule Chaudhuri did not overlook the foul language, human rights abuses and too-clever-by-half attitude of the rulers. An incident which Chaudhuri condemns roundly is the death of eighty two prisoners in unventilated rail wagons in November 1921 and police manhandling of a venerated academic in December 1921. Another instance of the British getting Chaudhuri's goat is Viceroy Lord Reading's dinner speech in Chelmsford Club, Shimla on 30
May 1921 when he said that his postal address was not altogether unknown and that if Gandhi applied to him for an interview he would readily grant it. Chaudhuri lambasts the Viceroy thus:

I thought that this was an arrogant assertion of his own position by Lord Reading, as if he was wanting to inflict his Canossa on Gandhi by making him come to the Viceregal Lodge at Simla as a supplicant. And the airing of his wit in doing that seemed to me in very bad taste . . . I think he might have spared his listeners and the readers of his speech the pleasantry. (Thy Hand 16-17)

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman admit that some writings of post-colonial theory are "depressingly difficult". (Colonial Discourse ix) Post-colonial critics like Homi K. Bhabha stand accused of this difficulty, mostly because of their complex conceptualization. Nirad C. Chaudhuri too is difficult to read, but for a different reason. His involved style, rather than his conceptualization, created the problem. His writings were made difficult by obscure allusions to non-Indian mythologies, like Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and verbatim quotations from non-English languages, like Sanskrit, Latin and French. At times, even his biblical allusions written in English read laboriously. His comments on the pre-independence Congress rule in Indian provinces are a case in point:

It [the pre-independence Congress rule] was a disaster for the Indian people as well as for the Congress. For the latter, it signalled 'Paradise Lost'. It was as if the Congress organization as Adam had
been coaxed by the practical leaders as a Congress eve formed out of the ribs of Gandhi, to eat the forbidden fruit. Considering that aspect of the matter, one could conclude that the British Satan indeed had gained a victory. (Thy Hand 455)

In conclusion, it is seen Nirad Chaudhuri did write about many postcolonial issues although he never wrote about the theory as a whole. He refers to its concepts in the course of his general writings. More often than not, his opinions differ from those of analysts like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. Chaudhuri differs from them on questions of racial discrimination, Orientalist purposes and western women in colonialism. However, Chaudhuri has some unexpected common ground with critics Gayatri Spivak and Aijaz Ahmad. The commonality lies in the concern for subalterns and the awareness about the omnipresence of colonialism. As far as the matter of choosing a language is concerned, Nirad Chaudhuri is with Chinua Achebe rather than Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

4.2 COLONIAL DISCOURSES IN CHAUDHURI

In Section 2 of Chapter II above, Michel Foucault's usage of the term 'discourse' has been discussed. The phrase that he used was "the order of discourse" and, ever since, the term has become a catchword in post-colonial criticism. Critic Hayden White describes 'discourse' as "the ground whereon to
decide what shall count as a fact in the matters under consideration and to determine what modes of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted." (Tropics of Discourse 3) Simply put, a colonial discourse means a system of ideas or thoughts whose ulterior motive was to dominate the colonized. A number of such discourses were spread in British India in order to propagate colonialism. The very fact that Nirad Chaudhuri became pro-colonial indicates that he had fallen prey to at least some of those discourses. This section of the thesis analyzes how Chaudhuri was taken in by the discourses and turned into a colonial stooge.

One of the major tools of colonial discourse was allegory. The noun 'allegory' essentially means 'symbol'. An allegory, like all symbols, represents something bigger than what it itself is. For example, a moral allegory represents morality. In much the same way, colonial allegories represented colonialism. Just as the purpose of moral allegories was to strengthen the morals of people, so the purpose of colonial allegories was to confirm the stranglehold of colonialism over colonies. Rulers marked their territories with allegories quite as animals do with their odour. 13 The allegories, on their part, constantly reminded the colonized people of their foreign rulers. These colonial allegories assumed various forms like literature, sculpture and architecture. English books, for instance, smacked of being colonial allegories. "It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England. . ."
says Gayatri Spivak. ('Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism') Truly, British literature represented England's culture in an impressive way to non-Englishmen. In fact, the so-called superiority of English literature implied a supposed superiority of the English colonizers as well. The ace in the pack of English literature was, of course, Shakespeare. His works were made so popular in the colonies that India became fertile ground for Shakespeare cultivation. How this literary allegory flooded the country is described by Nirad Chaudhuri. His mother had read about Lear in a vernacular translation and told him the story while he was still a child. Other adults of village, particularly the men, used to quote the Bard of Avon at various occasions. Some of Shakespeare's plays were performed at the village school and other places. In Chaudhuri's words:

Although we had heard the story of King Lear from our mother and knew who it was by, our first notion of Shakespeare was of a man whose writings all grown-up persons were expected to discuss and, what was even more important, to recite. It did not take us long, however, to pass from the ranks of spectators to that of participants in the Shakespearean procession. By the time we had learnt a second story by Shakespeare — and that was The Merchant of Venice — we were almost ready ourselves to recite both The Merchant of Venice and Julius Caesar. Our familiarity with the name of Julius Caesar was only a byproduct of our knowledge of Shakespeare... (The Autobiography 95)
However, English literature was not the only form of colonial allegory to be encouraged by the British. As has been noted above, there were other vehicles too employed for the same purpose. The role of art, particularly sculpture and architecture, in spreading allegories has been noticed by many postcolonial critics. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write, "Allegory has an important function in imperial discourse, in which paintings and statues have often been created as allegories of imperial power." (Key Concepts 9) It was for the purpose of conveying imperial supremacy, rather than any artistic quality, that British statues littered the cityscape of Indian metropolises. Hence, the sculptures were nothing else except colonial allegories. They succeeded in inspiring wonder, if not fear, in people like Nirad Chaudhuri. As a young boy, Chaudhuri saw the imposing statues in central Calcutta and was awestruck by the invisible presence of imperialism. He reminisces:

On the ground Calcutta presented a very impressive facade. . . . Through the funnel-like opening of the road called Government Place West could a glimpse of the Treasury Buildings be caught. At this entrance a formidable group of statuary stood on guard. Queen Victoria, Lawrence, Hardinge, Canning in greenish bronze reminded everybody in 1910, even if the unobtrusive Government House modelled on Kedleston Hall did not, that he was very near the heart of the British Empire in India. To the south of the Maidan there was a similar line of trees along Lower Circular Road, and although there was not in that quarter the same reminder of British power in India as
there was to the north, there was at least a reminder of British sickness, both civil and military. For one set of buildings which could be seen through the trees constituted the British Military Hospital and the other the Presidency General Hospital. The first was reserved for British soldiers and the second for British civilians. (The Autobiography 248-49)

The impression of such colonial allegories was so strong on Chaudhuri that they seeped into his sub-conscious. Once there, the impressions probably lay dormant as long as he was still a child. With passage of time, however, the impressions did not get blurred. In fact, they must have re-surfaced decades later at the time when he was making up his mind on the colonial question. Subconscious memories of colonial allegories seem to have been one reason for Nirad Chaudhuri turning into a tireless transmitter of colonial discourses. While advocating colonialism, however, he did not realize that he was being gently goaded by those allegories.

While colonial allegories were spread by the colonizers, there was also the occurrence of colonial appropriation by the colonized. The word 'appropriation' ordinarily means taking to oneself as one's own. In postcolonial criticism, though, 'appropriation' means the adoption of the colonizers' culture by the colonized. The features of the colonizing culture to have been most commonly appropriated were its language and its literary genres. The adoption of the English language is a
case in point as far as colonial India was concerned. "Eminent Indian thinkers of yesterday and today — from Rammohan Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen to Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Radhakrishnan — have made themselves heard in the West; a cultural offensive (if so it may be called) rendered easier by their mastery of the English language," said literary historian K. R. S. Iyengar. (Indian Writing 15) Nirad Chaudhuri, too, used European languages with consummate ease. He knew not only English but Greek, Latin, French and German as well. It is significant that, in one incident, the extent of his linguistic appropriation confounded even the editor of Macmillan, London. The editor, though a thorough-bred Englishman, was not aware of an English word which Chaudhuri had used in his A Passage to England. While the episode indicates that Chaudhuri was able to teach Englishmen a thing or two about their own language, it also reveals how much he had appropriated the English culture. 14 In the words of Chaudhuri:

I never learned the language in any English-speaking country or from Englishmen in India. It was learnt in Bengali from Bengali teachers, and till my fifty-third year I did not have, with the exception of relatively long conversations for a period of about one year off and on, enough exchanges of speech with the natural speakers of English which could have added up to five hours in their total duration. . . . I had written of swans (cobs) busking. He [the Macmillan editor] queried, 'What is this word?' I sent him with the proofs a photograph of an illustration of a swan in that state from an English ornithological
book, which bore the caption—‘Male Swan Busking’. He wrote back: though he had lived at Twickenham close to the Thames, and had been seeing swans all his life, it was curious that he had neither heard nor come upon the word. *(The Continent 6)*

