PREFACE
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English language has become a vehicle of creative exploration and expression of Indians. A large number of educated Indians have flown into the new horizons of knowledge and wisdom having English as a medium of creative expression.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Michael Madhusudhan Dutt, K.M.Munshi, Mahatma Gandhi, S.Radhakrishnan, Rajaji, Nehru, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and a host of other writers have done much of their creative work in Indo-Anglian literature. Among all, Chaudhuri occupies a distinct place. He stands as a towering literary personality in non-fictional English prose.

Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri is a voracious reader and a prolific writer who has devoted his whole life to the pursuit of knowledge. His knowledge is encyclopaedic. Like Bacon he has taken up knowledge as his province. His main interests and areas of study are history, literature, philosophy, religion, ethics, sociology, culture, military studies and warfare.

Chaudhuri is one of the finest flowers that bloomed to the fullest extent imbibing the true spirit of the Indian Renaissance in the early years of the twentieth century. He was lulled and thrilled in the pleasant breeze of literary fragrance which intoxicated many men of his times. He has an inexhaustible thirst to acquire immeasurable ocean of
knowledge and has been successful in his intellectual endeavour. He is a man who has achieved eminence through brilliance, an illustrious individual who has obtained intellect through industry.

The first striking quality that fascinates in Chaudhuri is that he is a man of keen perception with an exquisite insight into men and matters. With his extraordinary erudition, he drives and commands the words with great dexterity. The present dissertation, 'A STUDY OF NIRAD CHANDRA CHAUDHURI'S NON - FICTION', is on the three books – A PASSAGE TO ENGLAND, THE CONTINENT OF CIRCE and SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINARY. Though the three books belong to non-fictional prose of the same author they are considerably different from one another as A PASSAGE TO ENGLAND is a travelogue; THE CONTINENT OF CIRCE is a critique of the Indian society and SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINARY is a biography of Max Muller, a German Scholar.

The introductory chapter deals with the writer's autobiography – birth and parentage, boyhood days in Kishoreganj, graduate life in Calcutta, his scholarly pursuits, his job in AIR (All India Radio) as a commentator on World War II and his popularity as a writer after the publication of his famous book AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UNKNOWN INDIAN in 1951.
A PASSAGE TO ENGLAND is written as a result of his sojourn in England when he visited it in 1955; his reaction against the Indian society is presented in THE CONTINENT OF CIRCE. In his ‘SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINARY’ he pays a glowing tribute to Max Muller, the legendary German Scholar.

Chaudhuri became a well known Indian with his famous book. AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UNKNOWN INDIAN published in 1951. He shot into fame and established himself as a writer of rare distinction. On an invitation by the BBC, he paid a short visit to England and recorded all his observations and experiences in his travelogue, A PASSAGE TO ENGLAND which is dealt with in the second chapter. In this book, we find Chaudhuri’s luscious dreams of seeing England transformed into a reality. In his meticulous observation of England he finds a little contrast between what he saw there and what he had imagined earlier.

Chaudhuri glorifies timeless England as he views it from the background of India and has incurred the wrath of his countrymen who have branded him an Anglophile. The book is of great interest, as every student of English literature, like Chaudhuri will have great passion for green landscapes and natural beauties of England imagined through the study of English literature. England, for a student of English literature, is like Vatican to Christians, Benaras to Hindus and Mecca to Muslims.
Many of their desires of seeing England are similar to that of Chaudhuri and all cannot materialize their dreams into a reality like him. But the book caters, to some extent, to the thirst of the readers visiting England, at least, imaginatively.

The third chapter in the dissertation deals with THE CONTINENT OF CIRCE which is written as a self-dissection, a postmortem on Indians, particularly, the Hindu society. All the great ideas that we have nourished from our age-old traditions and all the self-praise in which we have steeped ourselves in our religion would be shattered while going through this book. The hypocrisy, self-vanity, self-deception, false prayers, double-standards and dichotomy of Indian society are exposed nakedly to the much humiliation of the Indians. The bold views that Chaudhuri expresses would hit on the head and prick the hearts of the Hindus especially, conservatives who are described as swine. The book is a mirror reflecting the naked picture of the Indian society that needs to be corrected.

The fourth chapter deals with SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINARY wherein Chaudhuari takes up for discussion, Max Muller, a great German scholar, known for his brilliance and his invaluable work in the field of Vedas and Sanskrit Literature. The biography is infact a tribute paid to Max Muller by Chaudhuri on behalf of his countrymen. He wants to enliven Muller through his biography
when his reputation is fading away from the memory of the people, as a world figure. If Chaudhuri’s A PASSAGE TO ENGLAND is a reversal title of A PASSAGE TO INDIA by E.M. Forster, SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINARY is written by an oriental scholar in admiration of an occidental scholar, who has shown genuine interest and earnest enthusiasm in Sanskrit language and literature as an Indologist all through his life.

In the conclusive chapter, Chaudhuri’s vision of life and his bold and sacrificing nature to the pursuit of knowledge at the cost of government jobs are discussed. His unique style, admiration and adverse comments of the critics and his place in Indo-Anglian literature as a product of the Indian Renaissance is also discussed by quoting epigrams from his books.

Nirad Chaudhuri evokes an interest among his readers with his thought-provoking ideas, making pleasant or controversial comments. He is, undoubtedly, an erudite scholar of immense intellectual potentialities who has developed a special taste in history and literature since his early childhood. He has imbibed interest for the English language and literature from his father. A great historian, a literary giant, a man of letters and an extraordinary scholar Chaudhuri makes an indelible impression on his readers by offering a delightful reading of his books. At times, he is an iconoclast, at others, an atheist questioning the
deep-rooted irrational beliefs and superstitions which are deeply steeped in Indian society. He doesn’t accept anything blindly just because it has been accepted for a long time.

Chaudhuri gives exemplary expressions to his illustrious ideas. Many of them have become precepts and proverbs. His observation, imagination and erudition have been perfectly blended and balanced in his works. In him, from the top of the brain to the tip of tongue/pen, ideas roll down like boulders from over the shoulders of a mountain with a devastating strength. The very name Nirad Chandra means a splendorous moon amidst the dark clouds on the misty horizon. But he can be as pleasant as the moon and as scorching as the sun.

I have great pleasure in acknowledging my debt of gratitude to all the pioneering critics in the field. I express my profound sense of gratitude to my research supervisor, Prof. P. OBULA REDDY, Head, Department of English & Comparative Literature, Sri Krishnadevaraya University for his scholarly guidance and affectionate help rendered in the preparation of this dissertation. In fact, he is the guiding force and the inspiring source for me. I also express my thanks to Prof. V.V.N. RAJENDRA PRASAD for his benign blessings.

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K.BAYAPA REDDY