Throughout his life, Nirad. C. Chaudhuri put forward aggressively pro-English views. Ignoring the hostile response to his works from fellow-Indians he presents a favourable image of England and its eminent citizens. His idea of the country blends history and tradition. It displays the complex responses as well as the simple attractions a colonial feels towards the British Empire. It is unique in the sense that as an ‘Anglophile’ he uses England to define himself as a respectable Bengali gentleman and also to purge himself of all that he detests in his native culture. The author’s extraordinary intellectual acumen and the deep understanding of the English character with all its strengths and weaknesses shape

"Chaudhuri's great autobiography, written obviously with a Western audience in mind, makes nonsense of the claim that writing for a Western audience is necessarily incompatible with exploring the most subtle and recondite features of one's culture; for in addressing the West, he is both defining himself against it, and also addressing a part of himself, in that the West is profoundly a part of the intellectual formation of the modern Indian" (Poles of Recovery: From Dutt to Chaudhuri, The Hindu, Amit Chaudhuri)

The same is true of Chaudhuri's A Passage to England. The author's account of his childhood days at Kishoreganj vividly illustrates this point. His notion of England, as a kid, was extremely sensational; an inter-play of light and dark shades in the deep recesses of young minds. Childish imagination played so many infinite tricks, that the unidentifiable aspects of English life became peopled with phantasms. But England for Nirad Chaudhuri, is also "not-India" and rightly so. As a writer he was enamoured of British culture. But as an Indian there is little doubt that he despised the idea of a 'colonized society'. This negates the theory of defining the orient from the occident's point of view. The colonized is no more the effeminate exotic. No more is it a subject for dissection by the rational colonizer. The writer very subtly brings to light his 'Indian-ness' through this binary opposition. Though the writer's idea as regards England might have been a little coloured but his attitude as to its people is neither inflated nor deflated.
A Passage to England is a new block in the area of Diaspora writing. As a travelogue, A Passage to England gives a vivid account of the author’s eight weeks stay in England. The word ‘Passage’ in the title is a multilayered one and needs careful scrutiny. Literally it denotes a journey from one place to another. But, symbolically the passage is a profound one. It is the passage from childhood flights of fancy to adult realism. It is the passage of time-- a transition from one stage of life to another. It also marks the journey undertaken from a traveller’s point of view. It is a passage from the self to the other, an exploration of one’s feelings and emotions on seeing England for the first time. It is the fleeting nature of the various images of England. In many ways A Passage to England is a symbolic manifestation of the rites of passage. The rites of passage are a religious process of initiation celebrating the coming of age of a person. It also marks a change in an individual’s status.

“Rites of passage have three phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation. In the first phase, people withdraw from the group and begin moving from one place or status to another. In the third phase, they reenter society, having completed the rite. The liminal phase is the period between states, during which people have left one place or state but haven’t yet entered or joined the next”, says the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep¹. Van Gennep was the first to use the term ‘Rite of Passage’ in his book with the same name which was published in 1909. Critics and scholars interpret this passage as a mechanism by which society

¹Rita Bornstein, Legitimacy in the Academic Presidency: From Entrance to Exit (Rites of Passage: Separation, Transition, Incorporation, p.168)
confronts and incorporates change without disrupting the equilibrium necessary to social order. It is not the brutal and horrific Middle Passage undertaken by black slaves as indentured labourers to colonial plantations. It is also not the Middle Passage that Naipaul undertakes to countries haunted by the legacies of slavery and colonialism. Interestingly, these countries have been so thoroughly defined by the norms of Empire that they cannot come to terms with decolonization. The shared heritage of colonialism and slavery for them has become a kind of security. *The Middle Passage* plainly talks about historical uprootedness, the formlessness of their lives and their search for a social order. V.S. Naipaul dramatizes the saga of human suffering, not the idea of England. The regional and racial questions are not so much his concern as their inner struggles are. The West Indians feel threatened and dispossessed in their own territory and V.S. Naipaul’s novels are concerned with this sense of ‘dispossession’. William L. Sachs, in his article ‘V. S. Naipaul and the Plight of the Dispossessed’, writes “Naipaul presents a consistent image of social reality in the non-Western world, where dispossessed people search for order in their lives. His own search for rootedness bespeaks the search of many colonial peoples”. This is not the case with Nirad Chaudhuri or any Indian Diaspora writer for that matter.

Nirad Chaudhuri, in *A Passage to England* is a passenger undertaking the passage to England. He assimilates a culture and appropriates it to his self without undergoing any emotional turbulence. As a book, it is a milestone in the author’s journey from being a passionate Bengali and a proud Hindu to becoming an admirer of Englishmen. Unlike Gandhi and Nehru whose approach to England was more nationalistic and Prafulla Mohanti, for whom England had become the metaphor for things strangely familiar (a passing fascination with the occident to
identification with the orient), Nirad Chaudhuri presents a pluralistic image of
England. Thus it is not about writing in opposition to the Empire. It is Indian
writing at its global/transcultural best. It is always believed that outsiders often
paint more penetrating pictures of the world they visit, than residents inhabiting
the same world. Thus Nirad Chaudhuri’s book becomes a delightfully humourous
analysis of Britain and the British. Like his contemporaries Paul Theroux, Salman
Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul, Nirad Chaudhuri is looking at British culture through
Indian eyes. The book is not a scathing indictment of the public face of England;
rather it is concerned with the private life of the English public as a nation. The
initial image of England is always very dreamy and pleasant. It is a country of the
birds, flowers, green countryside, picturesque villages, and quaint towns. The old
world charm that is portrayed in every Elizabethan literary work makes a strong
impression on a young reader’s mind. Nirad Chaudhuri does not seek to reinforce
perceptions of England as a dominant colonizing power. It is a charming account
of a foreign country by a traveller. The book unfolds for the reader/audience a
pageantry of the sights and sounds of London. The questions relating to the white
man’s relationship with colonized people, the myths of power, race, the imagery
of subordination, experiences of cultural exclusion are never raised at any point
during the writer’s journey. Though Passage to England is a postcolonial narrative
and its author is a colonized Indian, Nirad Chaudhuri is not the multivocal and
mongrelized narrator, nor is the writing disruptive. The language is dense to the
extent of becoming too elitist and parenthetical. The English language used by him
is Victorian, littered with untranslated French, Latin, Italian and German phrases.
For a travelogue, A Passage to England is much too complex for the ordinary
reader and is intended for a highly sophisticated and culturally literate readership
familiar with the stylistic nuances of European languages. But the book suggests
that there is more to binary opposites, ambivalences and colonial and anti-colonial experiences. The intervention of fantasies and imaginings of England is at its minimal here. The traveller gives us a picture of England that he gathered from poems, novels, history books, plays, etc. He simply constructs his understanding of the place of England in the Indian imagination.

In *A Passage to England*, Nirad Chaudhuri writes that his visit to England as an adult had been exciting and interesting. This is because he is able to see all the things and places he has longed to visit as a child. The paintings, statues, beautiful landscape, theatre, the fine buildings, gardens, the food and music, together form a collage of intense experiences which he is unable to explain coherently. All these represent an idea of civilization, an ideal civilization, which his native country lacks. He admits that he arrived at the land of his boyhood fancies with "an enormous load of book-derived notions" (11). Similarly, "...for the West Indian V.S. Naipaul, too, his reading of Dickens as a child was form-giving. England became for him the land of literature: his imaginings of the country were swathed in images of Dickens’s fog. By contrast, the Caribbean in Naipaul’s estimation had failed to generate anything resembling serious literature: it lacked a tradition of literary symbols through which to be understood" this is what Elleke Boehmer says of Naipaul’s fascination for things English in *Colonial & Post Colonial Literature*. He classifies them into two categories. He calls his earlier ideas truer; these are the ideas acquired from literature, history and geography. According to the writer, these childhood ideas were wide-ranging and created a homogeneous picture of England. Tennyson’s *Break, Break, Break* and Wordsworth’s *Upon Westminster Bridge* along with Shakespeare and Webster had already painted a very idyllic image of England in young Nirad’s mind. The second set of influences
came from the media- the political, social and economic news that were broadcast in the radio. By the time he made it to England, he had already memorised the features of England and Europe from his reading. Thus, entering England, he compared the "authorised version" of the England he already knew with the makeshift version that was presented to him: "[t]he famous chalk cliffs did not stand out glimmering and vast, as Matthew Arnold had described, but seemed like white creases between the blue-grey sheet of the Channel...".

'A World of Illusion' posits this fact. But again it is a two-fold one. The author suggests that since he is a Hindu, for him the world is an illusion. Sometimes for the author, the idea and the image coalesce to form a composite picture of England. He feels that whatever he had read in books did not contradict what he saw. The idea of England remains unchanged. But when the author enquires about the Cumnor Hills and the Bablock Hythe, his friend makes an interesting comment about Indians coming to England with strong literary associations. The very image of England turns into an illusion, changing the author's idea of what the country actually is. Thus Nirad Chaudhuri at one point says, "The only ties felt in the heart that we can have with England are those created by the things of the mind". The sense of illusion is highlighted in 'Meeting the Third Dimension'. What matters is the manner of perception, "...we in the East in one, a rarefied way, and they in the West in another, a concrete way". The English scenery according to him is three-dimensional, unlike the Indian landscape that is plain and flat. It is the light that contributes to the sense of unreality, he suggests. He finds the colours more pronounced and appearing frozen. The light effects cause the English countryside to look 'stereoscopic'. In India the surroundings appear much silhouetted. Apart
from the natural landscape, even the architecture gives an impression of solidity. In India things look very hazy, almost like a mirage.

Even though, throughout his life, Nirad. C. Chaudhuri has put forward aggressively pro-English views, when it comes to Kipling’s view on the East and the West, he aggressively rejects it. In Oh, East is East, And West is West... he posits a contrary theory that the East and the West will never be able to meet not because of Anglo-Saxon pride or Hindu xenophobia, but because of temperature. It is nature that divides the two cultures. In England the author sees a more symbiotic relationship between man and nature; “...man and nature have got together to create something in common” (33). Through his description of the colour ‘green’, he brings to light the essential difference in the two: in the East, man is either a parasite or a victim of nature. He finds the countryside, neither natural nor quite artificial. That industrial and over-populated England could be so pastoral in appearance, surprises him. This very idea is alien to a man who comes from a country where nature plays a great role in building or destroying lives. In the East one can see “man’s cruel and endless struggle with Nature” (35). For the first time perhaps, Nirad Chaudhuri finds a flaw in the literary conception of his land of dreams. He feels that the man-nature relationship in England is a Wordsworthian concept, which any Indian will fail to comprehend.

‘In Who Made the Town?’ one comes across what an English town is in reality. In the author’s view, Indians suffer from an “artificial didacticism of the anti-town pose” (42). As a child he had written a number of essays on the disadvantages of town life. But he is proved wrong. “Neither the thrush nor the blackbird had been driven out of London, for I was awakened by their song in the heart of the town” (42). He feels that every country should have its equal share of town and villages.
During his stay in England he comes to realize that the only way of differentiating a town from a village was a matter of degree and not kind. He calls the small English towns “a species by themselves” (43). They are totally different and independent from their bigger cousins. He classifies them into market towns, cathedral towns, manufacturing towns and university towns. Indian country towns have all the squalor of the big cities and lack basic facilities too. They are neither aesthetically appealing nor very comfortable. The relationship between the town and the country in England is very cordial, as it does not have the element of ‘hubris’ (offending behaviour). The fact that the city and the country co-exist in harmony proves the fact that England is no sinful City of Man given to empire-building, secularism, individualism blinded by the power and attraction of money. London is no congregation of ‘atomized’ individuals and the presence of cathedrals in the country and parks in cities vindicates his statement. Nirad Chaudhuri very cleverly challenges William Cowper’s “God made the country and, man made the town”. He finds that the country and the town fit together perfectly. And together they add to the cheer and well-being of the country in a larger sense. In England it is man who has made the country and God, the town.

In the first half of the travelogue there is a constant swing between the native and the host country. The comparisons and contrasts are glaring but not severely projected. It is very subtly done. Nowhere does the author degrade the country of his origin; nor does he exalt England. It is vastly different from Prafulla Mohanti’s conception of England in Through Brown Eyes. Nirad Chaudhuri’s idea of the country is an amalgamation of history and tradition. It displays the complexities as well as the simple attractions the mind of the colonial feels towards the British Empire. Like a child he feels elated at finding the harmonious blend of cathedrals, industries with woods and fields and flowers. The symmetry amazes him. There is
neither the rejection of urban civilization nor the cutting down of forests. Each is given its own space to grow and proliferate in. For him it is the two faces of an ideal civilization.

"In India for centuries the forests have been giving shelter to the peasants whenever they are threatened by oppression or anarchy. In the West they are providing shelter from a disquiet which has become normal and quotidian" (55). In ‘The Palazzo And The Basilica’ Nirad Chaudhuri says that the cathedral, people, forests and fields form one landscape.