The adoption of European languages was often accompanied by the adoption of European thought as a measure of colonial appropriation. Bill Ashcroft *et al* write that "modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis" from the colonizer’s culture were frequently appropriated by the colonized. *(Key Concepts 19)* Such appropriation of Western thought, and not only Western languages, was noticeable in the case of many leaders of the Indian renaissance. In Nirad Chaudhuri’s writings, of course, nothing is more obvious than appropriated Western thought. How much he had adopted European thinking is best seen in his self-made list of thinkers, a list that comprises of Europeans only. 15 In Chaudhuri’s words:

Having tried to acquire learning and failing to do so, I know who is learned and who is not. I am not. In order to convince the reader that this is not insincerity I shall mention the names of four men whom I regard as truly learned. They are Mommsen, Wiliamowitz-Moellendorf, Harnack, and Eduard Meyer. When young and immature I cherished the ambition of being the fifth in that series. *(The Continent 7)*
The cumulative effect of the allegorization by the colonizers and appropriation by the colonized, as shown above, was the generation of a number of discourses. Not surprisingly, all these discourses went in favour of the colonial powers. Britain’s colonial discourses encouraged the thinking that Europe and the West were modern while India and the East were primitive. One of the beliefs that this system perpetuated was that British rule was essentially benevolent and only occasionally repressive. Historian Bipan Chandra says that “the British did not rule primarily by force but by a carefully organized belief system or ideology”. (India’s Struggle 507) Actually though, the impression of the rulers’ benevolence was little else but a colonial discourse. Its real intention was to dilute the anti-colonial agitation of Indians and it succeeded in doing so at least in the case of people like Nirad Chaudhuri. Chaudhuri had fallen victim to the insidious propaganda of the colonial machine. He gave short shrift to his famously skeptical mindset and, instead, got sucked into the discourses of colonial rule. For instance, he was led into believing that the British had established the rule of law in generally lawless India. Chaudhuri says:

Overhead there appeared to be, coinciding with the sky, an immutable sphere of justice and order, brooding sleeplessly over what was happening below, and swooping down on it when certain limits were passed. Its arm seemed to be long and all-powerful, and it passed by different names among us. The common people still called it the Company, others Queen Victoria, and the educated the Government. The feeling, thus ever present, of there being a
watching and protecting Government above us vanished at one stroke with the coming of the nationalist agitation in 1905. After that we thought of the Government, in so far as we thought of it in the abstract, as an agency of oppression and usurpation. None the less, although deprived of its subjective halo, the protective power survived for many more decades. (The Autobiography 43-4)

The foregoing account demonstrates how colonial discourses engulfed Nirad Chaudhuri's outlook. The allegories which influenced his mind in its formative years and his appropriation of various aspects of the colonial culture were responsible for this. They convinced Chaudhuri about not only the benevolence of the colonizers, but also about their supposed modernity and development programmes. In this regard, what is surprising is that his monumental erudition could not save him from being compromised by these colonial discourses. It seems to be almost a 'willing suspension of skepticism', if one were to adapt Coleridge's famous description of the poetic process. Chaudhuri's denouement is tragic, like that of Dr Faustus whose wide learning could not save his soul from being damned. That knowledge and wisdom are different are, perhaps, best exhibited in their cases.
The previous section analyzed the various types of colonial discourses in Nirad Chaudhuri's writings. The present section examines, from a postcolonial angle, many of the contradictions which his writings suffer from. The term 'ambivalence' is described by Bill Ashcroft et al as "the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized." (Key Concepts 12) The noun 'ambivalence' etymologically means 'two powers'. In psychology, the word means a simultaneous desire for opposites and in post-colonialist criticism, 'ambivalence' means a co-existent attraction and repulsion. It is like a lure-cum-threat between the colonizer and the colonized. Consequently, colonial ambivalence worked both for and against the colonizer, and also for and against the colonized. Many colonizers betrayed this ambivalence regarding colonialism. For instance, British politician Alfred Duff-Cooper wrote, "The idea of an island in Europe governing against their will an Asiatic population ten times more numerous than themselves is not acceptable to the modern mind." Not only the people of colonizing countries, even those of colonized countries suffered from colonial ambivalence. When asked how far he would cut India off from Britain, nationalist leader M. K. Gandhi was ambivalent. He said, "From the Empire, entirely; from the British nation not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve." (quoted in Overseas Indian) However, the fact that both colonizers and the colonized were ambivalent towards each other does not mean that they stood on equal platforms. In reality, the former were 'more equal than' the latter.
As ambivalence was an inescapable feature of the colonial situation, Nirad Chaudhuri was no exception to it. In this, he was not unlike his contemporaries during the colonial period. The most visible sign of Nirad Chaudhuri's ambivalent attitude was his attire — he wore Western dresses in the East and vice versa. Taking note of this curious duality, the British Broadcasting Corporation wrote, "When he lived in New Delhi's old city, he walked to work in a western suit and bowler hat. After moving to England in the 1970s, he preferred the traditional dhoti of his native Bengal to receive guests at his home." Due to this, one might be tempted to think of Chaudhuri as exhibiting the Dr-Jekyll-and-Mr-Hyde symptoms. However, unlike the fictional character, Chaudhuri never tried to blend with the background. If anything, he tried to stand out always and everywhere. Even though a split personality, he was different from the stereotype.

However, Chaudhuri's colonial ambivalence was not confined to his incongruous dressing. His response to the British, for instance, was ambivalent and exposed the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that marks the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. During the wars fought by Britain, Nirad Chaudhuri remained undecided as to which side he was on and could make up his mind only after the wars ended. If Britain won a war, he became anti-British and attributed the win to bribery. On the other hand, if she lost a war, he became pro-British and attributed the loss to misfortune. Explaining his dilemma, he writes:
The Boer War was very frequently in our thoughts and not less frequently on our lips. . . . Our reaction to the Boer War, as to every war in which England was involved, was curiously mixed. One-half of us automatically shared in the English triumph, while the other and the patriotic half wanted the enemies of England to win. When our patriotic half was in the ascendant, as it usually was after an English victory, we went so far as to believe that the victory had been one by bribing one of the opponent's generals. (The Autobiography 99)

Not only was his relationship with the colonizers ambivalent, Chaudhuri's reactions to the colonized were equally so. He supported their anti-colonial movement occasionally but opposed it at other times. In fact, Chaudhuri admits to being inconsistent in the matter during his green years. However, he is not able to understand why he became such a bundle of contradictions with respect to the nationalist movement. Nirad Chaudhuri's problem, though, is easily solved by two concepts of postcolonial theory. The self-contradictions which puzzled Chaudhuri were actually the manifestation of the conflict between colonial discourses and counter-discourses. The fact that counter-discourses had been generated by colonized nations was first noticed by critic Richard Terdiman in 1985. The inevitable opposition between these counter-discourses and the colonial discourses resulted in the creation of ambivalence. In this sense, ambivalence was an inescapable part of colonialism. Chaudhuri, of course, fails to see it for what it is. He thinks that his early flip-flops regarding the colonial question were
nothing but his immature fickle-mindedness. He attributes his own ambivalence to the impulsiveness of his youth, thereby committing a grievous error in judgment:

The story of my relations with Gandhian politics was not to end with my disapproval of non-co-operation. During the civil disobedience movement of 1930 I veered round to a passionate approval of Mahatma Gandhi’s methods and became an almost idolatrous worshipper of his personality. In all these changes of mood and affiliations between 1921 and 1930 I was governed wholly by blind impulses. I did not understand the reasons for my moods. . . (The Autobiography 378)

The problem of ambivalence is closely associated with the occurrence of ‘hybridity’. ‘Hybridity’ is a term borrowed from botany wherein it means cross-breeding of two species by processes such as grafting, in order to form a third species. Postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha uses the same idea to explain the formation of a "Third Space" between the colonizer and the colonized. (The Location 37) Hybridization entails the fusion of certain elements on both sides of the colonial divide although the fusion is neither equitable nor stable. 18 A colonial hybrid reasserts the supremacy of the colonizer while encouraging, on the other hand, the insurgency of the colonized. It is best exemplified by a personality like Nirad Chaudhuri who supported British colonialism but also lent occasional support to the Indian resistance. Hybridized personalities like Chaudhuri were both suppliants and threats rolled into one.
Colonial ambivalence and hybridity, as analyzed above, led to the problem of colonial mimicry. The concept of mimicry was introduced by Homi Bhabha and has been discussed in Chapter II of this thesis. Bhabha says that the colonizer was often 'mimicked' by the colonized. These mimicries, although sincere on the part of the latter, became embarrassing for the former. The mimicries were like the distorted reflections seen in curved mirrors — just as such reflections are not faithful to their object, colonial mimicries were hardly loyal to the colonizers. In other words, the imitation by the colonized subjects was not always flattering. After all, the line between mimicry and mockery is thin and could be breached inadvertently, thereby discomforting the ones being imitated. In fact, mimicry is never far from mockery because it resembles and ridicules at the same time. Hence, the "class of interpreters" which Thomas Babbington Macaulay had planned to manufacture in India turned out to be Frankenstein's monsters. (Minute on Indian Education) 19

Mimicry, as a postcolonial theory, can answer the one question which troubled Nirad Chaudhuri no end. He was always very disturbed to find that Englishmen did not encourage the appropriation of English customs by the Indians. Chaudhuri never knew why the colonizers should be bothered if the colonized people wished to adopt their ways of life. The fact is that the local British resisted all Indian reconstruction of European culture because they were uncomfortable with their mimics. Had Chaudhuri believed in postcolonial theory, he would have
been able to fathom this with the help of Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Instead of doing that, a puzzled Chaudhuri writes:

