Abstract

This dissertation studies Nirad C. Chaudhuri’s attitude to and treatment of England in a wider perspective. It aims at exploring his stance on England, Europe, and the West as a whole. It is an attempt to analyze the nature and extent of Chaudhuri’s thorough outlook on England and also on India as a foil for England as India has always been subliminally present during Chaudhuri’s English, American, and European experience. Therefore, his notions and ideas about Indo-British cultural identity and encounter have been discussed here in detail. The present study has also been an examination of the subject from different angles and approaches of critical investigation, which could help open up newer perspectives in the context of Chaudhuri criticism as well as in a broader way the study of the West by the East.

The exploration of the attitude of a self-proclaimed “unknown Indian” towards England and thereby towards Europe and the West can be an apt subject of study especially in the post-colonial era, when literary and cultural projects of counter-colonial resistance, developed through native and hybrid process of independence, are defying the colonial cultural knowledge. The dissertation has been organized into five chapters and the analysis is attempted in the light of the available primary and secondary sources.
The introductory chapter gives a biographical sketch of Chaudhuri and briefly identifies his place in the history of Indian writing in English. It touches on his total output. This chapter includes a brief review of works done on him and evaluation of him by some important authors and critics such as Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, Mulk Raj Anand, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Khushwant Singh, Zulfikar Ghose, Amit Chaudhui, K. R. Srinivasa lyengar, C. P. Verghese, M. K. Naik, C. D. Narasimhaiah and British writers like E. M. Forster and Winston Churchill and critics like Edward Shils, Duncan Fallowell, Alastair Niven etc. It also presents the objectives of the study and its significance in the realm of Chaudhuri criticism.

Chapter two makes an attempt to identify the sources of Chaudhuri's view on England. To inquire into the true nature and extent of his knowledge of England, both his first-hand observations and second-hand perceptions have been taken into account in this chapter. These are for the most part taken from his autobiographical records. The chapter seeks the sources of Chaudhuri’s knowledge in the long string of events of his life since his childhood. The early environment, the reading of books on England, the influence of enlightenment ideals, and his permanent stay in Oxford have all added to the sources of his knowledge of England.

The third chapter discusses Chaudhuri’s books on English, European or Western themes. It has taken into account some portion of his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), and fully considered *A Passage to England* (1959), *Why I Mourn for England*
Chaudhuri's attitude towards England is mostly reflected in *A Passage to England* (1959), which is a fruit of his fleeting visit to England. Here Chaudhuri registers fresh and exact impressions which he observes as one capable of some highly subjective and incisive analysis of the British life and culture. *Why I Mourn for England* (1998) contains a dozen articles including a diary and some lectures previously published. They deal with Chaudhuri's love for England and his agony of her lost glory. *Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse* (1997) is Chaudhuri's another major work on England,
Europe, and the West which speaks of the decline and fall of Western civilization. Here he has raged against the vulgarity in the lives of the British and the Americans and eventually the Indians.

Chapter four analyzes Chaudhuri’s five major books on Indian themes. *The Continent of Circe, Being an Essay on the Peoples of India* (1965) is a highly characteristic view on Indian life and culture. The monograph, *The Intellectual in India* (1967) primarily deals with the historical study of the intellectuals in India and their contemporary situation. In *To Live or Not to Live* (1970) Chaudhuri considers how the Indians can have a happy and prosperous family and social life under the conditions which they are born in. This book is a cutting account of modern Indian life and culture. *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (1976) is a critical analysis of Indian clothing and adornment. It explicates at length Chaudhuri’s sartorial vision emanating from his serious study on Indian clothing through ages. *Hinduism, A Religion to Live By* (1979) is another major work on Indian themes. It is aimed at describing and interpreting Hinduism, the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. Chaudhuri here emphasizes their religious psychology and behaviour.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter of the study. It briefly points out Chaudhuri’s singular characteristic position as a writer in the Indo-Anglican tradition and certain attitudinal aspects. As to his Anglophilism and Hindu-bashing, it is observed that he was neither an ignorant lover of England, nor a hardboiled hater of India. Rather
he was a genuine Anglophile and simultaneously an Indian at heart. This chapter touches on a few other recurring concerns which have been identified in the core chapters, such as, his love for scholarship, for decent and disciplined life, for liberal arts, his indefatigable intellectual curiosity, his sympathies and angers, and above all, his love for humanity. It also identifies the areas that demand further exploration as independent fullfledged studies. His analytical competence, his total command of the English language, his argumentative skills, his 'pyrotechniques' so to say, have also been appreciated, and a potential of further exploration in them has been pointed out. The chapter also indicates the relevance of such a study of Nirad C. Chaudhuri in the present socio-cultural context of India and Bangladesh where the present student belongs.