London is a place of contradictions. As a travel writer, Nirad Chaudhuri thinks, “London’s modernity is old-fashioned, but it is living and creative. The best way to understand the city is to go through its innumerable little lanes, courts, by-ways and alleys. It is the large assortment of the human habitation that gives London its character. Therein lies the city’s vastness. In ‘The Mother City Of The Age’ he discusses at length the imaginary London, the real London and the London as it appears to a foreigner— "For me...London stood out vast, stark and powerful...” (57). The city is big and complex physically and intellectually. But its beauty is genuine and not a photographic trick. He finds the real London much more romantic than the pictures or the books he had gone through earlier. The landscape is the same everywhere and stirs up an unswerving mood. He samples the historical monuments and finds them to be architectural jewels. Both the St.James Park and the St.Paul’s Cathedral exceed his expectations. He finds the park at par with the Tuileries and the church a supreme example of English classicism. But then there are this two faces of London: the city steeped in history and the city of the masses i.e. the suburban London, which the intellectuals and aesthetes fear. The journey into the suburbia is scary for Nirad Chaudhuri. He finds them grey and grimy and quite out of sync with his image of London.
Nevertheless it gives him a complete idea of what the city actually is. He admits that these visits helped form a “truer idea of the structure and function of London, than I could have by merely seeing its sights” (62). The “brickwork of outer London” (63) is incessantly oppressive for him. It stifles the spirit. It induces a kind of exhaustion that is “overpowering” and “crushing”. He also comes to know the London that throbbed with power and vitality. This was Greater London. The visitor comes to realize that there is much more to city than meets the eye. “It is no longer a historic city” (64) but “the base of a new mode of human existence” (63). Unlike Paris, London doesn’t seem to be frozen in time. “It has absorbed its past... in its present” (64). Thus London for Nirad Chaudhuri is the “archetypal city of our age” (64). He labels it as the “Mother Megalopolis of our era” (65). He makes an interesting comparison at this juncture. According to him the visit to London helps him to know Calcutta, his native land. He sees Calcutta as a “half-caste offspring of London” (65). Both Calcutta and London are old and young at the same time. He understands Calcutta by tracing its ancestry to London. What Nirad Chaudhuri is trying to do is now termed as ‘acculturation’- maintaining his cultural identity and establishing relations with others. He seems to be socializing globally through inter-ethnic contact. According to critics ‘contemporary conceptualizations take a multidimensional approach that place both cultures on different continuums indicating an individual’s ability to maintain their culture of origin while adopting characteristics from other groups deemed appropriate for cultural adaptation’\(^2\). And this is what Nirad Chaudhuri is preoccupied with.

\(^2\) Berry, 2003; Conceptual approaches to acculturation from Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research by Chun, Balls Organista, and Marin
A Passage to England is written from the point of view of a traveller. It is witty, informative and extensively detailed. Nothing escapes this veteran anglophile's eye. There is no quest for identity here. But the oscillation from host country to the homeland though not very much pronounced is certainly there. The first part of the book The English Scene describes the sights and sounds of the London metropolis. He assumes the role of a narrator acquainting the reader with his experiences of a city he has always dreamed of since his kindergarten days. Chaudhuri presents himself as a kind of omniscient narrator, recounting the incidents with objectivity and originality. He displays a profound understanding of the English milieu. He is extremely responsive to his surroundings and keeps making interesting comparisons with the 'bookish' idea of London as well as with images gleaned from the past. The travelogue is built around the writer with the English landscape as the backdrop. Nowhere do we find the author being overwhelmed by the city. He is detached and involved at the same time. That is because in a travelogue the narrator and the author share the same persona. And moreover, the real world and the world of the narrative become one seamless entity. Thus A Passage to England is a record of events, sights and personal feelings with a nostalgic blending of fiction and reality. The London portrayed by Nirad Chaudhuri reflects the views and attitudes of a cultured man. He reflects on its glorious historical past and evaluates two entirely different civilizations because, for Chaudhuri, England had always been the symbol of order, precision, meticulousness and organization. In comparison India had been a chaos, he wanted to escape from.

Liberating the psyche of a particular race from the confines of their superficial exterior is certainly a daunting task for any travel writer. It is little wonder that in
the second part of the travelogue titled 'The English People', Nirad Chaudhuri, admits that attempting a sketch of the English populace during a short 5-week-long visit would not be fair on his part. It is like writing "the biography of a man after meeting him at a cocktail party" (69). His acquaintance with the English people remains limited and formal. Moreover, Nirad Chaudhuri is keen on explicating the superfcies of English life for the readers. Though his voice is casual, his description of the English men/women and their eccentricities and habits seems largely free from bias. Unlike his fellow countrymen who have extreme reservations regarding the English people, Nirad Chaudhuri's views sound balanced and moderate. His sensitive observations make him realize that neither in London nor in the country is he able to discern the characteristic English trait that will set it apart from other cultures. In India he is able to differentiate humanity on the basis of their hereditary trademark- an Aryan from a Hun or a Muslim from a Scythian. He is unable to spot in the countenances or fures and clothing the numerous invasions that took place ages and that have shaped the England of today- "I could never make out a Celt, Roman, Saxon, Dane or Norman in Oxford Street" (69). Whereas back home it is not difficult to identify the earliest representatives of the aborigines of India, who originally peopled the country.

Thus his account of English people is a collective and a more generalized one. Nirad Chaudhuri begins with their appearance. "I had been told that the Englishmen belonging to the different social strata and professions were very different not only in speech and behaviour, but also in their appearance, taking it as the sum of their features, figure, expression and, of course, clothes"(71). On his arrival Nirad Chaudhuri looks out for the typical class-consciously attired gent. By exercising his observational skills he is able to come to the conclusion that it is by
way of professional sartorial sense that distinctions between the different classes are made. In his 5-week stay he is able to notice the difference between the upper from the lower-middle classes and also recognize the workman type. Bowler hats and umbrellas become the markers of sophistication and good breed. The English society falls short of variety that so much marks its Indian counterpart. Once again it is the climate and weather that shape different styles in individual tastes of dressing in the East and the West. According to the writer, people in the tropics seem to have a relaxed attitude to dress codes. So we have diverse appearances and looks. But it is not so in the West. The cold weather braces the English people to cast themselves in a particular mould- a uniformity in dress code and appearance. Very unlike India, where the distinction is as transparent as the bareness of the bodies. Nirad Chaudhuri sums up this dissimilarity employing his usual tongue-in-cheek humour: “Lush growth in the tropics is not a phrase which applies only to vegetation” (73). He continues to banter in the lighter vein when he gives his impression of the women. He finds English women beautiful and smartly clothed but the sensation is much like when one apprehends “well-designed motor-cars” (75). He disapproves of the ladies’ fascination with fur coats- “I am sure the ladies of the West will forgive an Oriental’s insensitiveness to their furry and somewhat otter-like elegance...” (76). He finds the facial feature a little flattened, too, not as sharp as those of Indian women. He goes on to make interesting comparisons between the feminine folk of the East and the West. Indian women are conscious of their beauty, but the artificial methods of beautification look better on English women. An Oriental’s attitude to human physical beauty is largely derived from art. So, Nirad Chaudhuri finds it a little difficult to attune himself to the western style and display of beauty. He relates western beauty as presented in the nude or in historical costumes in the paintings
from the Renaissance to the 18th century. He is disappointed at not finding this type in the streets of London. But what really amazes him is the frankness and casual attitude of the westerners towards the nude. He relates an astonishing encounter with a child during his visit to the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. "A little boy, descended from one of the princely families, was showing the rooms to a visitor. He duly identified the figures in the painted ceiling...and then pointing to an ample female said, 'And that is my great-great-...grandmother' " (78). Nirad Chaudhuri at this juncture makes a very startling observation- "I do not think that any Hindu, standing in one or other of the great national galleries of the nude in his art, Konarak or Khajuraho, would care to point to one of the simpering ladies and say, 'That is my great-great-grandmother' " (78). This reflects a mindset that is at sync with his surroundings observing things from a deeper angle. Hindu art has no place for the spiritual in its sculptures. Whereas in Europe, one has hardly any erotic feeling while perceiving a Venus of Cyrene or for that matter a Venus de Milo. According to the writer, the Europeans have managed to convey the spiritual aspect of man through the nudes. Art has never been denigrated to the level of flesh. Indeed, an anomalous scrutiny of two diverse cultures.

Unlike preceding Indian visitors, Nirad Chaudhuri doesn’t find English people cold or formal. But he finds weird ‘The Eternal Silence Of These Infinite Crowd’. The word ‘silence’ is, to the Indian mind a bizarre notion. Be it places of worship, public places, homes or roads, it is the din and bustle of life that signifies the Indian way of life. Nirad Chaudhuri emphasizes this when he says, ‘...for us noise is as essential a condition of cheerfulness as is the warmth of the sun’ (80) Life in London according to the traveller is very akin to a silent film. Though the streets are crowded and public places, peopled to a large extent, there is absolutely no
hustle and bustle. The unending streams of people in Oxford Street and the Underground station remind him of a “long line of ants going into their holes” (81). After the raucous bazaars of India, this unaccustomed silence is frightening indeed. Silence greets him everywhere he goes—pubs, restaurants. Conversations are absent even in places regarded as centers of social life: clubs. The coziness amongst people sitting side by side in a public transport is also not evident. Physical proximity has a totally different nomenclature in India—“In the buses of Delhi all of us make use of one another for bodily comfort” (81). The buses are abuzz with conversations on all sorts of topics, private and public. Nirad Chaudhuri calls the buses of Delhi “a microcosm of our national life” (83). Very subtly, he weighs against the dreariness of the English people’s public behaviour, the ‘comedie humaine’ (84) the large-heartedness of the Indians.

Chapter III, titled ‘It Isn’t Done’ is an extension of the preceding one. Nirad Chaudhuri makes a strange beginning by praising the English alley cat. He finds them more courteous and friendly than the English people. Although he is never explicit about the formality of his English acquaintances, he just gives us, very ingeniously, the negative aspects of an Englishman’s behaviour. This is best exemplified in the “Don’t do this, that, or the other thing” (86) dictum vociferously voiced by parents in India as well as in England. But the application of this negative discipline is as diverse as the two cultures themselves. Unlike Indian children, English children take the dicta seriously, “…so that even the most rebellious young men acquire a formidable range of inhibitions from their elders” (87). Thus, they become inept in doing things that are considered normal amongst general public. Another remarkable aspect that is also a matter of pride in the English is the appearance of their country: “On one occasion, talking with a
distinguished English politician, I said I was seeing England for the first time. ‘Do you like it?’ he asked, and when I replied, ‘Yes, it is very lovely’, he observed, ‘You are seeing it at a very favourable time’ ” (87). This surprises Nirad Chaudhuri. Because all the time he believed “that they were interested only in finding fault with it” (87). Distinguished English people never disclose their position in the world. This habit the writer finds very perplexing and socially embarrassing. Because “This makes it difficult for us to decide how much civility to mete out to them” (87). Nirad Chaudhuri has come across many a notable personality during his sojourns, but due to this negative passivity towards fame, he has not been able to gauge the fellow Englishman’s achievements. His study of the English society makes him aware of the fact that “Usually they keep their work and their social life separate” (88). The comments that he makes towards the end of the chapter are astute and perceptive. That there can never be any understanding between Indians and Europeans, he finds it more convincing. It is a little difficult to apprehend the English psyche for example “The fact is that when an Englishman is friendly he imputes himself and considers all explanations as rudeness” (92). The Englishmen, according to the writer are “not unaware of their habit of tacitness, which they call understatement” (92). Rather they are proud of it as a sign of superiority. Here Nirad Chaudhuri makes a distinction between the ‘Englishman’ and the ‘English man’. The Hindus, in his view, do not see much in an Englishman. But we do respect their books, their knowledge and their learning. “Even in regard to Hinduism most Hindus prefer to go by an English book” (92). But one does not connect the writer with the general populace of his native country. This is what characterizes every Indian’s enthrallment and approbation for the ‘Made in England’ tag. It is complicated, rooted in literature and imagination. The tug of war between fascination for the West and the assertion of
Orient's distinctiveness is dexterously disguised under the binary opposition of 'Englishman' and the 'English man'.