An Englishman of this type resented our devotion to English literature as a sort of illicit attention to his wife, whom he himself was neglecting for his mistress, sport. Therefore he cast the Tenth Commandment in our teeth, tried to cure us of our literary-mindedness, and at the same time sneered at it. . . . The only ties felt in the heart that we can have with England are those created by things of the mind. The Englishmen who did their best to break those ties have lost the Indian Empire. (A Passage 16)

It is obvious that what Chaudhuri thought of as the Indians' "devotion to English literature" was actually looked upon by the Englishmen as exercises in imitation. It was a case of colonial mimicry for them and, therefore, they were wary of it. Sometimes, they went to the extent of resisting the imitative practices of the colonized people. The result was that the British behaved rudely towards those Indians who were trying to copy their civilization. In this regard, Homi Bhabha has stated that a colonized subject was "almost the same, but not quite". He went on to suggest, tongue in cheek, that colonized subjects were "almost the same, but not white"! Ignorant of Bhabha's analysis, Nirad Chaudhuri found the British behaviour to be inexplicable and held it responsible for souring the mutual relationship between the two countries. 20 He was thoroughly puzzled by the British hostility against those Indians who tried to assimilate British culture. Betraying his
bewilderment, Chaudhuri writes:

From his land and nation the Englishman brought many fine qualities for his work and business in this country, but his residence among us seemed to engender in him certain very offensive attribute which were as pronounced as the overpowering smell of our wild red dog (*cyon cyon duchunensis*), and which did untold harm to Britain's relations with India. These are matters of history. I refer to them only because my personal testimony would go a long way towards supporting the consensus of opinion among my countrymen regarding the Englishmen who have remained in India in the days of his power. . . . Their conduct today fills me with vicarious shame, for they are showing themselves as the same men now by their self-interested and ingratiating niceness towards us as they showed themselves in the past by their arrogant and power-intoxicated snobbery. (*The Autobiography* 343)

Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry can also throw significant light on Nirad Chaudhuri's controversial dedication of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. In Chapter I of this thesis, that dedication has been quoted in full. Chaudhuri had dedicated the book to the memory of the British Empire in India on the plea that "All that was good and living / Within us / Was made, shaped, and quickened / By the same British rule." (*The Autobiography* v) To most readers, it appeared to be an act of belated subservience, coming as it was from a former
subject to his former ruler. For independent Indians, the memory of the British was
certainly not worth dedicating a book to, and the net result was that Chaudhuri got
strongly condemned by his compatriots. Later, he clarified his position by drawing
attention to the lines which said that the British Empire in India "conferred
subjecthood on us / But withheld citizenship; / To which yet / Every one of us threw
out the challenge: / ‘Civis Brittanicus Sum’" [Citizen of Britannia I am]. The
"challenge" that Chaudhuri spoke about was supposedly thrown by Indians at the
British and it was to acquire full-fledged British citizenship in spite of the British
reluctance to accede it. As the British had been unwilling to grant Indians equal
citizenship, Chaudhuri's dedication disapproved of them, although in an oblique
manner. Hence, the dedication is not as uncritical of the British as it appears to be
on the first reading. Chaudhuri claimed to be misunderstood by his countrymen
and explained:

The dedication was really a condemnation of the British rulers for not
treating us as equals . . . an imitation of what Cicero said about the
conduct of Verres, a Roman proconsul of Sicily who oppressed
Sicilian Roman citizens, although in their desperation they cried out:
"Civis Romanus Sum". ("My Hundredth Year")

The "great resistance" of the British that Chaudhuri talks of was, obviously,
due to colonial mimicry. He is unable to understand that it could not have been
any other way as far as imbibing occidental culture was concerned. 21 The British
had to resist Indian attempts at adopting European traditions because the former
could not trust those attempts to be wholly sincere, the colonizers could never be sure that they were only being mimicked and not mocked. Despite the resemblance that the Indian imitations had with their European original, there was always a hidden possibility of ridicule. The distorted image in a curved mirror is the best example of this potential derision. As Bill Ashcroft *et al* explains, "Colonial culture is always potentially and strategically insurgent procedure". *(Key Concepts 141)* This lurking fear on the part of the rulers caused the distance between them and the ruled to widen. Thus, colonial mimicry made it difficult for Anglophiles like Nirad Chaudhuri to cozy up to the British colonizers.

### 4.4 OTHER POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

The applicability of Bhabha's postcolonial theorization to Chaudhuri's writings has been demonstrated in the previous section. However, it is pertinent to mention that there are many other related issues which throw a great deal of analytical light on the latter's works. Chaudhuri's works are analyzed from such perspectives in the following paragraphs.

The influence of Marxism on postcolonial theory has been referred to in Chapter II of this thesis. However, a status-quoist writer like Nirad Chaudhuri could not have been enthused by Karl Marx. Predictably, Chaudhuri says, "The man who described religion as the opium of the people never tried to define what kind of
dope political and economic dogmas were, because he was interested in the
popularization of a particular drug of his own." (A Passage 199) What is strange is
that, despite such anti-Marxist utterances, there were certain similarities between
Chaudhuri and India's communists. For instance, when communists decried the
independence that India received in 1947 as "false", Chaudhuri did not differ
drastically. He asserted repeatedly that India's independence was merely political
in nature and that it would make little difference to the teeming millions of the
country. The communists believed that only a drastic socio-economic revolution
could make a real difference. This conviction, too, is shared by Chaudhuri. He
was well-versed with the courses of the various revolutions across the world and
wished for one in India as well. 22 Given such convergence of opinions,
Chaudhuri's criticism of communist ideology is logically conflicting. One cannot
advocate revolutions and dismiss communism in the same breath. The positions
are mutually incompatible.

As far as the project of decolonization is concerned, it is universally
recognized to be a complex process. In this regard, Kenyan critic Simon Gikandi
writes, "There is an urgent need to question the ideological foundations on which
the narratives of decolonization were constructed." (From Commonwealth 378)
The fact that he raised questions about decolonization, shows that it is not as
simple as it sounds. One of the problems with decolonization is that certain forms
of colonization could not be easily identified, to begin with. For example, social
and economic forms of colonization were not easily identifiable although the
political form of colonization was. Hence, social and economic processes remain colonized even where political decolonization has been achieved. Social colonialism survives because of Euro-centrist preferences and economic colonialism because of globalization practices. Another problem with decolonization is that even the pre-colonized situation, having been heterogeneous, evades accurate identification. In fact, the pre-colonized condition had been so multifarious that some of its strands were irreconcilable. Consequently, decolonization has had to choose one or the other of those incompatible strands. These procedural problems made Nirad Chaudhuri dismissive of decolonization itself. 23 However, his outright dismissal is like throwing the baby with the bathwater. One need not be skeptical of the entire decolonization process just because there are some unresolved issues in it. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, takes an absolutist position on the matter. He is unable to realize that even if certain colonial vestiges remain in a postcolonial nation, it cannot call into question decolonization as such. No wonder that he arrives at the laughable conclusion that decolonization is an impossibility:

No such political phenomenon as 'decolonization' has been seen in history. Colonization of any country by a foreign people has always become permanent. The United States was created by the colonization of people of British origins in North America. It has not been nor will ever be 'decolonized'. (Three Horsemen 57)

Not only did Nirad Chaudhuri reject the concept of decolonization, he has
also tried to prove that he was right in doing so. He saw, while serving in the All India Radio in the year 1947, that there was hardly any meaningful change in the ruling dispensation even after the transfer of power. Instead of the British elite there was then an Indian elite, implying little or no difference in the day to day governance of the country. Government servants suddenly switched their loyalties from the colonial rulers to the national leaders and the departure of British officers vastly improved the promotion prospects of their Indian subordinates. In the rejection of such cosmetic changes, Chaudhuri sounds like the Indian Communists who doubted the significance of Independence. This convinced Chaudhuri that real decolonization was a utopian notion. On the matter of continuity between pre-independence and post-independence India, Chaudhuri comments:

The new Indian regime did not make victims even of those Indians in high places in the civil service who had made themselves notorious by their attitude as well as actions in regard to the nationalist movement. Actually, those who had served the British most efficiently were kept, so that they might put their efficiency at the disposal of the new regime. An Indian civil servant who had dealt with the Bengali revolutionary movement with great severity became India’s first ambassador in Washington and the first representative in the U.N. The loyal servants of the British at once became loyal servants of the Congress. (Thy Hand 865)

Although Chaudhuri refuses to concede the occurrence of decolonization,
he grudgingly accepts that colonialism itself is no longer on the ascendant but reached a plateau. However, he does not think that anti-colonial struggles should be credited for that. Chaudhuri, disingenuously, gives the credit to history instead, ignoring the fact that history is little else but the record of such struggles. What he thinks to be the inscrutable forces of history are actually the anti-imperial, pro-democratic movements of the human civilization. To Chaudhuri, though, history is an impersonal abstract which is not affected by the attempts of the colonized to overthrow the colonial yoke. Holding this view is a ridiculous way of robbing the credit from those to whom it is due. The only saving grace for Chaudhuri in this regard is that he admits the irreversibility of the decline of colonization. In his words:

The pride and power of Europe which had inflicted such injury and humiliation and which yet appeared so triumphant and irresistible was going to be fought by something infinitely more potent than our will and capacity; it was to be crushed by history in its inexorable sweep. There was to be no healing of that bruise. (The Autobiography 376)

The foregoing paragraphs show how Nirad Chaudhuri falls foul of major postcolonial perspectives. Actually, he ties himself up in knots because of his contradictions. Almost everything he asserts is refuted by him at some other place. The reader has only to be careful to notice those inconsistencies, all examples of Chaudhuri's colonial ambivalence.
4.5 AN ATYPICAL COMPRADOR

The previous sections in this chapter have analyzed Nirad Chaudhuri's writings from various postcolonial perspectives. The postcolonial term which describes him best though is 'comprador'. The word 'comprador' is of Portuguese origin, referring to local middlemen who operate in markets between foreign sellers and domestic buyers. The word was appropriated in Marxist theory to mean those members of the bourgeoisie who get undue privileges from capitalists and, thus, have a vested interest against the proletariat. In postcolonial theory, 'comprador' points to that section of the colonized intelligentsia whose independence may have been compromised by a dependence on the colonialists.

Regarding 'comprador', Bill Ashcroft et al say, "The word continues to be used to describe a relatively privileged, wealthy and educated elite who maintain a more highly developed capacity to engage in the international communicative practices introduced by colonial domination, and who may therefore be less inclined to struggle for local cultural and political independence." (Key Concepts 55) This description, except for its 'wealthy' part, seems to suit Nirad Chaudhuri to a tee. He was certainly one of the educated elite who had a 'highly developed capacity to engage in the international communicative practices introduced by colonial domination'. He was also disinclined 'to struggle for local cultural and political independence'. Let alone struggling for local independence, given a
choice Chaudhuri would prefer perpetuation of British rule in India.

However, Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri would not have been half as interesting a writer as he is had he been a typical comprador. His uniqueness lay in the fact that he could defy being stereotyped. In other words, his pro-colonial expressions were not uni-dimensional. While his colonial bias was never in doubt, Chaudhuri could, at times, surpass the colonizer versus colonized debate. He realized that there was more to the world than colonialism. The instances when Chaudhuri surpassed the colonial conundrum and displayed a rare wisdom in this regard are highlighted below.

One of Chaudhuri's atypical viewpoints was regarding indigenous and foreign goods. On this issue, the Indian nationalists and the British colonialists had taken predictable positions. While the former preferred country-made goods, the latter pushed the imported ones. Clearly, the stands were taken according to their respective ideological predilections. In such a controversy, Nirad Chaudhuri would be expected to side with the colonialists because of his comprador's attitude. However, the view that he held was one of clear sightedness. Instead of taking an ideological pose, he took a utilitarian view of the whole matter. He judged the goods not by their origin, steering clear of the debate, but by their utility. In Chaudhuri's words:

We made no distinction, till the nationalist movement came, between the goods made in the factories of Great Britain and those made by
our handicraftsmen. We still judged goods, neither by their provenance nor by their method of production, but by their usefulness or appeal to us — the buyers. We paid equal attention to hand-made and machine-made goods... (The Autobiography 31)

Not only with regard to goods, Chaudhuri professed an atypical viewpoint regarding the issue of universalism too. On this score, as in the earlier one, the opinions of Indians and the British were widely different from one another. Each group looked at the rest of the world through the coloured glass of its own nationality. Both the rulers and the ruled had, as always, become prisoners of their respective ideologies. However, if one were to expect Nirad Chaudhuri to align with the British view of the world, there was a surprise in store. Chaudhuri understood that neither the British yardstick nor the Indian one were long enough to measure the world as such. Rather than take a partisan call, he held a neutral opinion on the matter. The fact that great works of the intellect were produced in the East as well as in the West, proved to him that no one civilization was better than the other. Distancing himself from the typical comprador who would echo the worldview of the rulers, Chaudhuri writes:

Who would think of judging the world by standards either Indian or European? It must take its stands on broader human grounds. When all is changing no one attitude would serve as a measure of progress. In this infinitely complex and infinitely vast mass of ever-changing things nothing supplies us with a safe anchorage save the
objective method. Such a conception of history cannot think of being partial or impartial. . . . To it the epic of the Cid and Ramayana are primitive examples of poetry, the philosophy of Vedanta and of Henri Bergson efforts of the human mind to find a solution of [sic] life, the Reformation a transition from one stage of development to another through economic, political and religious causes. It has no special liking for things Indian or European. The hero of this history is man in all his developments and in every climate. The conclusions of such history are independent of the views of morality, religion, or politics that the writer happened to hold. (The Autobiography 329)

Another aspect of Chaudhuri which set him apart from other compradors is his relationship with the continent of Africa. Had he been nothing more than a colonial propagandist, he would not have had any love lost for the so-called Dark Continent. After all, European colonialists had dubbed it the white man's grave. However, Nirad Chaudhuri had a palpably soft corner for Africa although he never visited the place. Africa appears quite unexpectedly in his writings, a bit like the way she appears in the writings of Ernest Hemingway. For instance, while describing his village river, Chaudhuri compares it with the Nile. Given his undying love for the West, one would expect him to make the comparison with the Thames or the Hudson. However, Chaudhuri says, "We loved the stream. To compare small things with great, it was our Nile. Our town was the gift of the river." (The Autobiography 4) While describing the vessels on the village river, Chaudhuri
remembers Africa again. He writes, "They were all country boats, having the outlines and general shape of the model boats found in the tombs of the Middle Kingdom of Egypt." (The Autobiography 6) Evidently, the waterways of India brought to his mind their counterparts in Africa and not those in Europe.

Given Chaudhuri's pro-colonial leanings, it would have been entirely understandable had he wished to be born in Europe. However, it was not so. Nirad Chaudhuri actually expressed a wish to be born in Africa. When India was being ravaged by the uncontrollable post-partition riots in 1947-48, he wished he were an African instead. At that time, Chaudhuri's sole connection with Africa was a lioness which roared in an animal shelter near his house but was later euthanised. 26 Preferring the innocent beasts of that continent to the riotous mobs of India, he writes poignantly:

The lioness had wafted the peace of the wilderness into a murder-ridden city. Her voice had lured our thoughts away from the obscene events which we were witnessing to travel across the African veldt, the Masai country, and the Serengeti Plain, and clothed our nights with the mystery of the gigantic crater of Ngorongoro. O dead lioness! For what you gave us for a fortnight a son of a man who would rather be your cub than a man in contemporary India thanks you from the depth of his heart. (Thy Hand 855)

The above paragraphs do not disprove the fact that Nirad Chaudhuri was a
comprador. What they prove is that he was one with a difference. At times, he would rise above the colonizer-colonized divide and write about the universal. At other times, he would be thinking about Africa rather than Europe. Hence, the conclusion that Chaudhuri was an atypical comprador!

4.6 FROM UNKNOWN INDIAN TO KNOWN UN-INDIAN

The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (1951) is often mistaken to be Nirad Chaudhuri's first publication. However, the fact is that his first publication was 'Bharat Chandra' (1925). It was not a book though, but an article of literary criticism which appeared in The Modern Review, a magazine with a country-wide circulation. Thereafter, Chaudhuri wrote numerous articles on national and international politics in various journals and for All India Radio. By the time India became independent, he was not really unknown in the area of writing and publishing.

The Autobiography was, nevertheless, Nirad Chaudhuri's first book. It was also his first work to have caught the attention of the readers. The most eye-catching part of the book was its dedication; it was to the memory of the British Empire in India on the ground that "All that was good and living / Within us / Was made, shaped, and quickened / By the same British rule." The dedication stated something which was, till then, not accepted by people at large. It declared what
most Indians and many Britons refused to recognise — the positive features of
British imperialism in India. In metaphorical language, the dedication seemed to
acknowledge a non-existing debt.

This unfavourable reaction of Indians to the book’s dedication is partly
justifiable. The dedication was unbalanced, to say the least, in its statement on
British India. It had failed to identify the negative features of the Raj, as if they
never existed. However, the fact of the matter is that there were many and some
of them quite serious. Not only was the dedication lopsided in this way, it also
appeared to question the rationale of the freedom struggle. Questioning the *raison
d’être* of a mass movement is raising doubts about the reasonableness of the
millions who had participated in it voluntarily. Surely, nothing could be more
undemocratic or elitist.

On the other hand, a few things need to be said in defence of the
controversial dedication. The strongest part of it is that it spoke well about the
dead. In highlighting the plus points of the Late British Raj, it spoke an
unspeakable truth in newly independent India. It is well to remember that one of
the slogans of the independence movement was ‘self governance is better than
good governance’ which implied that the Raj did provide good governance. What
the freedom fighters actually questioned was not the administrative efficiency of the
British but their moral right to rule over Indians. Hence, Nirad Chaudhuri’s
dedication foregrounds those qualities of imperialist rule which had been relegated
to the background by neo-nationalist enthusiasm.