The passivity of the English is part of the strategy of conserving energy for doing work. The talkativeness of Indians need not be compared with it. This difference in modes of self-expression is governed to a great extent by the climactic conditions of the two countries. The Indian climate restricts our capacity for work, so we take advantage of our vocal chords, whereas, the English people's self-expression lies in their activities. This is essentially what Nirad Chaudhuri deals with in the chapter titled 'Tell Me The Weather And I'll Tell The Man'. The English weather is the source of a lot of curious speculation amongst Indians as well as the English. The writer calls the English weather a mischief-maker. He finds its 'changefulness' pleasant. The rainy weather is of extremely misbehaving type. It lacks the romance of the Indian rains. It spoils his sightseeing and gives a few anxious moments. Other than that he enjoys the rain from inside a cathedral in Winchester. The experience, which is very English, is like a compensation for him- "There was driving rain, almost like sleet, and whistling wind; the trees were swaying violently; within as service was going on...England was in a grave mood for me that morning..." (94). English weather can be very provoking and distrust for it lies embedded in the breast of the natives. It has molded the English peoples' sensibilities and made them responsive to various changes in the environment as well as made them immune to surprises-pleasant and unpleasant. According to Nirad Chaudhuri, the weather has resulted in making the English observant and susceptible to details. Little wonder that an Englishman finds intriguing "...a knocker, a hinge, a paw foot to a chair...a whole piece of furniture or a wrought iron gate..." All these things fascinate an Englishman irresistibly. The usually
reticent Englishman adds zest to his life through his interest in the smaller things of life. It is an extraordinary attribute in an Englishman like John Clare who writes so beautifully and touchingly about "the frog half-fearful jumping across the path, the little mouse leaving its hole in the evening and nimbling with timid dread beneath the swath, or the jetty snail creeping from the mossy thorn with earnest heed and tremulous intent" (97). This characterizes the English people's love for curios in wood, stone, metal and glass. It sets them apart from Indians for as Nirad Chaudhuri says, "...we would not have affectionately held up and contemplated a piece in blue Bristol glass" (98). Nirad Chaudhuri notices the same pattern in the interiors of English homes. Every house gives an evidence of concrete detailing. And he posits a very good reason for it too: "They are in a way possible only in that climate and weather. They were made by and meant for a people who had to spend long evenings indoors, sometimes day after day, when the mind would be benumbed by its own emptiness unless it could crawl from one object to another along a continuous chain of interest-furniture, china, plate, pictures, ornaments, fireplaces, and other fixtures..." (98). He drives home his point by means of striking comparison- "These interiors were stocked on the same principle as squirrels' nests are in winter" (98). Though lavish and opulent, the houses are homes and do not convey a sense of claustrophobia and oppressiveness. It is just like its inhabitants- formal from outside but very welcoming from within. But such houses would be unbearable in tropical places, because of the uninterrupted flow of light and wind. Nirad Chaudhuri wonderfully fuses the inner workings of the mind to sculpture. The English mind is reflected in its homes. Such a home is not possible in India, where the "sculptors, when they wanted to compel us to notice their handiwork, provided strongly accented erotic focal points of interest" (98). This is a reflection of the casual remark made by a boy to a nude painting as his
great great – grandmother. The traveller in Nirad Chaudhuri seems to be aware of the reason for the Englishman’s outrageous colonial behaviour after experiencing the English weather. The hot weather of the tropics makes them offensive, depriving them of their “kindliness and equability in human relations” (99). If the Orientalists had labelled the natives of the tropics as effeminate and barbaric, then it would not be wrong to say from an Occidentalist’s point of view that the Englishmen gave way to an extremism in temper coupled with a stridency of opinion. They themselves became “raw and crude” (99). According to Nirad Chaudhuri, “…they degenerated into outright cads, and the more sensitive or specialized the English organism, the more warped it became” (99). He finds the memsahibs, more offensive, with the sahibs and the Anglican clergy coming a close second: “The ill-natured peevishness of the women and the uncharitable arrogance of the priests were inconceivable in anyone brought up in the English tradition” (99). So the moral of the story is never to separate the Englishman from his weather. Chaudhuri deftly uses terms used by Orientalists to interpret the way the British behaved in the orient.

In ‘Money And The Englishman’, Nirad Chaudhuri considers English peoples’ attitude towards money, and finds it difficult to gauge the Englishman’s exact degree of attachment to money. Because he would confess to the most depraved of passions, but not to money— the one thing that makes life and living possible. So in order to get an insight into a man’s attitude to money one has to resort to indirect methods of investigation. It is a matter of symptoms and behaviour. The attitude to money is psychological and not social or religious as in India, where money is worshipped and is accorded a sacred status with gods and goddesses acquiring emblems of financial prosperity and good luck. Every Indian house has a shrine
dedicated to these specific deities. Nirad Chaudhuri does not see any such sanctum in an English home. His observations are not in any way a comparison between two disparate outlooks. It is rather a traveller's scrutiny into the mental make up of a race that has been so highly regarded by him. England, to him, appears a country of easy money—"...everybody was not only expected to pay his dues promptly and regularly, but also, generally speaking did so. In our society the willingness to pay decreases as the capacity to pay increases" (102). What elates him is the fact that the banks and shops are so much lenient and trustful in money matters. Commercial honesty in England amazes him. He calls it a virtue of the highest order. But English people refrain from all kinds of 'shop-talk'. But in India "money-making is an open conspiracy." In a lighter vein Nirad Chaudhuri comments that money-making is as noticeable as love-making in the West. English society deems it very undignified to discuss openly financial problems and methods of acquisition, a very strange habit in people who are described universally as shopkeepers and capitalistic. But this reveals certain negative aspects of the English character. The financial world is actually divided into two-the party of spenders and the party of savers. The difference is between the misers and the spendthrifts. But this is the case from the earning point of view—"...love for money in order to be enjoyed must be restricted" (104). The scene is different when it comes to spending—"On this side there was as much assertiveness as there was secrecy on the other" (104). Nirad Chaudhuri perceives spending to be the positive urge of the English people and saving as a corrective measure. He offers an insight into the psyche of Indians and the English in relation to money. For the Indians, hoarding is a pleasure. Unlike the English, we cannot spend money in a planned and deliberate manner. Money is synonymous with temptation, passion and panic. The variety and abundance of commodities in a shop amazes a man
who has never been exposed to the idea of 'choosing' from among items—"I think I should have gone mad if I had to decide about clothes, or furniture, or glass, or china" (105). There is hierarchy in spending too. London has its own share of cheap and expensive stores. But Cambridge is for the middle-range. The English middle-class is not comfortable in a Bond-Street shop. They feel shy because of their sartorial style, which is not up to its mark when compared to those of the immaculately attired shop assistants. But the tourist in Nirad Chaudhuri enjoys to its heart's content—"I can hardly say how it gladdened the heart of a spendthrift in both principle and...my means...to find myself in a country in which spending was respectable. I liked the English people for their devotion to spending—'That's the way the money goes'" (107). Nirad Chaudhuri's experience with the English financial affair is an eye-opener. He feels that people in England are fond of 'style-in-living'. There is always a desire for a high standard of living. So, "the best use of money is to spend it on the good things of life" (108). A thought which is an anathema to the Indian mind-set.

In 'Love's Philosophy', Nirad Chaudhuri talks about his experiences with matters of the heart. And he calls his English affair a 'revelation'. "In England, as indeed all over Europe, love seemed to be a primary motivation of human beings, a major occupation of men and women..." (109). He finds in it a seriousness that can only be rivaled by the pre-occupation of Indians with money making. The Hindu society and the Western society are radically opposite in their views regarding love. For a man who equates life and literature, Nirad Chaudhuri, realizes that love in all its manifestations is not a mere literary phenomenon in England. And it is impossible to see the workings of love in a Hindu society. According to the author, love, unlike tobacco or potato has neither acclimatized itself nor taken deep roots.
here. The transference from literature to life did not take place quickly either, in India. Hindu society has never felt the need of love for the smooth working of its social institutions like marriage. Love marriage is still considered a defiance of *patria potestas*. In case of Indian marriages, love is *ex post facto* and transient. “It is a marginal luxury, a fancy value, which is never taken into explicit account as one of the pleasures of marriage state” (110). He emphasizes the Hindu view of love in order to be able to comprehend its western aspect. The Hindu theory fosters a detached view of love. But certain western influences like novels and other works of fiction have added a few changes to it. On the whole, an Indian is happy without the moorings of love and can wholly do away with it in real life. But in western society, as Chaudhuri observes, love has an independent existence. The entire European subcontinent is extremely demonstrative when it comes to displaying acts of love. Chaudhuri opines that it is this public flaunting that robs love as well as the English lovers of their dignity and the French of their intelligence. He calls this kind of love a foolishness bereft of viciousness. For a common Indian bred on Shakespeare and the Romantics, England has always been the fabled land of knights in armour, damsels in distress, platonic love and romance. So encountering obtrusive love-making in public places, in England is a little appalling for a middle-aged man’s taste. Nirad Chaudhuri labels modern love as trivial. Though democratized, this type of love is cheap and vulgar. At one point of time love was believed to be “...the most significant movements in the evolution of sensibility, which has brought about the emergence of romantic and idealized love as a basis of the intimate relationship between men and women” (112). Nirad Chaudhuri states that the pre-modern version of love was “Europe’s special contribution to the life of passion of mankind” (112). But what sets the two cultures apart is the attitude towards love and its position in daily life. In the West,
love is perceived in two ways. There is social love and there is its biological counterpart. Family life rests on the bedrock of love. The concept of collective love has been borrowed from literature, because Chaudhuri finds the social matrix of love best exemplified in the novels of Jane Austen. Love might be independent but it remains “under the power of the family” (112). Love in the European subcontinent has always been idealized and romanticized by chivalry and courtoisie, the songs of troubadours and the knightly vows. Medieval love, though very fanciful and operatic, was dignified. The profuse use of conceits and the writing style of Dante made it more charming. Unlike them, we Indians take a frigid stance when it comes to matters of the heart and tender feelings. Indians treat love with a certain degree of tired and impatient boredom. The Indian concept of love has a moral basis to it. We regard fidelity as the end of every form of love. Chaudhuri astutely brings out the disparity in the two cultures with a very acute sense of perception—“In Europe the idealization of relations of the sexes was the work of man; in India or, to be more acute, in Hindu society it was that of the woman” (113). He jocularly refers to the idea of wifely devotion as not an imposition of the patriarchal Indian society and describes this idea as a misconception. It is very difficult on the part of the westerners to comprehend the Hindu concept of marriage and the value attached to it. Most Indians do not grasp the Christian way of marriage. Nirad Chaudhuri emphasizes the virtues of the Indian marriage system, because countless people have found happiness in it and it is not right to speak of this sacred institution in a light manner. But each has its own share of pros and cons. He is of the opinion that the western idea of love as an end in itself arrogates to itself an unruliness, making love as illusive as a will-o’-the-wisp. At the same time he does not hesitate to state the fact that love is definitely a precious emotion in the lives of men and women. For the Westerners it
is falling in love with the abstraction of love and in case of the Indians it is more concretized in the form of holy matrimony. Finally, the East and the West balance each other in matters of the heart through the following equation—"Life plus Love = Life minus Love".

Chaudhuri goes on to engage in an expose of the innate English character, the subterranean patterns and workings of the mind and behaviour. He creates a fictitious personage called John Bull, something in the manner of Fielding's Sir Roger de Coverly. This John Bull has certain remarkable characteristics. A distinct set of people in India they are identified with the Anglo-Indian type. Authoritarian, snobbish, condescending and bad-tempered they were addressed as 'Nabobs' in 18th century colonial India. According to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English, "John Bull is a character who represents a typical Englishman or English people in general. John Bull is traditionally depicted as a short, fat man wearing a waistcoat with the British flag on it". Strangely, Nirad Chaudhuri hardly comes across one during his stay in England. Neither does he face the notorious stand-offish English behaviour, of which he had heard so much in the past. Instead he finds his English friends very warm, intimate, pleasantly affable and courteous. But he does meet John Bull Jr. i.e. John Calf or the English juvenile. Observant as he is, Nirad Chaudhuri does espy the subtle presence of the pompous John Bull. Unlike him, his Indian friends have not been so lucky during their English sojourn; having bumped into the patronizing and haughty character much to their chagrin and discomfort. John Bull made their stay in England lonely, unhappy and friendless. According to Chaudhuri, these people have, in some ways failed to accept and enjoy the English way of life and living. They have grumbled about everything— from food to social customs. These are misfits who live in the country they nurse a grievance against. These are not the people who fit into the role of the
wistful and dislodged citizens, for whom their erstwhile homeland is always, in the words of the internationally acclaimed author Shashi Tharoor, “Never Relinquished India”\(^3\). Unable to mix freely, these people form their own notions about the English as proud, cold, and even snobbish. Chaudhuri traces this mindset to the exodus of the people from countries with fewer opportunities to places with greater opportunities. Indians, who came to England in search of material gains and vocational training, failed to see the real England. They visit the country not out of love, but out of compulsion and the reason is a paradoxical one. Nirad Chaudhuri traces this to the ‘Made in England’ syndrome. A foreign work experience or training will get a decent job back home. Concurrently a foreign degree stands out like an eyesore, because it is ‘not-Indian’. There is acceptance on the part of the individual but rejection on the part of others. Thus the stay in England becomes an irksome experience. However, Chaudhuri does agree that entering English social life is akin to entering an exclusive and posh club. That is why people take the English to be unsociable. “The English animal will not take the initiative to make friends with the exotic creature, and so even though we are of the guest team we have to do the honours... So for most of us, old John Bull survives in English social life. To my thinking, he also does in the international relations of the English people, which will sound unconvincing unless it is remembered that John Bull, like Janus, always had two faces, the conservative and the radical.”\(^{121}\). Nirad Chaudhuri traces this to the ‘Made in England’ tag. He spots it in a mundane comment made by a shoe-black to one of his friends. The shoe-black on finding his customer to be an Indian, very enthusiastically asks-

\(^3\) http://www.shashitharoor.com/articles/hindu/singapore-india.php
"What do you think of our rule there?" (123). This exasperates the friend who mutters, "Even their shoe-blacks think that they are our masters" (123). A clinically detached observer, Nirad Chaudhuri never assumes the role of a sociologist, when he talks of his experiences with human beings. He deals with people from the point of view of a traveller. There is neither pondering over a particular person nor dissection of his traits. His remarks aim at being authentic, accurate and devoid of emotion. John Bull, with his distinct outlook and behaviour, is an intrinsic part of the sophisticated English upper class. In his view, these John Bulls are inaccessible as well as fundamentally simple. But it is the Oxford and Cambridge variety that are the most archetypal. Nirad Chaudhuri makes a very unique statement by way of comparison. He puts forward the Hindu conception of an evolved human being as a challenge to the stiff-lipped English John Bulls. "Those Occidentals who call us economically backward, or euphemistically 'under-developed', in pride of technological progress, have no inkling that in another aspect of economic life they are far less developed than we Hindus, who look upon the millionaire as the natural complement of the Sadhu" (124).