A tsunami of severe criticism hit Chaudhuri immediately after the publication of his maiden book. He never apologized for it but claimed that he was misunderstood. That he did care for the Indian opinion of him is borne out by the fact that, forty five years later, he wrote an elaborate explanation for the controversial dedication. His article, published on the occasion of India's Independence Day in 1996, is translated from Bengali as follows:

If anybody has an authority on the English language, then he would understand without delay that in such dedication, I have criticised British authorities in India, not praised them. I praised, even boasted about, our attitude because of which we could reconstruct European culture despite being under British rule who were against it. The proof of my logic is the Latin sentence in the dedication: Civis Britanicus Sum. A little knowledge of Roman history would explain its significance without difficulty. One would realise that I have written these words in imitation of a quotation by Cicero.

At that time, an aristocratic Roman named Verres was the ruler of Sicily. He was money-minded and depraved and used to torture Sicily's inhabitants. Cicero invoked the Roman senate to judge him. Just as Burke had Warren Hastings impeached on matters of administration, Cicero did exactly the same for Sicily. He said Verres used to imprison people who would scream - Civis Romans Sum (I
I am a Roman citizen) . . . This was the dedication’s crime. Firstly, I indicted the British for not considering us their equals, and secondly, we imbibed occidental culture despite great resistance of the local British. (Desh 15 Aug. 1996)

If we grant the benefit of doubt to Chaudhuri, there does seem to be an iota of criticism against the British in his 1951 dedication. However, this cautious ‘criticism’ needs to be carefully examined for what it really is. In actuality, it is merely a complaint that the British did not give us their citizenship. What had saddened him was the fact that we were British subjects only, not British citizens. Probably, Nirad Chaudhuri’s sadness was the sadness of Frantz Fanon who had realised that because of his complexion, the French would invariably identify him as a negro and never as Tarzan, with whom he wanted to identify himself. This was Fanon’s experience at a movie show in Paris, as recorded in Black Skin, White Masks.

From his childhood, Chaudhuri embarked upon an active process of westernization, exemplifying affiliation in its extreme. The colonised replaced his filiative connections to indigenous traditions. Chaudhuri typifies the colonised who, in the words of Fanon, wants to be white, “who will be proportionately whiter . . . in direct ratio to his mastery of the language.” (Black Skin 18) Chaudhuri desperately sought to compensate for the absence of blood ties. He reinforces Macaulay’s paradigm that knowledge of language and literature is a privileged means of
affiliation. Chaudhuri has said in the absence of blood ties only cerebral interest in English culture and fluency in language can validate a non-English person's claim to a share in English greatness. He identifies English as the culture through which he and others were transformed and he justifies imperialism as a form of social Darwinism.

Nirad Chaudhuri's is actually asking why only subjecthood, why not citizenship? An answer to his query is available with Homi Bhabha. The latter suggests that a colonised subject is merely a blurred copy of the colonizer and calls this condition 'ambivalence'. Apparently the coloniser and the colonised are on equal platforms, but actually the former is more equal than the latter. It is in the colonial penumbra, that the writings of Chaudhuri appear. Bhabha's theory of mimicry can also explain the "great resistance of the local British" that Chaudhuri notes at the end of his 1996 explanation. The local British resisted any Indian reconstruction of European culture because they were uncomfortable with their mimics. Mimicry is never far from mockery; it is like a reflection that resembles and ridicules at the same time. So Macaulay's Indian-blood-English-taste "interpreters" could turn out to be Frankenstein's monsters.

One of the problematic features of The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian is its mixture of autobiography with history. Such a mixture is problematic because it becomes a cocktail of the personal and the impersonal. After all, it is generally assumed that autobiography is a personal genre while history is an impersonal
subject. Nevertheless, a blend of autobiography and history is understandable in the case of national leaders like Gandhi or Nehru because their lives change the course of history. An autobiographical history is not expected out of somebody who is self-admittedly unknown, one whose life did not influence anybody except his family members.

It is here that Nirad Chaudhuri's ego came into play. He thought about himself as if he were India's Sphinx, the silent observer in the sands of time. He thought of his contemporaries as idiots full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. His self-imposed detachment convinced him that an autobiography was the appropriate genre for writing history even though he had no part in creating the latter. In fact, he would be greatly disappointed if his book was read only as an autobiography and not as history. Obviously, nobody but a super-egoist would think on these lines.

Nirad Chaudhuri's forte was autobiographical writing. Not only is his two-volume autobiography the longest in the English language, autobiographical elements are strewn over his other writings as well except for his biographies of Max Mueller and Robert Clive. Now, an autobiography is a literary form with great psychological significance. It is a mode of expression where the author can explore the self quite as another or as the Other in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The autobiography, as a form, has historical relevance too. According to Laura Marcus, it is a genre shaped by history. (Autobiographical
In considering the autobiography as a work of literature, one finds that it is a metaphor of the self. It builds a metaphoric bridge from the subjective self-consciousness to an objective reality. Once that reality is reached, the writer becomes accessible to the reader. In other words, an autobiography is a mode of expression for the writer who has to locate a unique objective correlative for his or her self with the purpose of reaching the reader. Separate selfhood is the very motive of autobiographical creation because the genre is of the individualistic self. Autobiographies make mirrors in which the writers reflect their own images. But if an autobiographer falls in love with that image, like the mythical Narcissus, he or she will end up magnifying it. Needless to say, the entire process would get distorted thereby.

In an essay titled "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?", Dipesh Chakrabarty says, "Many of the private and public rituals of modern individualism became visible in India in the nineteenth century. One sees this, for instance, in the sudden flourishing in this period of the four basic genres that help express the modern self: the novel, the biography, the autobiography, and history." Unfortunately though, the general standard of autobiographies in Indian English is not as high as that of novels or poetry in this language. It is comparatively neglected, quite like Indian English drama.
Nevertheless, some Indian English autobiographies do deserve critical attention. Among them, are the works of Gandhi and Nehru in the pre-independence era and those of N. C. Chaudhuri and C. D. Narasimhaiah in the post-independence times. Literary personalities like R. K. Narayan and Dom Moraes also have penned valuable autobiographies. If one were to cast a searching eye across such works, certain common features would stand out. For instance, Sunil Khilnani describes the autobiography as “a genre that in Indian hands . . . conveniently fused picaresque personal adventures with the odyssey of the nation”. (The Idea 7) The self and the communal are intertwined, individuality and collectivity are merged in the attempt of telling a story larger than itself. Invariably, it becomes not merely the life story of an individual abut also the story of the times.

Despite his attempt to mix history in it, it is the autobiographical aspect of Nirad Chaudhuri’s books which is the best in literary terms. Chaudhuri’s forte is his picturesque descriptions, be it of nature or of people. For instance, his description of the monsoon showers in what is present-day Bangladesh is as follows:

One of the most attractive and engaging sights of the season was to be seen in the inner courtyard of our house, when there was a heavy downpour. The rain came down in what looked like pencils of glass and hit the bare ground. At first the pencils only pitted the sandy soil, but as soon as some water had collected all around they began to bounce off the surface of water and pop up and down in the form of
minuscule puppets. Every square inch of the ground seemed to receive one of the little things, and our waterlogged yard was broken up into a pattern which was not only mobile but dizzy in motion. As we sat on the veranda, myriads of tiny watery marionettes, each with an expanding circlet of water at its feet, gave us such a dancing display as we had never dreamt of seeing in actual life. It often went on for the best part of an hour but had a trick of stopping suddenly. No magic wand could make elves vanish more quickly. The crystalline throng was brushed off even before the rustle of rain ceased in our ears. (The Autobiography 8-9)

Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India 1921-1952 is the second volume of Chaudhuri's autobiography. It takes off from where The Autobiography had ended, after his dropping out of the M.A. course. The book is introduced by the author as the story of "my life and thoughts" and also as that of "the struggle of a civilization with its environment." (Thy Hand xiv) Perhaps, it is more of the latter than the former, thereby making it more socio-political than personal.

The biggest surprise of this book is Chaudhuri's statement that he would have actually preferred to see India becoming independent decades before 1947. Apparently, this is not in consonance with his strong pro-colonial leanings. However, Chaudhuri justifies this unexpected stance because he thinks that the partition of the country could have been avoided had the transfer of power
happened years earlier. It gives us an inkling to his complex mindset — that his real disappointment with India's independence was due to the bloody balkanization of the country. He discloses:

I have firmly held the view that the best date for transferring power to Indians, as was done in 1947, was 1921. If that could be done outright, even the fixing of a final date then and adoption of a plan of concessions in stages would have spared India the calamities which followed the inevitable transfer in 1947. I would add that a good opportunity came in 1935. If in that year a decisive step had been taken, instead of passing the Government of India Act of 1935, which demoralized the British administration in India without satisfying the nationalists, that would have been a second best. That opportunity was missed. (Thy Hand 68)

Ambivalence, which is one of the definitive characteristics of post-colonialism, has been candidly admitted to by Chaudhuri as he writes, "I remained ambivalent between a nationalist (Indian) and an imperialistic (British) view of Indian history. However, this has not made me overlook the shortcomings of British rule or of the Indian nationalist movement either." (Thy Hand 27) This conclusively proves the main thrust of this thesis about his colonial duality.

Metamorphosis is yet another characteristic effect of post-colonialism. Nirad Chaudhuri could not be outside its pale as a colonial subject. The following
passage is illustrative of his kind of metamorphosis:

Anyone who had any knowledge of the modern Indian mind knew that it had been formed by English education, in India more so than abroad. Westernization of the Indian educated in England had an appearance of being an artificial veneer, but Indians, educated in India in the English language, became mentally transformed quite naturally, so that they could hardly say what exactly their mind and personality might have been without that education. (Thy Hand 918)

Nonetheless, Chaudhuri’s accusation of nihilism against the Indian movement is difficult to subscribe to. Had his charge of ideological vacuity been valid it would not have been possible to draw up a comprehensive Constitution of India within three years of independence. The Constitution is the veritable proof, if any were needed, that the nationalist movement was not as negativist as Chaudhuri thought it to be. He also felt that the vacuum created by the decline of positive idealism in India was filled up there by the love of money in its most sordid form. This is the unkindest cut of all. To accuse India’s freedom fighters of being money-minded is nothing short of untruth.

Nirad Chaudhuri is of the view that little had changed in India after independence. However, he suffers from a logical incongruity on this point. If nothing has really changed in independent India it must mean that the Indian rulers were as bad as their British predecessors. That is not something Chaudhuri is
willing to concede though. He postulates that no one could serve the foreign rulers of his country and the national rulers with equal loyalty. He refused to script a glorifying account of the Quit India Movement for the All India Radio because in 1942 he was in the service of the British administration. His contention is that, if he had thought that the movement was right, he would have resigned. In the same vein, Chaudhuri goes to the extent of saying, “All the Indians in the ICS should have been hanged from the nearest lamp-post on 15 August 1947.” (Thy Hand 922) Chaudhuri insinuates that government servants who were Indian celebrated Independence wholeheartedly since it served not only the nationalist but also their careerist purposes.

Chaudhuri laments that even to the last days of British rule the local British aired an insolent contempt for our reading and literary culture. Their fear of colonial mimicry, he is unable to reconcile even throughout his writings. In the absence of a valid justification of the British attitude, he writes:

One of the most curious aspects of the reception to the book [The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian] in India was that of the attitude of the local British. . . . There was a very discreet aloofness on the part of the British High commission, who must have seen what trouble I had brought on myself by paying a tribute to the British rule in India. But they were probably afraid to cultivate a man who was persona non grata with the new Indian regime. (Thy Hand 921)
Chaudhuri relates an incident soon after the publication of *The Autobiography* which gave an indication of the British 'official' attitude to him. An English General warned Chaudhuri half seriously that he would report the latter to the Director of Military Intelligence, who was an Indian. Chaudhuri was taken aback to find that, in their new respect for Indians, one of the English Generals was now ready to tell on a man for his lack of respect for them. He laments:

Any exhibition of European life, civilization or history drove the British community in India to make the gesture which peasant boys in India make at a passing train. They expose themselves and wave their hips. But as the train goes forward in spite of these gestures, our figurative train to Europe also did, in spite of the figurative obscene gestures of the local British. *(Thy Hand 924)*

The point worth noting is Chaudhuri's reiteration of his conviction in pro-imperialism. He had built up an elaborate theory based on social Darwinism to defend the concept of empires. The irrationality of his theory is dumbfounding. For a man of his erudition, it is nothing but a deliberate misuse of the intellect to propagate such an unjustifiable theory. He wrote:

I had better confess that all Hindus are traditionally imperialists, and they condemned imperialism only in so far as British imperialism made them subjects to an empire instead of its masters. This is due to that fact that the strongest political passion of the ancient Hindus was directed towards conquest and domination. All Sanskrit literature
and all the historical inscriptions are full of glorification of both. This aspiration to conquer and dominate was suppressed during Muslim and British rule . . . (Thy Hand 773)

The author justifies his imperialism by misinterpreting the social reformers of the nineteenth century like Rammohun Roy. He is not able to comprehend that the conditions had changed since the times of Roy. It is inconceivable that Roy would support British rule in the twentieth century because there are sufficient instances of his life to prove his independent mindedness. Disregarding those facts, Chaudhuri writes:

I was perfectly familiar with the views of the greatest Indians of the nineteenth century on British rule in India. . . . These great men were all conscious of an antithesis between the natural desire of all Indians to become free from foreign rule and the welfare and progress of the Indian people. Not only they, but no Indian with any education and some regard for historical truth, ever denied that, with all its shortcomings, British rule had, in the balance, promoted both the welfare and the happiness of the Indian people. The general assumption then was that an Indian regime succeeding the British would also promote these as assiduously. I, however, began to doubt this from the Thirties onwards, and therefore I became more of an imperialist than a nationalist. (Thy Hand 774)
Chaudhuri was an idiosyncratic writer. The idiosyncrasies pertained to the substance of his writings, not to his style — the substance was generally non-conformist whereas the style was often classical. The substance is idiosyncratic because, through it, he tried to telescope the history of his life with the histories of India and of Britain. It was a mark both of egoism as well as audacity that a writer, who was a non-entity otherwise, could attempt such a work. As far as his non-conformism was concerned, Nirad Chaudhuri was so both in his decisions of life and in his interpretations of India and Britain. One of his life’s earliest non-conformist decisions was in 1919 when he dropped out of a post-graduation course even after standing First in the First Class at graduation. His non-conformism regarding matters of India and Britain was first seen in 1951 with his iconoclastic dedication.

Throughout the 19th century, many Asians and Africans visited or settled in Britain but they were considered exotic outsiders and curiosity objects. Perceived as native informants who could tell secrets of their little-known culture, their burden was to embody foreignness, provide alien perspectives of British culture for the consumption of the majority population. They were considered informed mediators between two widely divergent and incompatible cultures. They were supposed to put to good use their first hand knowledge of the Orient, create some sort of fantasy which would be firmly tied to reality. A sharp light was thrown on the wide gulf between the East and the West. Stereotyped versions of India were bandied about, it was an occasion for savouring of otherness and simultaneous relishing of
the writers' assimilation. Different writers negotiated this role of cultural ambassadorship and self-translation differently. Notions of oriental morality gave incredulous fascination. Privileging of native informants allows dominant culture to restrain from criticising the other because the authentic insider is there. The initial success of Chaudhuri's books was boosted because Britain was losing its confidence and its empire.

Nirad Chaudhuri's immersion in the colonial process was assimilative. His colonial experiences are defined through the processes of hybridization and they testify to the colonialist interpellation of the indigenous elite. However, it must be remembered that some of the education and values concerned were imposed while others were chosen. Chaudhuri's finest achievement is his invocation of the conditions of his growing up in loving, intense details.

Chaudhuri's language is the language of the British elite of a lost generation. The usage of words and phrases like 'larceny', 'mendacity', 'besmirched' and 'not a whit', show an intimacy with old English but it is anachronistic in the present times. Chaudhuri's ornate English is distinctly formal, late Victorian. It is neo-classical in style with long sentences and a masculine tone. He uses archaic terms which were earlier used by the upper-class elite. In fact, Macmillan wondered at his language. (Thy Hand 903) Ironically, this perfect polish shows him to be a non-English author rather than an English one. It is because those born in the language are oftentimes less particular about linguistic niceties. In this context, one remembers
what Sara Suleri says regarding V. S. Naipaul. She thinks that the "anguish of affiliation dictates the grimly perfect grammar" of the hybridised author. (The Rhetoric 149) For writers like Chaudhuri and Naipaul, 'Indian English' was a term of disapprobation, implying an insecure grip on English idiom, or infelicitous use of vocabulary. They avoided it like the plague.

Nirad Chaudhuri makes no attempt to challenge the competence of metropolitan readers. The coloniser's tongue is not used for confrontation or resistance but for abject submission. It is replete with untranslated quotations from French and Latin but not from any Indian language. Chaudhuri does not inscribe any difference into the English language or formalise the cross-cultural character of the linguistic medium. In fact, he insists on the complete absence of any cultural nexus between English and Indian languages though he is himself an embodiment of that very nexus and a mark of that synthesis. He forgets other languages while writing in one as if every language stands in utterly different worlds not only as languages but also as minds. It is worthwhile to remember that, in this strict compartmentalisation of languages, he had his father's training to fall back on. The senior Chaudhuri never allowed slipshod translations of English into Bengali and vice versa (173). For the same reason, Nirad C. never allowed translations of his works. He was very particular that there should not be any linguistic contamination in bilingual writers.

However, the Anglicised English of Chaudhuri was also a response to
demands of publishing. He thought it imperative to conform to the norms of British speakers in order to ensure that his books get the Western publishers he was looking for so earnestly. Chaudhuri wrote, “An acute anxiety troubled me when I was writing my first book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, in 1947 and 1948. I asked myself whether what I was writing would sound like English to those who were born to the language. I knew, unless it did, no English publisher would accept my book.” ("My Hundredth Year" in Ian Jack ed. *Granta 57 India* p.208)

Nirad Chaudhuri has promoted assimilation into the host culture. Interestingly, theorists have said that untranslatability is a positive feature of marginal languages. Other postcolonial writers have shown a linguistic variance which is a privileged metonymic figure of cultural difference. For instance, Salman Rushdie emphasises cultural hybridity. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, is a writer of undeniable elitism, anti-national cosmopolitanism, and European universalism. His self-Westernization was static and fossilized throughout life. It helped in his initial acclimatisation in Britain. His Anglicisation made him non-threatening, he fell in with their habits and customs as if living with them for years. Clinging to obsolete notions of Englishness, subscribing to discredited imperial ideas, he continued to reproduce outdated ideologies, with the intention of countering what he perceived to be an unsatisfactory, decadent present. Chaudhuri's dislocation was extreme and unique. Nevertheless, he was never actually assimilated in Britain.