Moving over from people's psyche, Nirad Chaudhuri next gives us a bird's eye view of the workings of English daily life. He presents the English peoples' attitude to work. Every English household is servantless - "The English middle-class is also simple in its attitude to manual work, which has made the servantless household possible" (125). The reason is: "Economic conditions and social changes may have made their contribution to this, but when remembers to what extent the standard of life of the English upper middle-class depended on a large staff of servants, one realizes that the servantless house would not have worked without a perceptible decline in elegance, comfort, and cleanliness without this
pre-existent attitude to bodily labour even in Englishmen of the highest classes” (125). Even their work-place attitude is worthy of note. “In our society an official of middle-class origins not only does not carry his briefcase, he does not even take a paper to a colleague, he rings for the peon. This peon on his part will carry papers and files, but not packages.” (125). Nirad Chaudhuri indicates that, with every rise in official stature, physical labour gets reduced proportionally. But the scene is very different in England. Nirad Chaudhuri, during his stay, sees shop assistants sweeping the floors of the shops and pavements too. There is a monastic approach to labour in the English. But one must not forget that this Spartan attitude is not a western original, rather borrowed from the East. Chaudhuri remarks, “When we Hindus thought of physical exertion as a means of spiritual catharsis, we indulged in Yoga” (125). In England physical exercise is synonymous with games-- a good way of exercising dull minds in tough bodies. Apart from the work ethic, Nirad Chaudhuri finds the English equally simple in choosing a career. For the Englishman there is wide difference between work-for-a-living and what-one-wants-to-do. If an Englishman wants to do something in his life he would not hesitate to leave a well-paid, secure job. But for us the question ‘What do you want to do in life?’ is much the same as what kind of job we would like to take up as career. “We are ready to do anything provided it gives us wealth, security, worldly position, and power, which mingle as inducements in differing proportions with different persons” (127). Indians, generally plan their careers in terms of material gains. Thus, holidays and leisure become boring. Because people do not know what to do with spare time. Most office-goers in India shun the ideas of a holiday. “We have no indissoluble emotional or ethical ties with anything we are doing at a particular time of our life.... The rush of the intellectuals from the universities to the secretariat is one of the most striking career-drifts seen in our
country" (127). To the Englishman, this kind of approach to career and life is more adventurous. But for us it is a more orderly way to earning a livelihood.

Part Two of *A Passage to England*, is a picturesque collage of 'The English People'. It is almost like a personal and custom-made album of Nirad Chaudhuri's perception of the various types of people he comes across during his brief stay in England. One senses the same feeling for England as in *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. "He has a poetical mind with a sceptical turn, and the English are lucky to have come under his shrewd peeled gaze. He is best at direct observation and he writes like an angel", says the reviewer of Chaudhuri's book in *The New Statesman*. Though the writer's idea of England might have been a little coloured but his attitude as to its people is neither inflated nor deflated. It is very down to earth. He tells us with a touch of humour in *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* "Our ideas of the Englishman in the flesh were very different from our ideas of his civilization" (135). The travelogue discusses the English milieu, its roots, the societal mores and its efficient working as a cosmopolitan culture. The people described are nothing like the author's childhood idea of the 'white' rulers. Ignoring the misconceptions and the prejudices that cloud the Indian mind-set, he presents an almost favourable image of England and its eminent citizens.

Part Three of *A Passage to England*, entitled 'Cultural Life', touches upon the enriching aspects of English life. To a civilization dating back to the pre- Anglo Saxon days, culture is a matter of preservation and sensibility for the people in England. Culture in England implies edifying, intellectual, and artistic pride. One does not feel surprised when Nirad Chaudhuri chooses to dwell upon 'Shakespeare
In Today’s England’. As a literary bridge between two diverse cultures, William Shakespeare certainly assumes a pivotal role in defining the borders where culture and enjoyment diverge in order to overlap. Culture and amusement are indirectly proportional to each other. In other words, what is entertainment in England is culture in India. In Bengal, Shakespeare is worshipped as a cult figure. The aesthete in Nirad Chaudhuri revels in the celebrations commemorating the 391st birth anniversary of the bard in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Shakespeare’s relation to present-day England leaves Chaudhuri amazed. “At the very outset I was surprised by the tribute to him that was implicit in the apparent prosperity of Stratford. Here was a little town doing quite well on Shakespeare, as the country town in which I was born did on litigation, which in its turn was kept going by the money brought in by jute. I was told elsewhere in England that Shakespeare was dreadfully commercialized at Stratford” (132). A little flustered at the beginning, nevertheless, he finds the commercialization of the poet quite innovative. Stratford owes its material and artistic success to the multifaceted poet-dramatist. The commercialization of the bard’s birthplace provides immense pleasure not only to Chaudhuri but also to the hundreds of admirers who visit it every year. The bard is honoured in a way which is entirely unknown to any Indian. In India, it is religion that has a market value. No one prospers on the plays of Kalidasa, because religion is a living entity, and more importantly, Indians display very little or no interest in Kalidasa. But the scenario is completely different in England. According to Nirad Chaudhuri, Shakespeare still interests the common Englishman to the extent of being a source of popular entertainment. Though smaller than Kishoreganj, Stratford is an attractive little town offering a curious mix of the new and the antique. It is a world of old and new china, silver, furniture and of course Shakespeare. “Englishmen had not degraded the old playwright,
actor, and stage manager into a mere author” (133). When it comes to culture and Shakespeare, the English are a devoted lot. They buy tickets to see the plays and this is how they go about it, “I saw it being done in a very impressive manner at Stratford. I had gone out for my walk before six in the morning, and when returning I was astonished to see a large crowd before the Memorial Theatre. What were they doing there? When I came nearer I was even more astonished to find that men and women were sleeping on the ground under blankets with rucksacks as pillows. They had spent the night there in the open and in the cold in order to queue up for tickets, in fact they were sleeping in a queue” (133). It shows their attitude to pleasure and its true gratification because “people do such a thing only when they get their money’s or trouble’s worth of enjoyment, they do not do it out of a sense of duty to culture” (133). Their responses to the plays enacted on-stage are direct and very natural. Nirad Chaudhuri observes that most of the audience comprised the middle class, who could have easily mistaken for avid filmgoers. They did not give the impression of a Shakespeare scholar or enthusiast “Nevertheless they were unmistakably showing their appreciation of the play, of the gorgeous Elizabethan rhetoric by close attention though they did not carry tablets, and of the vivacious Elizabethan jokes, some decidedly bawdy, by loud laughter” (134). The relation between classics and modern civilized people is deep-seated in England. Shakespeare and his plays remain an integral part of England and its denizens. They relate to the plays unlike Indians, who are content to place Kalidasa somewhere in the hoary past, never to be recalled. Chaudhuri deep within perceives the soft corner which the English still possess for the bard, because they are innately Elizabethan.

Nirad Chaudhuri makes use of the word ‘house’ literally and metaphorically to prove that in England ‘Culture Begins At Home’. He informs the audience that
apart from Shakespeare, visiting country houses is an intrinsic part of the English cultural consciousness. The term ‘country house’ generally refers to a large house, which was built on an agricultural estate as the private residence of a landowner who had sufficient income to be accepted as a member of the aristocracy or the gentry. Visiting country houses is an expensive affair, what with high admission fees, meals, souvenirs, guidebooks, and transport. But what really exerts a pull to these places is “to derive some immediate and direct satisfaction from the mere sight of the houses and their contents. I could plainly see that they were interested in the house as a building, in the park and the gardens, in the collection of furniture, pictures and objects d’art” (138). Nirad Chaudhuri doesn’t find the commercialization of country houses disagreeable. The reason, he understands, is not only a practical one, but necessary too, “Perhaps a few owners, or at all events their agents, practise the art of advertisement to a point which is perilously near angling. But so far as I could see none of the places were spoilt by being thrown open to visitors, and those which were in the hands of the National Trust were being protected from museumization” (137). Visiting country houses has been a form of recreation, even before the system of fees was introduced. And the new practice has already made a difference “to the spirit of showing or seeing” (138). English country houses are seats of traditions, values, sophistication, and etiquette. Besides portraying a recreational and aesthetic side to it, country houses are seats where history is made and in some cases re-written. Chaudhuri gives us a picture of the making of politics in Knole and the Penshurst Place that he visits—“‘After dinner we went into what I think was the most fascinating room I ever saw in a house—great or small— one of the libraries on white enamelled shelves, with a few, but not too many knick-knacks lying about, and all illuminated with the soft radiance of many clusters of wax candles. A picture to remember: Spencer with
his noble carriage and fine red beard; Mr G. seated on a low stool, discoursing as usual, playful, keen, versatile; Rosebery saying little, but now and then launching a pleasant *mot*; Harcourt cheery, expansive, witty’ ” (139-140). He cites another instance: “ ‘We met in the famous room where all the sovereign treasures of the bibliomaniacs are—-the Caxtons, the Mazarin Bible, the Mainz Psalter; prizes acquired by an ancestor from funds procured by sale of land from Wimbledon to Hyde Park Corner…. Rosebery took up a book and turned it sedulously over, only interjecting a dry word now and then. Harcourt not diffuse’” (140). Chaudhuri comes to the conclusion that “Since English politics ceased to be made in the country houses it has wholly changed its character, for in politics the successor to the aristocrat is not the so-called common man of democracy, but the bureaucrat” (140).