Nirad Chaudhuri's immersion in late Victorian culture suggests a distinction
between metaphorical and physical exile. Although he claimed to be living in exile, the fact is that he was only an expatriate who chose to live abroad. It was purely voluntary. His affiliation with the English culture began before the physical crossing of borders. When one studies his childhood, it is revealed that his liberal parents initiated the severance from traditional rituals and from an extended family. Consequently, he distanced himself from ritualistic Hinduism and went over to Christianised monotheistic Brahmoism. Chaudhuri greatly admired Raja Rammohun Roy as a critic of Hindu culture. In a similar context, sociologist Ashish Nandy notes "the widespread internalization of western values by many Indians". (The Intimate 24) A generous view of Nirad Chaudhuri can be in terms of this modernisation and not only as an eccentric Anglophile. Chaudhuri mourns the passing away of India's distinguished past and he is inextricably entwined with notions of present decay thereby inviting colonial intervention. Despite all evidence to the contrary, he claims to have never lost his identity. (Thy Hand preface)

Octavio Mannoni's theory of 'dependence complex' anticipates Nirad Chaudhuri's stance as a passionate apologist for the Raj. Mannoni claimed that colonisation was "desired by the future subject peoples" (Propsero 86) What Chaudhuri claims is that colonisation was required by the past subject peoples and, perhaps, it is required by them even now. He asserts that India can be saved only by Britain and that the latter abrogated her imperial responsibility by abandoning this country and leaving it to anarchy. (Thy Hand 70) He dramatises the predicament of the culturally colonised native in his lament at the elimination of
imperialism. In his autobiography, the powerful retelling of Durga Puja shows a
contlictual attraction and repulsion regarding Hindu festivities. He was both aghast
and awestruck by the bloody sacrifice of animals; the orgiastic and the devotional
nature of the bloody sacrifice fascinated him. (The Autobiography 77-8) The
immense detailing and the loving particularisation betray his fascination.

Chaudhuri's intense, cerebral relationship with England led to his internal
exile from India. A British reviewer of A Passage to England remarked, "Mr
Chaudhuri does not appear to be seeing for the first time, but returning after years
Chaudhuri's childhood. His imagined realities became as significant as the
immediate, referential ones.

Critic K. Chelappan says that Chaudhuri's "obsession with what India is not
made him seek an aggressive Western identity". ("The Discovery of India and the
Self in Three Autobiographies") For instance, the town of Kishorganj is described
in terms of what it is not, i.e. an English country town. It is an attempt to define
India in relation to England. Hence, C. D. Narasimhaiah described N. C.
Chaudhuri in terms of Macaulay's progeny. (Essays 61)

Chaudhuri's governing metaphor of India is stagnant. He foregrounds the
difference between him and others, and is antagonistic and even hostile. (The
Autobiography 607-8) He says "this historical thesis has emancipated me from a
malaise that had haunted me throughout my life." But M. K. Naik has very rightly said, "It is the other way round . . . it is the 'malaise' that explains the historical thesis." (A History 265) The extremity of his estrangement from India is seen when Chaudhuri thinks of his writing as cathartic and alienation as liberating. His sense of liberty or autonomy was achieved without uprooting himself from India.

Ashsis Nandy calls Chaudhuri "the last great Edwardian modernist of India" (The Savage Freud Dedication) He is, after all, a part of India's modernising traditions. He shows not fusion with the nation but separation. Whatever Chaudhuri writes, be they memoirs or travelogue except biographies, he refracts the reality through himself. The autobiographical form asserts individuality, autonomous self: a fully constituted male subject who pre-exists the language in which he casts his story. It is associated with potency of self-identity and separate selfhood. (Anne McClintock 313)

Chaudhuri lived on his own terms and was anxious to emphasise his self-determination, that he never got carried away by prevalent modes of thinking. Hence, far from expressing angst against his alienation, he relishes and embraces it. He wrote, "I saw nothing wrong in Darcy's pride, because I came from a landowning family, which would not even dine in any house connected with trade." ("Woman of the World" Times Literary Supplement 16 January 1976)

Partha Chatterjee calls Nirad Chaudhuri the most extreme proponent of the
theory of Bengal's decline because the story "easily lends itself to a social conservatism that justifies class privilege by dressing it up as a 'meritocracy' and a celebration of the nineteenth century 'synthesis' of West and East." (The Present vii) However, Chaudhuri was never a part of Bengal's elite which was entrenched in the city of Calcutta. He was more of a country bumpkin than anything else when he went to the city. In his defiance, Chaudhuri insists that his position as an intellectual outside the dominant group enabled him to be free from ideological constraints or allegiance to any national constituency. His self-construction as an objective outsider is in order to privilege his perspectives. He dared to transcend provincial limits and put criticism before solidarity; he dismisses patriotism as xenophobia and is against the concept of unquestioning allegiance to one's country. He says that detachment from the multitude is the precondition of all original thought.

Nirad Chaudhuri calls himself as one among "a small number of historians whose integrity would not succumb to nationalism, however patriotic they might be." (The Intellectual in India 52) His works, like V. S. Naipaul's, raise many questions about subjectivity and consciousness. Can we preserve self-respect and autonomy even as subjects of colonial power? Can we stand apart from ideological and cultural circumstances that frame our world view and make impartial judgments about other cultures and our own? Chaudhuri seems to imply that nationalism should be robust enough to profit by a scolding. His correspondence suggests that his criticism stems from a desperate concern rather
than the professed detachment. Naipaul's travelogues are in the tradition of British travel writing but they too establish the tradition of a detached objective observer of the Third World who comments on other cultures.

Chaudhuri's subsequent texts are increasingly uneven. They are characterised by dense prose, repetitive arguments, sweeping generalisations, unnecessary denunciations and a hectoring tone of self-justification. The *Intellectual in India* was not only his first book to be published in India, but it is also pitched to Indian readers. Since then, there is a double voice – he tries to address both his readers in Britain and his critics in India. Thereafter, we get mostly passionate outbursts, subjective distortions and exaggerations largely unrelieved by lyrical descriptions or his acute, particularised observations of the natural world. However, the book does not walk on stylistic stilts like *The Continent of Circe*.

In the autobiography, Chaudhuri confesses to an emotional relationship with England. The autobiographical form is only a matter of convenience to tell the life-story of a man generally in conflict with his countrymen. In many a chapter, the interaction between personal and national is artistically unobtrusive. The book is a history ideas even if they are not acceptable or sustainable. What impresses the reader is the writer's originality, brilliance or forthrightness. It is the ideational process, the ways of creating ideas, that is controversial.

*A Passage to England* is Chaudhuri's canvas to emphasize the contrast
between India between England. This separates it from other travel books which are not burdened with any hidden agenda. His comments on Hindus are dogmatic and doctrinaire, though they cannot be called absolute denigration. Anglicism is a pronounced feature of his writings and it touches the high watermark in *A Passage*.

In his adulation for the English way of life, he exaggerates all good things of English life and glosses over its faults. Chaudhuri compares them with Hindus to the disadvantage of the latter. The chief awareness of the book arises from this comparison. Apart from the impropriety of comparing two dissimilar countries, he also compares the past with the present. Actually, Chaudhuri uses his impressions of England as pegs to hang his criticism of India. His point of view is the temperamental alienation from India and her people. He takes himself outside the Hindu fold and bitterly criticizes the latter. It would have been a fruitful exercise had he not shut his eyes firmly to all virtues of Hindu society due to his wide-eyed love of English.

His urge for radical non-conformism leads Chaudhuri to refute established historical facts. *The Continent of Circe* is not history or even satire, as there is no fine raillery, only bitterness. It is demonstrative of a peculiar kind of atavism. Hence, the excellence of the book is in the imaginative concept of history, a subjective personal interpretation of history. It is essentially literary not historical. *The Continent* is a formidable attack on things Indian. Chaudhuri claims to have a full-fledged epistemology, a theory of knowledge, about India. The gist of that knowledge is that one has to be acclimatized or reconciled to the all-pervasive
squalor in order to live in India. Although Nirad Chaudhuri subscribes to the theory of historical objectivity propounded by Lord Acton, he ends up exemplifying the theory of Robin Collingwood that complete objectivity is an impossibility. Hence, *The Continent* has been described as a brilliantly written thesis of an erudite student who has distorted history to suit his preconceived notions. Chaudhuri says that Hindus have a streak of insanity but that this collective insanity is feeblener but more permanent than that of the Japanese and the Germans. His condemnation of Hindus, which involves distortion or suppression of facts and enunciation of half-truths, is like that by V. S. Naipaul or Ved Mehta.