During his short stay in the West, Nirad Chaudhuri observes that he does not come across the Indian image and idea of “today’s Europe”. He talks of the Europe that fascinates the common Indian mind and the politico-economic drivel that excites intellectuals—“It is the Europe on which the Public Service Commission in India sets the stiffest imaginable questions and to which, therefore, before the examination or interview, some of our acutest young brains devote some weeks of hectic cramming” (145). He calls this dichotomy “ugly little cuckoo-twins” (145). And there is a Europe “which is tangible everywhere” (145). He feels that this notion of Europe exists in the real dimension, but in a subtle manner. It is in fact a very perceptible Europe. “This is the Europe of European civilization, which is entwined with the contemporary existence of the European peoples, influencing and shaping it in every way, and being accepted as part and parcel of their ordinary life” (145). What Chaudhuri intends to say in ‘Adventures Of A Brown
Man In Search Of Civilization’ is, Europe has remained largely unchanged through centuries and that culture is a living entity in the West. It is impossible to separate life present from life past. The basic elements that make up the essence of European civilization cannot be overlooked or got rid. Unlike the East or India for that matter, where culture is something that we read about and infer from our own imagination. It is textual and mythical because the cultural situation, to which Indians are accustomed, is a little opaque— "India is a land of ancient and massive civilizations, but the universal recognition of this fact has enabled us to repudiate the contract with the past" (146). As a Hindu, Chaudhuri has always wanted to capture the spirit of ancient India in the present. But somehow it has remained as elusive as ever. Though we Indians have continued to stay traditional in many ways, Chaudhuri feels that comprehending the nature of our ancient past has not been an easy exercise. Thus perceiving it as a living reality has been an impossibility. He goes on- “For the majority of my countrymen their historic civilization is a culture in the anthropologist’s sense of the word. It has been reduced to its simplest to become a more or less inert psychological environment, in which they live as fish do in water. As for those Indians who have imbibed the notion of civilization from their Western education, their ancient culture is a thing to throw at the heads of foreigners, never to be carried on their own shoulders, where it is felt as a burden. Our men of culture practise it in the abstract, as modernist painters practise abstract art. Their cultural consciousness is a part of their nationalism” (146). Culture and civilization are both transparent entities in the West. For example, Parisians do not hesitate to attend art exhibitions, even if the entrance fee is 200 francs, and the catalogue, a 100 francs. This is the brown nan in search of the utopian civilization makes a distinction between the Eastern and the Western one— “India without politics is a bare expanse of petty
worldliness. Europe without politics is by far the most attractive part of Europe. Indians have an arcane sense in matters pertaining to homeland and cultural etiquettes. Just as in Paris, in England museums had been transformed into the highest expressions of culture and civilizations. "On the third day after my arrival in England I walked into the National Gallery all by myself. As I passed through the aisle formed by the Italian Primitives I was dazzled by their splendor. I had a notion that I knew something about European painting, I found out how mistaken I was. What I knew was not a shadow of the reality. It is only those who do not possess collections like the National, Tate, and Wallace who can realize that to have built them up is in itself an achievement in civilization" (147). The English people in spite of heavy taxation and the diminishing wealth of the rich, have managed to preserve their civilization by forming exclusive circles, where the "dwindling elite" (147), are pursuing their "esoteric interests" (147), in the form of music, sculpture, dance, visiting country houses, painting and, last but not the least, William Shakespeare. This is what the 'brown man' feels on visiting the premier citadels of culture in London- "...the Fitzwilliam...and the Ashmolean at the Oxford are just as important as any college for a man who cares to lead a civilized life. These collections can indeed be overpowering and, as a French museologist has said, a cause of nervous strain to a cultivated tourist who is torn between his desire to look long enough at a particular work and his fear of missing some of the other masterpieces. But they were never meant to make a man cultured in the course of one visit..." (148). The 'brown man during his search of civilization sees the art and artifacts of the British Museum, namely the Elgin Marbles, Assyrian Scriptures, the statue of Demeter. In the National gallery he feasts his eye on The Nativity by Piero della Francesca and the works of Claude Lorraine and Poussin. Besides, he feels very lucky in his quests when he hears the
Second Symphony of Beethoven in a concert at the Festival Hall and when “The very evening I arrived at Cambridge I was taken to hear Handel’s Messiah, sung by the Cambridge Philharmonic Society. It was very beautifully done. People say that the Messiah is a favourite in England” (150). Even in this age of film music or jazz, Handel remains, for the common Englishman as popular as Shakespeare. What really delights the ‘brown man’ is the manner in which some of his “most out-of-the-way interests” are satisfied “with the greatest ease” (150). He illustrates it as follows- “In 1923 or 1924 Elkin Mathews and Marrot had published a sumptuous folio edition of Jane Eyre, with lithographs by a French artist. I formed an intense longing to buy it when I read the review, but I could not then afford the five guineas at which it was priced, and I never heard about it afterwards. However, when I walked into the Charlotte Bronte exhibition in the British Museum, which was being held to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of her death, I came upon the selfsame folio, looking as beautiful as I had imagined it would” (150-151). After describing in detail the obvious nature of culture, Nirad Chaudhuri comes to the conclusion that civilization is synonymous with sanitation. Soap is the ultimate symbol of refinement- “sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas” (153). This was the cry of the advanced thinkers of the late 19th century when material progress was advancing in leaps and bounds. But there is catch in this too, observes Chaudhuri. He feels that the introduction of universal suffrage and universal sanitation has resulted in the lowering of confidence amongst the people of the West, “Finding that sanitation can co-exist with the most crushing forms of vulgarity or even rank barbarism of the mind, some of them are rushing to the extreme point of denying the idea of civilization altogether. I should like to reassure them by suggesting a new test for it, which I employed. It is the number and prosperity of the shops dealing in antiques, old books, and second-hand
furniture. Judged by this test the people of England are very civilized, for I enjoyed these shops everywhere, stocking goods for all purposes (153). Having reached the end of his expedition, the 'brown man', concludes that flowers, gardens and flower shows are the final ingredient in what constitutes a civilization. "An Englishman as gardener is professing allegiance to his civilization in the same manner as he would have done if he were buying old prints, furniture, and books" (153). And the visit to The Chelsea Flower Show corroborates this fact.

What Chaudhuri intends to say is that culture is a universal phenomenon in England. There is nothing similar about 'The Brown Man In Search Of Civilization' and Prafulla Mohanti's book, *Through Brown Eyes*. The similarity stretches only to the titles. Nirad Chaudhuri takes a sojourn back in time to trace the cultural roots of England. He looks for the Englishness that had once fascinated him in the form of a tag in a trunk-'Made in England'. Chaudhuri's search takes him to country houses, museums, galleries, concerts, theatres, shows and shops. It is an expedition unlike Prafulla Mohanti's journey where an invisible barrier rears between 'brown' and 'white'. The brown eyes critically scan the layer of sophistry that lies underneath a false sense of camaraderie and self-confidence, whereas, Chaudhuri is a self-assured brown traveller exploring a civilization that is centuries old. His pose is that of an explorer, a connoisseur of all things English. India was once upon a time observed and experienced by the blue-eyed white men. Now it's the turn of the brown men, embarking on a journey to the land of the white men to evaluate as well as identify with all that is 'not-Indian'.

It would not be wrong to say that Nirad Chaudhuri had always held the English traditional mores in high esteem. In 'Kindergarten and Pedagogy', he talks about the cornerstone that binds the English people to their tradition- "...it is only
commonsense to recognize that such a highly civilized life as is theirs cannot be maintained without effort, thinking, method, and education...” (155). These are the right ingredients for maintaining the ideal cultural standard. And this has been achieved through the right kind of teaching from the pre-school stage. Culture consists in the right balance between brain and brawn. He gives the example of activities relating to sports in early school life to illustrate this point, “Young Englishmen who rebel against the tutor of the brain grovel abjectly at the feet of the tutor of the brawn. Here swotting is the thing. The whole nation has come to believe in the moral equivalents of play and sport, as a wholly non-functional, non-purposive, and specialized exercise of the muscles. They are under no biological compulsion to acquire the efficiency of a horse in the legs, of a hare in the wind, of a gibbon in the arm, or of a tiger in the paw, yet they have set their heart on attaining all these skills” (154). Because “eternal vigilance is the price a nation has to pay for keeping its civilization” (155). The point he wants to make is that the English cultural world is divided between kindergarten and pedagogy. If pedagogy preserves brain culture, then kindergarten nourishes brawn culture. “The first check on the quality of cultural life is exercised by the pupils themselves” (155). Next, the university men do a good job of making historic civilization accessible to all. And sport lovers cultivate a breed of macho individuals. Thus culture in England is a happy blend of intellect and muscle, of reason and power. Pedagogy has come down to the level of “haute vulgarisation” (156), which Nirad Chaudhuri finds a very competent gesture on the part of culture keepers. The keepers of culture are categorized into three groups: the entrepreneurs, the interpreters and the popularizers. It is their job to acquaint everybody with their cultural roots. There is “unpretentiousness in intellectual life” (158) whereas, “we Hindus have developed an over-consciousness of culture” (159). And adult
education is a prime example of this. One can always take pleasure in a trouble free cultural enjoyment in England, just like the engineer friend of the author, who had taken a liking to English literature as a result of the adult education program. The organization of cultural life is done in a very natural manner, never encroaching itself on daily life. It is informal and playful. It gave cultural history a more human touch, dispensing with its seriousness tag.

Religion forms an inseparable part of culture in England. It is the wish of Chaudhuri to speak “...about the place of religion in the personal life of the English people...” (161). But unfortunately he learns nothing about this aspect of English life. So in the last chapter of the third section, ‘Christian Civilization’, he describes what meets the eye. “Everybody recognizes that Christianity has been a great force behind the rise of Western civilization, and one of its earliest manifestations, the Anglo-Saxon, was intensely Christian...Religion and culture have always intermingled in Europe, more so in England than anywhere else” (162). He describes a beautiful picture of the church service, at the King’s College in Cambridge. It was an Easter service attended by local visitors and holidaymakers in great numbers. Nirad Chaudhuri remarks that people had come to attend the service instead of going to some gay seaside resort. They were stopped at the entrance by a choir which was rehearsing for the occasion, and he looks at the “magnificent vault and the glowing stained glass, and suddenly a melody rose to the lofty roof like a coil of incense smoke...” (162). The experience is like a moment of epiphany for the author. He is surprised to see the congregation, which disproves the statement about the falling church attendance. He does not find any decline in belief or faith in the religious institution. He finds he visit to the church a great devotional experience- “The next day was Easter
Sunday, and I again went to the Chapel. This time the attendance was even greater than on the previous afternoon. Once again I felt the power of the service, and though I could not define in what it lay, I said to myself that if anywhere I, a Hindu, could think of becoming a Christian it was in such a place” (163). The spirit is common to all churches in England, be it Stratford or Winchester. They all appear the same, and here Chaudhuri realizes that somehow he fails to see what the spirit actually is? “I never got any insight into it, and never asked any Englishman what he was seeking in his religious observances or what he was getting out of them” (164). The worshipping methods are very un-Hindu like, “I wondered if they went to a church as we went to a temple. We go to temples to look on the image of a divine potentate and to watch the ceremonials of his daily life, which are modelled on those of a king. We do indeed prostrate ourselves in awe before him, but that used to be done by the ancient Egyptians before the Pharaoh and by the Japanese before their Emperor” (164). He cannot help comparing the quiet church worship with the temple cult of the Hindus. He wonders if the English do go to their churches to see a divine Being and his everyday life. But then, neither is the temple cult a true form of Hinduism. According to Chaudhuri, ancient Hindus from western Asia borrowed these cults; it is not an innate part of their religious life. In spite of their adoption, these cults have retained their individuality, reflecting still the elements to which they once belonged. He puts forward a theory that if such is the case with the gods of West Asia and East Asia, then “why there could be no resemblance between our temple worship and Christian worship, for Christianity had fought and triumphed over those very cults” (164). He assumes the role of the Occidentalist, for a split second, subtly bringing to light, the notion of the European highbrows of the 19th century on Christian superiority. Inflexible by temperament, they were
conditioned by an ancestry of prejudice toward the East that dated from Herodotus and Aeschylus. Hinduism is more universal and welfare-oriented in its outlook, and the Hindu worshipper's pursuit of welfare in the world is not totally materialistic. The Christian way of collective worship is different from the Hindu concept of realized and unrealized righteousness or Hindu welfare universe. Collective worship seems to have been inspired by the movement of spirit leading away from material world. Moreover, Christian worship does not believe in "propitiation and coercion of the gods through offerings, sacrifices, and incantations..." (165). The Hindu form of worship has a lot of character, in it, coloured by a myriad moods- "from propitious silence and super magical tenseness to Dionysian frenzy" (165). And Chaudhuri comes to the conclusion that "religion and civilization were still interwoven with each other in England, as indeed in the West as a whole...It seemed to me that as soon as the life of the English people lost touch with religion it also passed beyond the pale civilization to the de-civilized state created for a very large number of the people of the West by industrialism and democracy" (166). Religion has totally different meaning in the West, because the people have never trodden the Pilgrims' Way, "They were falling from the civilized state for having acquired, not forbidden knowledge, but forbidden ignorance" (167). In England, religion also has a sociological basis to it. The English upper class is more religious than common-men. In India, it is the upper class, which boasts of their irreligiosity. They have lost their faith and are finding new avenues to renew it. They no longer feel the need for it, for they belong to the most prosperous section of Indian society.