Nirad Chaudhuri was particularly critical of British foreign policy. One of his unpublished commentaries on the British withdrawal of Palestine and the emergence of Israel reads, “British rule in Palestine, disguised under the name of Mandate, came to an end last night after thirty years of unsuccessful and troubled administration. . . . The greatest sufferers from their [USA and UK] policies and from the war in Palestine will be the people of Palestine. Nobody seems to be thinking of them this moment.” (15 May 1948) Chaudhuri’s exactitude for facts was borne out by his script on the American military action in Korea in 1950 where he had noticed that the action had preceded, not followed, a United Nations Security Council resolution to the same effect by a few hours.

British reviewer Raymond Mortimer said, “If Mr Chaudhuri sees nothing good in his country do not imagine that he is indulgent to the English. He speaks
with loathing of our superciliousness, cruelty and despotism in the days of the Raj . . .” (“The Square Peg” Sunday Times 9 September 1951) Macmillan reader John Squire wrote, “Chaudhuri, a realist, is certainly no indiscriminate belauder of British rule; he has some damning things to say about the attitude of the British communities . . . towards the native inhabitants of India.” (“A Bridge Between England and India” Illustrated London News 3 November 1951)

Chaudhuri's importance as a writer is due to his erudition, originality, defiance of conventional history and bulk of facts he places before readers. He takes a painstaking intellectual approach, endeavours to be forthright and downright in his expression of ideas while maintaining the highest standards of dignity and decorum in English prose. His books on Max Muller and Robert Clive are examples of painstaking research and bear the stamp of intellectual approach. About Clive, he could not discover any new information but re-interprets old facts. Thus, he said, “To my thinking, the inadequacy of the existing biographies of Clive is to be found not in the incomplete utilization of the sources, but in the unsatisfactory interpretation of well-known facts.” The discussion of moral issues too was in the interest of historical truth.

Nirad Chaudhuri provides important clues to the understanding of social mores and behaviours. His personality is projected most forcefully in all his books - they have a distinct flavour, the like of which seldom comes across in a language not one's own. He has rightly been described as “gourmet, epicure and stylist”.

Chaudhuri is convinced about own intellectual superiority. Despite his Anglomania, his moorings in India and Hinduism remain very strong. His 'hate India' themes are grossly misunderstood. He knew that the Anglicized class was hypocritical and seldom went beyond reading blurbs and reviews of books. Therefore, his dedication was a trick to attract attention. Chaudhuri is provocative, intemperate and even fussy but never insipid or boring. He maintains a majesty and solemnity of style. His mood is bitter as he grows impatient with the conditions in independent India. He utters some plain but unpalatable truths about Hinduism and castigates Hindus for duplicity, intellectual degeneration. He takes recourse to climatology in the absence of cogent arguments or logic. Clearly, he cares more for the literary purpose than for sociology or anthropology. Over all, Chaudhuri offers some remarkable insights though they are vitriolic and trenchant.

Some of the criticism against Nirad Chaudhuri is symptomatic of the resentment against his admiration for Britain and his hostility to India. Just as metropolitan critics make the thoughtless equation between exile and objectivity, subcontinental critics perceive his criticism of India as evidence of dislocation. The reactionary nature of some of his views overshadows certain points like his acute analysis of role of class and wealth in contemporary Indian society. While his patrician contempt for Gandhi's mass movement is classed, his fears of Hindu jingoism are borne out by the excesses of contemporary Hindu nationalism. However, like Naipaul, he too has been accused of colluding with Hindu communalists. Chaudhuri had an impish urge to be seen as enfant terrible and
delighted in accusations of chronic Anglomania.

C. V. 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:

The book does reflect, as any well written autobiography does, the many facets of a colourful personality as it develops from childhood through youth to maturity. . . . The generally objective expression is almost unconsciously given up, and before Chaudhuri becomes aware of it and switches over to his avowed 'objective method', he exposes the purely personal side. Such 'lucid intervals', taken together, I feel, are capable of providing the reader with a delight no less rewarding than the treat he has at being enlightened by a unique and original look into India of the past, present and future from the historical viewpoint, which is what Chaudhuri explicitly states as his intention in writing this book. And a look into the book in search of the purely personal element is warranted, for Nirad Chaudhuri does only say that his 'main intention' is historical but not his 'sole intention'. (Perspectives 213-14)

In 2007, Ruvani Ranasinha published an article on Nirad Chaudhuri. Titled 'Self-translation as Self-promotion', the monograph suggests that Chaudhuri's self-
translation needs to be seen in relation to his hopes for a European-inspired renaissance in India. Ranasinha also gives an episodic account of Chaudhuri's comfortable duality:

The almost schizophrenic duality of Chaudhuri’s personality that observers immediately perceived did not seem to present any personal conflict about the complexity of his intellectual inheritances. When a British friend asked him in 1974 ‘Which is the real Nirad Chaudhuri? Is it the person dressed in Indian style, talking of the old Delhi that he loved, or the person dressed impeccably in Savile Row suits talking knowledgeably about English literature?’, Chaudhuri immediately and confidently replied ‘both’. (South Asian Writers 81)

After more than sixty years of independence, post-nationalist India seems willing to rediscover Chaudhuri. Hence, in some quarters, there are attempts to re-evaluate some of his anti-national criticism. Chaudhuri’s paradoxical essence is that his overt prejudices should not blind us to his perspicacious observations. He considered the British Empire as the greatest phenomenon ever known to history and interpreted criticism of the empire as a disavowal of that greatness. However, his outdated ideas of Englishness remained at odds with the host culture of real Britain.

Nirad Chaudhuri’s emotional journey was over when he realised that Britain’s empire had to disappear, if not because of the resistance by colonized
nations then by the inevitable logic of historical cycles. That was the sad culmination of his pro-imperial exuberance. Hence, he concluded that “the greatness of the British people has passed away for ever, and the only question now is whether their last days would be serene and honourable . . . ” (Thy Hand 762)
NOTES

1 The story was about a common Indian krait, which looked like a speckled band because of its white stripes on black skin, taken to Britain and then used as a murder weapon.

2 John McLeod differentiates between the two terms thus: "Colonialism is one historically specific experience of how imperialism can work through the act of settlement, but it is not the only way of pursuing imperialist ideals." (Beginning Postcolonialism 8)

3 Chaudhuri writes sarcastically, "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." (A Passage 125)

4 It needs to be emphasized that Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri's defence of British imperialism is India-specific; he thought that the condition of India, not necessarily other of colonies, had become so diseased that it required a large dose of British rule.

5 According to Said, the polarization between the East and the West resulted in restricting "the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies." (Orientalism 46)

6 Chaudhuri writes, "As I read Kipling more and more I find that it is he who has said some of the truest, if also the bluntest, things about relations of the East and the West." (A Passage 25)
Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* has been called a subaltern view of Indian history.

Viewing the history of civilization as the history of imperialism, Chaudhuri wrote, "If history reveals anything, it reveals that the emergence of every new civilization and of every new value in human life is accompanied by and is inseparable from the domination of a particular human group." *(Thy Hand 776)*

When a British friend asked him in 1974 'Which is the real Nirad Chaudhuri? Is it the person dressed in Indian style, talking of the old Delhi that he loved, or the person dressed impeccably in Savile Row suits talking knowledgeably about English literature?', Chaudhuri immediately and confidently replied 'both'. *(quoted by Ruvani Ranasinha in *South Asian Writers* 81)*

Chaudhuri says that, in the pre-independence era, common people circulated rumours like "there was not one chaste woman in the whole of the British Isles..." *(The Autobiography 388)*

"The cause is the consequence," wrote Fanon. *(The Wretched 32)*

A couple of years, to be precise, from 1825 to 1828.

Mammals, particularly felines like lions and tigers, urinate around the boundaries of their territory.

Chaudhuri's appropriation of English culture came to the forefront when he said that he had settled in England to show Englishmen "how their fathers dressed, how their fathers ate and drank and how their fathers wrote English." *(The Spectator Sep. 1988)*

Incidentally, all the scholars in the list are German.
Ashcroft and others explain, “The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. (Key Concepts 12)

About Chaudhuri’s attire, The Indian Express wrote, “If he took pride in his bowler hat and tweed jacket, he was equally at ease in his starched dhoti-kurta.” (August 2, 1999)

Colonial hybridization can be in various forms like cultural, linguistic, political or racial.

Macaulay desired “a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”

Puzzled by the British attitude, Chaudhuri writes, “The malice was mean, but it was typical of the British community in India, which always tried to hold up our use of English to contempt and ridicule.” (Thy Hand 23)

Chaudhuri writes sarcastically, “An Englishman of this type resented our devotion to English literature as a sort of illicit attention to his wife, whom he himself was neglecting for his mistress, sport.” (A Passage 16)

Chaudhuri flaunted his knowledge about world revolutions, “I have also passed through and read about all the revolutions of our age, viz. the young Turk, the Chinese, the Russian, and the new Turkish led by Kemal.” (Thy Hand 31)

Chaudhuri thinks of decolonization as “rebarbarization”. (The Autobiography 174)

Unlike Chaudhuri, Bill Ashcroft and others acknowledge the role of the
commoner: “The local is perceived to be fully corrigible and involved in an inevitable process of historical change.” (Key Concepts 16)

25 The literal meaning of the word, in Portuguese, is ‘purchaser’.

26 About the African lioness, Chaudhuri writes, “When she was living and roaring near our house, the lioness had wafted the peace of the wilderness into a murder-ridden city.” (Thy Hand 855)