The section bearing the heading 'State of the Nation' marks the end of Chaudhuri's journey. With politics, the traveller has come full circle. The picture
is complete. ‘A Constitutional Parliament’, the first chapter of part four, acquaints the reader with the traveller’s brief exposure to British politics. Chaudhuri wistfully states that the chasm between what he had read about England and what he sees and experiences is an enormous one. He is, in a way, surprised out of his wits by what he comes across. He finds the discoveries interesting, because first of all, as a reader, he had found the suggestions implicit and secondly he had not believed them. An admirer of the traditional aspects of English life and civilization, he nevertheless describes contemporary England with equal vivacity. But ‘Timeless England’ is omnipresent. He feels its powerful presence where ever he goes and its spirit in the air. He tries to correlate it with the present, so as to give it a more tangible form and to remove from it any fantastical impression that has been attached to it over the years. It is the concept of the Welfare State that characterizes present-day England. It builds a bridge between the old Anglo-Saxon England with the new, thus becoming an integral part of English culture. The idea of England is being reinforced with the merging of the ancient and the contemporary, painting a more solid picture of the erstwhile inscrutable and puzzling England. It is an inverted picture or idea or image of England, very similar to the idea of the East in the mind of the West. Now it is the East that is reviewing the West, through its long and torturous association as a colony, a victim, or a strange admirer for things ‘foreign’. In order to vindicate his point, Chaudhuri draws his readers’ attention to the political scenario, even though English political life has little of interest to offer him. A visit to the House of Commons is memorable. The chamber of the House of Commons reflects impeccable taste and a sense of propriety and “there was a good deal of very becoming architectural piety” (173). But it is the parliamentary proceedings that Chaudhuri finds a little apolitical, “I could not bring myself to believe that what I
was seeing and hearing was in any way connected with government or with the
cruel trade of politics, in which good-nature had no place” (173). He espies the
greatest statesman of all, Sir Winston Churchill, inconspicuously ensconced
between two colleagues. “He looked very much like his figure in a toby jug, but
was much more rosy, white-haired, and childlike than I could have imagined him
to be. It was surprising how successfully he had divested himself of all
atmosphere, of all suggestion of being not only a writer, historian and political
thinker, but also a statesman and war leader. He showed no signs of being weighed
down with anxiety for anything, the world or his country, war or peace. He had no
prophetic air, no eagle glances, no rebukes for anybody. He appeared like a
schoolboy in a class of schoolboys, not like a teacher among school children, as
our new statesmen in India always try to look. Winston Churchill the statesman
and Winston Churchill the House of Commons man seemed to be wholly different
persons. Even the parliamentary proceedings were very un-parliamentary. It
seemed more like “…the pulling of crackers by two friends than the sharp rapier
they were meant to resemble” (174). This is a traditional and venerable ritual.
According to British parliamentary tradition, debates, questions and answers
between the two opposing parties should go through correctly, with decorum and
in a certain devout manner. This is how the author interprets the parliamentary
proceedings, “It seemed that after establishing a constitutional monarchy the
English people had taken another great step in the evolution of their political
institutions by bringing into existence a purely constitutional form of
parliamentary government, in which the House of Commons also reigned but did
not govern, that business having passed to one of the parties chosen by the people
and entrusted with power for the time being” (174). He calls the English system of
governance, “plebiscitary oligarchy” (175). The parliament is definitely a vital part
of their constitutional machinery, because, though it cannot take over the administration, it plays a formal legitimate role. The life of the party in power depends on its ability to please the electorate.

In 'Farewell to Politics', Nirad Chaudhuri says that the English lack political ambition and the zest to do great deeds in the political arena- "The only people who seem capable of working themselves up to a state of excitement over politics are the politicians themselves, whose personal and party interests are involved" (177). That is the impression he gets while in England. Chaudhuri believes that political interest, power and passion make themselves visible in a "highly wrought-up psychological state" (177). The election debates are devoid of animation and the election campaigns lack the paraphernalia that so characterizes Indian elections- "Even when there is no subjection to foreign rule, the impact of live politics is felt as the current is felt in a river. English politics gave me the feeling that I was watching a swimming pool" (177). Small wonder then that he finds the election proceedings domesticated and civilized. English elections are bereft of factional rivalry, shooting and gassing, which keep the spirit of politics alive. This lethargic attitude to politics, Chaudhuri explains as "a very tame affair" (178). He shows an astute perception of the political mind-set of the English. Their view of the Indian struggle for independence is non-partisan, "...the attainment of independence, which the English people describe as their gift to us, and which we look upon as our victory over them..." (178). A cursory glance at the language will make clear the idea of England from an orientalist's view. The Zeitgeist has changed. It is no more the suave Occident that exudes power and charm over its poorer cousins, it is the orient that has thwarted the labyrinthine idea and image of it projected by the West. The reason for this political
complacency is “... because they have solved all their political problems or got rid of them, and so there is nothing left for them to do. At home they have ended social and economic injustice, so far as this can be removed at all in human society, and thus deprived their politics of its most powerful motive force. They have also eliminated all competition for political power by distributing it among all, and making it diffuse to the point of ineffectiveness” (178-179). Contrary to this lethargic attitude to politics, is the Empire’s outlook to colonialism- “...in spite of having created the greatest empire that history has seen, the English people never had any real understanding of empires” (179). It is extremely contradictory and does not portray the English as a superior colonial power at all. The English, as it were, through their political indolence, have undermined their own supremacy. In this chapter, Chaudhuri identifies the different facets of politics, idealistic and practical. The British system leans more towards practical politics. ‘Farewell to Politics’ discusses in an understated way the insular bearing of the English people. In fact this constitutes one of their greatest strengths. The duality of the colonial mind is built upon the edifice of insularity. Nirad Chaudhuri finds politics tiring and a cog in the process of achieving worldwide peace. “For instance, there is nothing from which the English people shrink with greater horror than the mere idea of war, yet they are having to spend more money on armaments than at any other time in their long and warlike history. They denounce the H-bomb every day and still cannot refrain from making it. They are determined not to go war, and yet they allow a foreign nation to have military bases on their own soil. All this is done in the name of practical politics” (182). The English people’s attitude towards politics reflects the contradictoriness of the colonial frame of mind. Though peaceful, they take great pains to keep themselves prepared for military inevitability i.e. war. The jets flying over Oxford and Cambridge spring a
surprise on Nirad Chaudhuri, “To hear that sound in the eternal silence of those infinite spaces, and in a country which on the ground has absorbed a good deal of that stillness, was terrifying. I cannot tell how much I disliked the immense American airfield, which I saw when going from Cambridge to Ely. From the tower of the cathedral I saw the winding Ouse below, and the trails of the jets above. All this is bringing a not-very-ennobling misfortune into the lives of the English.” (182). They can certainly do very well without politics. It is quite an ambiguous idea of England that Chaudhuri throws light upon.

Juxtaposed against dying politics is the glaring reality of the Welfare State. It is a reality that not only pleases Chaudhuri, but genuinely surprises him too. Even though deception and lies lie at the heart of politics, the active application of the concept of Welfare State, adds a modicum of uprightness to it. And this is what Chaudhuri discusses in chapter three, ‘The Welfare State- Fact or Hoax?’ What is a Welfare State? “…a government which is trying to promote the welfare of the people and making contributions to it; secondly, a general state of welfare of the people, which may or may not be due to the government and its agencies…” (183-184). This is how Chaudhuri explains the term. He comes across both the kinds during his stay in England. The actuality of government and public bodies conjointly contributing to the welfare of the people produces a strange sensation in Chaudhuri. The Welfare State is not mere political propaganda and “…the main reason for the sensation of strangeness I had was that I was used to the old personal method of dealing with all the problems of living, including funerals” (184). And he substantiates his point by putting forth the following statement, “When a man is used to seeing these problems solved only by the individual’s own efforts or not at all, he is bound to be struck by the unnaturalness of finding them
taken out of his hands, if not wholly, at least partially. Yet this unnatural state of affairs exists in England” (184). And the existence of the National Health Service, makes Welfare State a reality for Chaudhuri, because good health is the index of a prospering nation. More than semi-starvation, it is falling ill that makes it such a harrowing experience for Indians. Good treatment is expensive and free treatment is not only casual and unsympathetic but humiliating, too. This picture is true of almost all hospitals in India. Nirad Chaudhuri cites as an example the experience of a friend of his in England while on his way to the U.S. “He went to a hospital for a check, and it was discovered that he had a touch of tuberculosis. So he was kept and treated in a hospital for some months, to the incredulous relief of his family and himself. In India tuberculosis is either a catastrophe for the family or slow death for the patient. But so short are the memories of men that the people of England have learnt to complain bitterly if they have to spend even five pounds on treatment” (184). The second factor that lends credibility to Welfare State is what Chaudhuri calls “building effort” (185). It is something to be seen to be believed. No scheme remains at the level of pen and paper. It is put into direct implementation. He talks about the dreaded ‘English slums’, which at one point of time stood for the condition of the working classes in England and which Chaudhuri thought would cure him of his “…chronic Anglomania” (185). The so-called slums do not agree with his notion of those found in Delhi and Calcutta—“On the contrary, the new blocks of flats for working men had the appearance of the blocks of luxury flats in New Delhi, in those parts of this upstart city which since Independence we have got into the habit of calling ‘prestige areas’ because foreigners, diplomats, and people of similar status live there. Even in those parts of the East End of London where the old working men’s dwellings had survived…. In Bethnal Green, I saw prams at the doors, and curtains in the windows, which
instead of suggesting slums suggested to me the quarters of high civil servants of
the Government of India" (185). Chaudhuri is bedazzled by the material growth
and prosperity of the people in a Welfare State. There is hardly any distinction
between natives and foreigners in a Welfare State; unlike India, where the
disparity between the middle classes and the well-to-do is one big gap. As Nirad
Chaudhuri puts it, "The two stand at wholly different levels of material culture..."
(187). It is strange, when one comes across an England that treats people of
different ethnicity equally, all because of a socially viable institution called the
Welfare State. It is like a compromising strategy to give England a more
cosmopolitan look, thereby facilitating an understated distinction between England
and India, between the rich occident and the poor orient. The Welfare State is in
fact everything "not-India", "Even in the big cities, for every two persons in clean
and adequate clothing there are eight in an assortment of shabby, dirty,
insufficient, and tattered clothes...After that the most painful impression is created
by the presence of diseased, underfed and deformed persons everywhere. Again,
almost every day in the buses I have to sit by the side of people suffering from all
kinds of illness, including tuberculosis and chickenpox...Even when there is no
disease the impression is one of lifelessness" (187). Nirad Chaudhuri paints a very
sordid picture of his home country, with a very sunny, flourishing, picturesque and
healthy England as its background. The absence of all the squalour and filth of
human misery in England makes Nirad Chaudhuri a firm believer in the
advantages of the Welfare State. To round off his argument he gives the example
of the condition of children in England. It is a joy to see English children in their
happy, healthy and rosy state. Even the occasional bare-foot children that he
comes across do not pain him, rather the sight conveys an impression of smiling
good health. Sadly, the Welfare State has made the exodus of people from the
third world not only a necessity but also a grim reality—"While highbrow Indians affect to believe that the English people are finished, humble and common folk all over the sub-continent are coming more and more to believe that they will no longer remain poor if only they can make their way to England" (188). There lies the very quintessence of Diaspora dilemma- the dream to make it to the fabled land of plenty and the pangs of nostalgia for the warmth of the hearth left thousands of miles behind – “Another day, after my return as I was going to New Delhi in a bus, a Sikh in very ordinary dress came and sat by me. He asked the conductor for some direction, and got no reply. Then he turned to me and said, ‘See how they treat a countryman if he does not look rich. I have lived for years in London, and I have never seen anything like this. He explained that he had a business in East End. Then we began to discuss living expenses in England as compared with those in India. I observed that rents were very high. The Sikh at once replied, ‘Why should you go on paying rent? It is so easy to buy a house there. I have bought one for five thousand pounds. I paid a part of the price down, and then had the balance spread over years’ ”. (188-189).

“If I had not been to England I should have continued in a wholly wrong view of the English social and economic revolution of our times” (190). Once again the dichotomy between the imagined England and the real England becomes all the more pronounced. This is because, “It has been represented to the outside world...in a very partisan light, as the achievement of the Labour Party. We in India with our bias in favour of Labour have given it as the victory of the good Englishmen led by Attlee over the wicked ones led by Churchill” (190). In the chapter titled ‘The Most Glorious Revolution’ Nirad Chaudhuri expresses the view that the English Welfare State is a product of class conflict, and that it has shaped
itself into a national revolution and not a mere class revolution. This is the foundation on which the edifice of the ‘idea of England’ rests. The Welfare State in turn produces strife between the old colonial England and the new egalitarian England, very similar to the images and ideas of the England in the expatriate’s mind. “I found no trace of resentment against it, I mean real anger as distinct from the grumbling in all circumstances which is normal in Englishmen. There was resignation even to heavy taxation. It was a case either of demoralization of the once-privileged classes or of co-operation on their part even at their own expense. I would not say that the English upper classes are absolutely free from the feeling that they are being hit hard and even treated unjustly, but it is equally certain that as a whole they would not like to see undone anything that has been brought about by way of equalization of incomes and national welfare” (190). Nirad Chaudhuri opines that the Welfare State concept is an outcome of the English conscience, and not an economic development. The English upper class has a very active social conscience. This revolution was not a proletariat one, though it did lead to the formation of a class-less or one-class society. But it can’t be labelled as Communistic or Socialistic. It is a bourgeois revolution, a contradiction in terms. The term contradiction is used in the sense that though class conscious, the English welcomed the concept of social equality with an open mind. The idea of levelling the society created a new free society in England, where people could proudly boast of their status. Industrialization was another offshoot of this revolution. Besides transforming economic life and organization, it also influenced human personality and character. Nirad Chaudhuri presents this change in a succinct manner- “But I failed to meet Farmer Oak in Wessex” (192). In India the townsman and the peasant have a markedly individual appearance. Once again there is a clash between an idealized world and the actual world. The romantic
conception of an ideal farmer eludes him in the mechanized world of agriculture. Though he visits many English villages, Chaudhuri does not find a villager in the true sense of the term—"The village had survived architecturally, but not, so far as I could judge, socially" (192). It is the case with agriculture and animal husbandry, too. Though India is predominantly an agricultural country, the high standard of farming and cattle astonishes Chaudhuri. In comparison, Indian agriculture cuts a sorry picture by being primitive and poor. What concerns Chaudhuri is the absence of the notion of agriculture and farming as pastoral, idealistic and warm—"...the peasant, the shepherd and the herdsmen were absent" (193). Technological progress does not interest him. He harps on the impersonal and detached activity that is now synonymous with farming and cattle rearing. What aggrieves him is the indifference towards the industrialization of human persona. He sees the English revolution making inroads into life and living. It does not result in a clash, but raises the question of the existence of the village with its cathedral, the pastoral beauty, and the farmer. It is the tussle between industrializing of landscape and industrializing of humanity. So, it is not a revolutionary mission, in fact, it is anti-revolutionary. It is an inconsistent revolution. According to Chaudhuri, the English are lamenting the industrialization of landscape, while working towards the industrialization of human personality. So the most glorious revolution is no revolution in the correct sense of the term and that "...is the climax of their history" (194).

Chaudhuri now proceeds to discusses the idea of England/ West’s superior virtues- technology, organization and cleanliness; virtues of the West that every expatriate longs for in his homeland. The concept of Lubberland, Chaudhuri borrows from a 17th century ballad. Lubberland is the symbol of bounty-land,
where everything is available aplenty, and where no one is poor. England seems to be the proverbial land of abundance, which people dream of visiting; this is the land of every child’s dream, whose ancestors have smarted under colonial rule.

“The material well-being of the people of England put me in a very happy frame of mind, and made me take a roseate view of their contemporary existence and future” (195). England for Chaudhuri and a host of other expatriates has always been the land where poverty in the Indian sense of the term does not exist. A friend of the writer almost confirms this theory—“...if a man was not very careless or lazy there was no reason for anyone in England to be half-fed or half-clad” (195). Once again there is a clash of impressions—between the bookish England and the real one. “All that I had read about the economic troubles of the English people became for the time being wholly unreal to me” (195). Strangely, Nirad Chaudhuri always finds the actual England unreal. The England existing in the books seems more tangible. He feels that this prosperity is due to the Welfare State. It has a few disadvantages, the one being that England will never have personalities like Elizabeth Fry, Wilberforce or Shaftesbury, Dickens, Carlyle and situations like Chartism, Suffragette agitation and so on. Chaudhuri finds this picture of prosperous England rather boring. What had once been a source of excitement is now mundane and dull for him. He believes that such a state of affairs will not corrupt, rather it will lead to a state where people will happily lead a life they have wanted to. In a Welfare State happiness can be ensured if the flow of creativity continues. Stagnation is not conducive to a happy frame of mind. Since the Welfare State is a mass-culture, this happy creative flow should then become the responsibility and prerogative of men of exception, “For individuals, is for nations, doing well in life and doing something in life are contradictory aims. The real test for the Welfare State will be whether it has been able to merge

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the two ends…” (196). But in the writer’s view, achieving this state is a challenge in contemporary England because, “... difficulty is not due to the absence of men with a will to do something. The real trouble is that there is very little to do, and it is hard to arrive at a clear perception of what to do” (197). Even the second condition of achieving happiness seems an equally impossible proposition—“...once the great majority of men in a particular society have had enough to eat they should do nothing, and only sit down and doze like cattle and sheep on their pastures” (198). Such a circumstance will create many adversities in Chaudhuri’s view—“Once he is relieved of anxiety in regard to survival the democratic common man will make mischief in small magnitudes but on so universal a scale that he will become more dangerous than a Chenghiz Khan or a Hitler” (198). Chaudhuri assumes the role of an Occidentalist at this juncture. He offers the view that occidentalists have espoused for many years— the immorality of the opulent West rendered prosperous on account of industrialization, capitalism and economic liberalism. In Occidentalism, Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit contend that Orientalist prejudices, resulted in the viewing of Oriental natives or non-West people as ‘lesser breeds’. Similarly, Occidentalist prejudices encourage people of the orient to see westerners as reduced beings. Thus the Welfare State becomes a force that accelerates the process of secular Occidentalism. It can neither be put to use as a means to an end nor can it be enjoyed as end in itself. It achieves neither political nor social democracy. It does not supplement political and economic equality with the equality of the mind. A Passage to England, which was a simple and colourful “window to Europe”, ends up providing a critique of the mind of the West. It successfully cracks its superiority myth, by showing it as defective and decadent—“...it is a good thing to do away with the caste system by birth, also by wealth, but a deadly mistake to tamper with the natural caste system of the mind.
There is nothing men resent more than to be raised above themselves against their will, which means the same thing as beyond their capacity” (198-199). So the Welfare State is not as democratic as it was supposed to be. In certain ways, it has proved to be a failure.

Chaudhuri goes on to observe that “…the English people have to look for something on which they can fall back from their present condition: something solid and inexhaustible as a source of happiness, and proof against decay and corruption; something about which they can say that nobody is going to take it away from them” (200). This source has remained perpetual for centuries and, the hindrances, though threatening, have proved transitory. That is the reason why he mentions Saint George, the patron saint of England. Saint George was persecuted because of his protest against the mindless massacre of Christians. He came to be venerated throughout Christendom as an example of bravery in defence of the poor, the defenceless and of the Christian faith. St. George epitomizes the values of the old world. Since then, the English have strived hard to maintain this uninterrupted flow of happiness, coming out victorious even in adverse circumstances. The Germans, says Chaudhuri, found solace in scholarship and philosophy. And after the turbulent Second World War, they took refuge in the moneymaking business, individually as well as nationally. This is how they drowned the pangs of defeat and partition. As for the English, both these ways are closed for them, because “Their Government will not allow them to forget the worries of their public existence in private prosperity” (201). Nor do the creations of contemporary culture provide any relief to the English for they have become the ‘most discontented, peevish, and dispirited” (201). The English show no great enthusiasm in matters of science and technology, rather they are more dependent
on their historic civilization. "As soon as I came to this point in my thinking I also understood the real meaning of all that I had seen in England and France - the crowds at the classical plays, concerts, picture galleries, and exhibitions; the interest in architecture, gardens, and landscape; loyalty to religion and preservation of the national heritage; the love and piety inspired by all the aspects of the historic civilization, including even its politics" (202-203). An indispensable part of English sensibility, it was projected consciously as the Greeks had, once upon a time, "Paideia is a haven for all mankind" (203). This is the eternal source of joy for the Englishmen. "It is entering actively into their daily life to keep them steady and cheerful in situations which are full of disappointments and anxieties. Perhaps the power of the historic civilization is best seen in the effect it produces on the creators and preachers of contemporary culture. As soon as they turn their face from the present to the past they are restored to sanity, good sense, and sincerity. They recover humility and love. None of them dream of repeating in regard to Shakespeare or Michelangelo what they say about their own products. The attitudinizers become lovable personalities again" (203). In England, civilization is almost synonymous with "the art of living - literature, painting, architecture..." (203). But preservation of this life needs a change or re-orientation of attitude. Because, as Chaudhuri astutely observes, the art of living in the old manner is no longer possible. So the English have to "fix their love on the permanent things, and put less trust in the evanescent style of living" (203). And this dependence on civilization is not an escape or "retirement into the ivory tower" (203). It is that element, which provides fighting spirit and strength, and without it man is a weak creature. Here Chaudhuri seeks to put forward his views regarding the tussle between civilization and new democratic culture. The elegance of life can be achieved by enjoying other means of gratification like good
music, literature, painting, architecture and sculpture. The credit for this goes to men of faith, courage and energy, who are interpreting and popularizing historic civilization for lay people. There is danger to old folk culture due to the onslaught of new democratic culture. Chaudhuri’s search for the ideal world in English civilization leads him to the English people’s search for utopia, i.e. idealism in St. George’s world. St. George is civilization and the present stem out of it. The new democracy is antithetical, to its predecessor as it presents a threat to it. But the sense of defeatism is nowhere visible. The English, at least for the time being, seem to be savouring with zest and vigour the beauty of civilization.

As he approaches the end of the journey, Chaudhuri speaks of England’s destiny as a nation. The oscillation between ideas is all the more evident here. A few chapters ago, one saw a frantic and agitated Chaudhuri describing the British Welfare State as defective. His stance has undergone a change and he speaks of it complacent manner. He conjures up, as it were, the imagined England of his adolescence. “I was seeing a people who were going about their business with energy and confidence, who looked strong and healthy, had plenty of food and the other necessities of life, were enjoying luxuries of which, living in India, I could form no idea, and altogether showed no signs of being tired or discouraged” (205). He goes on to meditate on England’s future: “To what was all this leading them as a nation? They had lost their Empire, the greater part of their wealth, also their position as the first World Power. Were they going to recover their old position, or create a new position of which they could be as proud, or were they, in spite of all their apparent recovery and prosperity, going down the path of inevitable decline?” (205). When he puts the same question to a friend, he receives the following answer: the English as a race “are wholly absorbed in the present”
But his question remains unanswered. He poses it to another friend while in Rome, who said, “‘You see, Mr. Chaudhuri, we have had very bad times and we have come through, though we hardly knew how to. We have also recovered more rapidly than we could have believed to be possible. I think that is why we are enjoying the present for a little while. I am sure we are not really thoughtless about the future’” (206). The question is answered and he is reassured. He accepts the English people’s happy optimism. “I now think that they are wholly right in going about as they are doing; making the best of their imperishable resources of happiness and showing a brave thoughtlessness as regards their troubles” (206). But the vacillation remains, because no sooner does he make this statement, Chaudhuri immediately refutes it by saying that beneath this happy-go-lucky façade lies the inherent moodiness and irritation, which is as serious as the national habit of grumbling. But at the same time he finds this happy, careless and gay mood of the English delightful and surprising. “But when in England I had no perception of all this or of the relationship between their contemporary situation and their historic civilization. I could only see the richness of their ultimate resources, and how accessible these were. This by itself was a great joy to me…” (206-207). Apart from England, he finds his sojourn of the European subcontinent equally satisfying and fascinating. He calls Paris *mere des arts, de armes, et des lois* i.e. mother of arts, of arms and of law. Finally, the tours fuse to form one happy, serene picture. While in Rome, it is the great architectural wonders that capture Chaudhuri’s artistic sensibility. He wanders around Michelangelo’s Campidoglio. He sits at the foot of the statue of Marcus Aurelius and visits the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. The ambience transports him to the time when Gibbon had sat at the very place and conceived of his great historical masterpiece. The ruins in and around the Capitol enrapture Chaudhuri.
As the sun goes down, he perceives the ruins in a new light—“Suddenly, unseen floodlights were switched on, and the buildings began to gleam like figures of cameos against their background. As it grew darker and darker, they became brighter and brighter, until the Arches of Severus and Titus, the columns of the Temples of Vespasian and Saturn, the three shafts of the Temple of Castor and Pollux with their entablature, even the little Temple of Vesta which had been recently restored, shone like fragments of architecture quarried out of the full moon. The Colosseum, which appears so menacely solid and somber in daytime, seemed to have lost all its weight and become aerial” (208). He contrasts it with the sights seen in London and Paris, “In London I had already seen the façade of Somerset House and the dome of St. Paul’s illuminated at night. In Paris the floodlit dome of the Invalides was a lovely vision which I saw every evening through my hotel window. But I had never come across anything more beautiful and moving than the phosphorescent ruins of the Roman Forum” (208). The excitement of these experiences puts him in a state of ecstasy. His happiness is as transparent as it is bubbling, “...I told everybody that never before, except in the intimacy of my family life, had I been so happy as I was during my short stay in England. It was the literal truth, and the happiness has lasted” (207). He neither pretends nor conceals it. The journey has come full circle and the traveller has finally ‘arrived’ without having experienced the pangs of ‘a middle passage’. The traveller in Chaudhuri made it into the land of his boyish dreams and escapades. After all, it was a holiday well spent at the expense of the English and the French—“My happiness was flowing out of my very much deeper springs” (208).
As one goes through the travelogue, one is reminded of the West Indian writer C.L.R. James. As autobiographers and as individuals the two resemble each other in many significant ways. Both Chaudhuri and James hailed from middle-class families with an obvious fascination for England. Both were autodidacts. A curiosity for all things ranging from mankind to books and history defined their character. Ramchandra Guha in his article in The Hindu entitled ‘Two Brown Sahibs’ says

“Both James and Chaudhuri had a lifelong fascination for European, especially British, civilisation. This made them unpopular with their compatriots, whose hatred of British colonialism had blinded them to the glorious creativity of the British people. But the courage of James and Chaudhuri was such that they were willing to risk personal popularity in favour of intellectual honesty. Both studied European civilisation closely, and took from it what they required. Both chose to spend their last years in England, though it is not without significance that while Chaudhuri settled in the prosperous town of Oxford, James settled in the poor London locality of Brixton”. James’s Letters from London and Chaudhuri’s A Passage to England, shows the travellers at ease with British culture and society. Chaudhuri and James display an intellectual superiority and an open-minded curiosity about a new world. Both are equally awed at works of art that line every street, nook and corner of England, and at the achievements of the English civilization. Guha goes on: “There are awed descriptions of a Rodin statue and of a 14th Century clock whose maker was unknown, but which would still "probably be there in a thousand years, tick-ticking away". But — and here too he is not unlike Chaudhuri — there is also a proper contempt for the degraded contemporary products of this civilisation. Particularly noteworthy are James’s
comments on the vulgarity of the popular British newspapers, whose technological sophistication did not preclude as aesthetic vulgarity. Commenting on their obsession with crime and sex, James asks: "What in the name of heaven is the use of a newspaper press being able to turn out 1,68,000 copies an hour if it is only printing the rubbish that it does?"

_A Passage to England_ is a critique of things typically English. It is a traveller's account of the English way of life and living and what it means to be characteristically English. England for Chaudhuri is more than just another occidental country. It is not the megalomaniac, sinful city of Man. It is not a cultural wasteland either. Rather, it is a bustling city full life and energy, materially, aesthetically and spiritually prolific. It is not frozen by philosophy as some critics argue. Nor is there "spiritual pollution" as Deng Xiaoping once said. It does not, at any point, reflect V.S.Naipaul's attitude "Writing as a dispossessed person, one who has been culturally uprooted and forced to create his own world, Naipaul presents not objective reality but subjective perceptions. He finds personal resonance with the world-views of the dispossessed, the former colonial subjects now cast on their own resources and in search of distinctive identity" (William L. Sachs, _V. S. Naipaul and the Plight of the Dispossessed_). _A Passage to England_ is an apt example of what is currently termed as 'intercultural competence'. Because Nirad Chaudhuri tries to strike a balance between knowledge about other cultures, people, nation and the understanding of self and others and self-confidence. Many critics find it hard to digest the fact of the glorification of a country that ruled India through sheer craftiness and brutal force by a colonized subject. His masterpiece, _The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian_ which was
published in 1951, courted controversy in the newly independent India because of
the dedication of the book:

"To the memory of the British Empire in India.

Which conferred subjecthood upon us,
But withheld citizenship.
To which yet everyone of us threw out the challenge:
"Civis Britannicus sum"
Because all that was good and living within us
Was made, shaped and quickened
By the same British rule."

Chaudhuri's friend, the editor, historian and novelist Khushwant Singh commented
that “The wogs took the bait and having read only the dedication sent up howls of
protest”. Chaudhuri was misunderstood by many an Indian. Later, he explained his
dedication in the Granta article “The dedication was really a condemnation of the
British rulers for not treating us as equals”. In his typical style Nirad Chaudhuri to
vindicate his statement he drew on a parallel with ancient Rome. The book's
dedication, he said “was 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”. It can be said
that Nirad Chaudhuri like his predecessor Nehru vacillates between the twin ideas
of ‘Cultural Imperialism’ and ‘Cultural Appropriation’. Because Nehru and Nirad
Chaudhuri as well as Prafulla Mohanti had acquired a taste for England since their
infant days. But it translated differently for each one. The ambition of the Bengal
Renaissance was to create a synthesis of East and West. Unlike An Autobiography
of an Unknown Indian, A Passage to England tries to at least, if not eliminate the
gap, bridge it to some extent. The book is no dialectical discourse on diaspora dilemmas. It is a favourable idea of England that many of us are familiar with. The traveller to England is neither Kipling’s ‘baboo’, nor Rushdie’s ‘peripheral man’ for that matter nor Bharati Mukherji’s ‘invisible minority’. Swapan Dasgupta in his article on Chaudhuri in *India Today* called him a “Gadfly”. Chaudhuri who was often reviled as “an insufferable man, conceited and silly” loved to occasionally bolster his sense of dignity by denigrating his country and his countrymen. Dasgupta draws a very accurate picture of Chaudhuri as the “world’s last Englishman”. Like a gadfly he upset the social and political status quo by putting forth his pro-English views and irritating many a patriot. England held a strange fascination for him. He was quite a paradox himself-- indeed a man much ahead of his time-- moving effortlessly back and forth between bowler hat and dhoti. His sartorial sense is reflected in his writings. He oscillates between India and London, between Kishoreganj and Oxford. *A Passage to England* supplements a travelogue in a variety of ways. It is a charming and refined expression of insights into the English way of life. It is as if the author is singing a panegyric on England. But the author’s Anglophilia often led him to gloss over the faults of the English. His views regarding the British are tempered with consideration and sympathy. But his erudite style, his ability to straddle the two diverse worlds of West and East with ease, his love for Western music, art and literature, as well as his deep understanding of Indian history and the Bengali middle class in particular, place him in an enviable position as an interpreter of modern India to the English-speaking audience.

A comparison between Nirad Chaudhuri and V.S. Naipaul will be in order here. Both Nirad Chaudhuri and V.S. Naipaul share a love-hate relationship with India.
Their preoccupation with things essentially English throws a veil over the fact that both of them wanted India to become England. Nirad Chaudhuri was always haunted by a thought that England possessed a civilization superior to that of his own. Naipaul too was obsessed with India even after being three generations removed, because he was never able to disown his Indian identity altogether. The simple fact that both writers were denied the respect and recognition in their own country makes them turn to another country. Both of them gloss over England because as Naipaul said in an interview to Farrukh Dhondy,

“A very simple thing. Shall we say for my father it means - heaven knows where the spark came from, in that plantation colony of Trinidad - getting the wish to be a writer and not having anyone interested. To this day they're not interested. I would say that my father's grandchildren are not interested in his work. It's bitter, isn't it?”

In many ways both Nirad Chaudhuri and Naipaul anticipate each other. Naipaul in his books *India: A Wounded Civilization, An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, talks about questions that arise in the form of complex thought processes when one mentions ‘India’. Naipaul seems to have not come into terms with a country that is three generations removed from him. In *Half a Life* Naipaul talks about the preoccupation with one’s ancestral land and how it remains deeply embedded in one’s subconscious even after being physically and geographically distanced from it. It is little wonder that all the time he talks about a passage that is totally different from what Nirad Chaudhuri discusses in his travelogue. Naipaul in *India: A Million Mutinies* writes

“In Trinidad, in the late ‘30s and early ‘40s, I used to see poor Indian people sleeping in the squares of Port of Spain. These people were peasant emigrants from India; they had served out their indentures 20 years or so before, but had not been given their passages back to India, and had then
become destitute, abandoned by everybody. In the colonial city they were further isolated by their language; and they were to live on the streets until they died out. The idea came to me, when I was quite young, seeing those destitutes, that we were people with no one to appeal to. We had been transported out of the abjectness of India, and were without representation. The idea of the external enemy wasn't enough to explain what had happened to us. I found myself at an early age looking inwards, and wondering whether the culture, the difficult but personal religion, the taboos, the social ideas, which in one way supported and enriched some of us, and gave us solidity, wasn't perhaps the very thing that had exposed us to defeat.

Thus his book The Middle Passage: A Caribbean Journey talks at length about how the Caribbean islands like Trinidad, Jamaica, Surinam, Martinique and British Guiana are nothing but wasted remnants of a glorious civilization called England

"Though we knew that something was wrong with our society, we made no attempt to assess it. Trinidad was too unimportant and we could never be convinced of the value of reading the history of a place which was as everyone said, only a dot on the map of the world. Our interest was all in the world outside, the remoter the better; Australia was more important than Venezuela which we could see on a clear day. Our own past was buried and no one cared to dig it up. This gave us a strange time-sense. The England of 1914 was the England of yesterday; the Trinidad of 1914 belonged to the dark ages" (36).

*India Through V.S. Naipaul's Eyes (Radio National-The Spirit of Things with Rachael Kohn on Sunday 9/09/01) http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/spirit/stories/s361036.htm*
The places stifle him and he keeps searching for an English connection here and there,

"But it is to be remarked all through the island that the people are fond of English dishes, and that they despise, or affect to despise, their own productions. They will give you ox-tail soup when turtle would be much cheaper. Roast beef and beefsteaks are found at almost every meal. An immense deal of beer is consumed. When yams, avocado pears, the mountain cabbage, plantains, and twenty other delicious vegetables may be had for the gathering, people will insist on eating bad English potatoes; and the desire for English pickles is quite a passion" (41).

The paragraph not only brings out the passion for things English but it also brings out the ambivalence that besets every colonized mind or as Naipaul calls them "the English-minded Trinidad elite". It is little surprise that India for such a person is nothing but a hodge-podge of taboos, rituals, rules. All the time he is afraid of an India that is in his own words,

"I think we all knew that we had come from a very poor country and that we had migrated there, because of the wretchedness of conditions in India in the 1880s when there were famines. I don't know why there should have been famines in India in the 1880s, or why it was so specially wretched, but one relation of mine went back to India to visit my mother's family's ancestral village. When this person came back, he said, 'If my grandfather or my father had to indenture himself 20 times to get away from that, it would have been well worth doing', such was the shock he felt on seeing what he
did see. And these were my nerves on going to India, it was a land of an extraordinary wretchedness from which we had fled. We were not middle-class people going to university in England and as it were lying about ourselves, talking about our social standing, we were peasantry and we knew that it had been awful, and that was the India that I was very nervous of finding, and it was the India I'm afraid I horribly found".5

He criticizes Gandhi for not being able to understand the Englishness of England during his visit, "It's a very simple internal experience. He will say, and I think this actually records his words, 'We got to Southampton as a remember, on a Saturday.' There is no picture of Southampton, and the Saturday is important, because he couldn't get at his clothes for landing". Moreover, according to Naipaul Gandhi is unable to experience the world of the Englishmen, "there is not a whisper in his account of England, of any of the plays that were there, any of the writing that was there, there's only an account of a meeting with Cardinal Manning, who had just dealt with the dock strike. It was not a way of seeing the world at all". He calls India a wounded civilization and argues that it would have been completely destroyed but for the benign presence and contribution of the English colonizers. Both Nirad Chaudhuri and V.S.Naipaul expressed similar views regarding India and England. Chaudhuri, like Naipaul could never come to terms with life in Kishoreganj, his native place. For him England was emotionally a much closer place and Kishoreganj a remote world. Unlike others who were brought up in an environment that fostered an Anglophobe approach, Nirad Chaudhuri and his siblings were taught to respect and adapt the good qualities of

5India Through V.S.Naipaul’s Eyes (Radio National-The Spirit of Things with Rachael Kohn on Sunday 9/09/01) http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/spirit/stories/s361036.htm

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the white rulers. As to the English background, the author says that their “scrappy and simple” (An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, p.129) ideas were formed through visual and verbal descriptions. Together, they conjured a very picturesque vision of England. It became a country that possessed not only beautiful spots, but also places with equally beautiful names: “Isle of Wight, Osborne House, Windsor, Grasmere, Balmoral, Holyrood Palace, Arthur’s Seat, Firth of Forth, Belfast, were some of the names that attracted us” (129). So deep was the fixation with England that even such trifles as steel trunks, with the ‘Made in England’ tag was more attractive in comparison to the richly ornamented antique wooden almirahs. All his life Nirad Chaudhuri strove to escape from the ‘Bengali Bhadralok’ tag and so fled to England in 1970 to reside there permanently. His first act of distancing himself from the ‘Bengaliness’ was to write his autobiography in the English language and his second act of estrangement from his intellectual milieu in the Bengal Renaissance took the shape of the highly refined and highly ornamental dedication (placed at the beginning of the book). This made him infamous in his home country. We find a similar trend in Naipaul’s books too, especially in The Middle Passage. Every chapter begins with a meaningful quote from a European writer or a Greek philosopher. In the second chapter of The Middle Passage, entitled Trinidad, the chapter begins with two interesting quotes from Thomas Mann and Tacitus. Both serve as beacons to highlight the predicament of leading a diasporic existence;

“Because several of their generations had lived in a transitional land, pitching their tents between the houses of their fathers and the real Egypt, they were now unanchored souls, wavering in spirit and without a secure doctrine. They had forgotten much; they had half assimilated some new thoughts; and because they lacked real orientation, they did not trust their own feelings. They did not trust
even the bitterness that they felt towards their bondage" (Thomas Mann: *The Tables of Law; The Middle Passage*, p.33) and also refers explicitly to the powerful pull the West, “In place of distaste for the Latin language came a passion to command it. In the same way, our national dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen. And so the Britons were gradually led on to amenities that make vice agreeable- arcades, baths and sumptuous banquets. They spoke of such novelties as ‘civilization’, when really they were only a feature of enslavement” (Tacitus: *Agricola; The Middle Passage*, p.33). An interesting feature that one sees in Naipaul is the tendency to link the contemporary world and its writing with those of the Graeco-Roman times. Correspondingly, in his partiality for the English, Chaudhuri like Naipaul offers himself to a worldwide audience, if by “world” we mean the Anglophone West. Amit Chaudhuri elucidates that the “unknown” in the title *An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, is partly ironic- a slap in the face of a society he felt had largely ignored him.
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