Chapter IV

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India is subliminally always on Chaudhuri’s mind and finds expression in his treatment of England. In other words, his England is often seen on the background of India. Since they work as foils for each other and mutually illuminate his thinking, a lingering look at Chaudhuri’s India is desirable. In fact, India, Indian people, and their culture have been the recurrent themes of his sustained interest. His treatment is carefully focused. R. K. Kaul admits: “One of the subjects dear to the heart of Chaudhuri is Hinduism and Hindu society” (1998:119). In fact, all works of Chaudhuri more or less deal with Indian people and their culture in the broader sense of the terms. The lines that demarcate them are faint. They are conterminous. So it is difficult to determine exactly what his works on India are. We had better analyze his prominent views on India reflected in the writings which primarily treat these themes.

*The Continent of Circe* (1965) is Chaudhuri’s most important work on Indian themes. It is sub-titled “An Essay on the Peoples of India.” Chaudhuri says: “The main purpose of this book is to describe the peoples of India in their natural groupings, both ethnic and cultural, and analyze their collective personality in the light of the historical evolution which has formed it” (1965:38). In the introduction, he claims that the knowledge of the outside world about India since 1947 has not been accurate. The foreign observers,
journalists, diplomats, even the novelists on India could not paint the true picture of India. Most of them have tended to glamorize their observations on Indian life and culture. About the foreign novelists he says:

Even the novelists on India have become purveyors of sociological data. Many foreigners who are interested in our life but will devote neither the time nor the effort needed to gain any worthwhile knowledge of it read these novels. The novelists, too, conscious of the demand, and keen to meet it, go about the country notebook in hand, collect local colour and turns of speech, record snatches of conversation with special reference to such slips in English as lend themselves to caricature, and then three-quarters in ponderous solemnity, and a quarter in cold-blooded self-seeking malice, they turn out works which are no more fiction than blue-books are fables .... (1965:12)

The Indian journalists are also faced with great difficulties, which impede dispassionate observation, candid statement, and prevent the publication of authentic and impartial account of their life. So, what they publish is vitiated by falsity and fabrication, Chaudhuri thinks. He accuses even the Indian novelists writing in English of dealing with falsehood in terms of themselves. He argues that they are not well-informed about their own country and most of their information is gathered in an unplanned way. He declares that they “deIndianize themselves substantially” simply for their wish to write novels in English. He has cogently explained the problem faced by the Indian English novelists and its consequence. To quote:

...The life, the mind, and the behaviour of Indians are so strange for the people of the West that if these are described in ordinary English the books would be
unintelligible to English-speaking readers, and unacceptable to British or American publishers. Most Indian writers solve this problem, not by choosing a genuine Indian subject and creating an adequate Western idiom to express it, but by selecting wholly artificial themes which the Western world takes to be Indian, and by dealing with them in a manner of contemporary Western writers.... The result is an inefficient imitation of the novels about India written by Western novelists. India is far too big a subject for such frippery. (1965:14)

Chaudhuri here indicates that the Indian novelists in English distort the true image of India by romanticizing it to cater to the taste of the Western readers. Dilip Chitre regards this view as “a partially valid observation typical of Mr Chaudhuri” (1969:46). But this has not gone undisputed. C. Paul Verghese finds faults with Chaudhuri. To quote: “Chaudhuri here seems to forget that his first three books published abroad were written for the English-speaking world outside India and that he himself is an India writer in English out of touch with the rural people, and therefore, with real India, and at the same time writing for the Westerners” (1973: 67). It is true that Chaudhuri’s proclaimed difference from other Indian writers in English in terms of treatment of India sounds contradictory. He claims competence in writing about India and questions the effectiveness of the Anglicized Hindus in representing India to the outside world. As he puts:

...the world’s knowledge about India today is obtained overwhelmingly at one remove from people belonging to the Westernized and urban upper middle-class, who have become the heirs of British rule... they are unqualified to give a full or fair view of what is taking place in the country. For one thing, they have their trusteeship of the people of India, which I look upon their exploitation, to justify. This makes them prone to
misrepresent and even to lie.... They are so completely
imitative of the West, so dependent on current literature
written in English, mostly by foreigners, for their
knowledge of their own country, so ignorant about the
original sources of knowledge, and so formed by their
urban upbringing that the whole of traditional and rural
India remains outside their ken.... (1965:21)

Chaudhuri, too, belongs to what he calls the Anglicized or
Westernized upper middle class as far as his social status is
concerned. So his criticism of his own class for misrepresentation of
the image of India and his avowed competence to give a true picture
of India can easily be seen as inconsistent. Besides views on India
represented by R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, M.R. Anand, Malgonkar
etc. cannot be ignored. They can be considered as having depicted a
comparatively candid and acceptable picture of India, which
Chaudhuri seems to have completely glossed over. R. K. Narayan’s
invention and exploration of Malgudi, the small South Indian town
in more than a dozen novels prove his close observation of Indian
life and society. Mulk Raj Anand’s books like Untouchable and
Coolie are a powerful expression of social concern. Raja Rao’s
writings are expressive of a distinctively Indian experience. V. S.
Naipaul in his An Area of Darkness, India: A Wounded Civilization,
and India: A Million Mutinies Now paints a fairly truer picture of
India. The literary projection of India by such writers cannot be
flatly refused.

At the outset of the book Chaudhuri raises an objection to the
use of the terms ‘an Indian’ or ‘Indians’ as a means of meaning the
people of the whole continent. Instead, he suggests the use of the
term ‘Hindu’ to them who have in mind a human type common to
India. He considers the word 'Indian' as only a geographical definition and a very loose one. He gives an etymological interpretation of the two words ('Hindu' and 'Indian') and shows that the word 'Hindu' in its primary meaning stands for the same thing as 'Indian'. He is again self-contradictory. While he prefers to use the word 'Hindu' for 'Indian' he introduces himself as an 'unknown Indian' in his famous Autobiography.

As to the peoples of India, Chaudhuri implies that there are only three physical types classified by complexion, which are the Blacks, the Browns, and the Yellows. The Darks (Blacks) are not Negroid, but have sharp and modelled faces, with a high broad nose, and large, black, and liquid eyes. They all have good figures. Anthropologists call this type Australoid. The Yellows have the familiar Mongolian features. The Browns have what are usually described as Caucasoid features. Chaudhuri signifies the fact that these three types of peoples of India are clearly separated from one another by their geographical position. According to him, the Yellows are basically confined to the Himalayan regions and the hills of Assam. The Darks are mostly massed in the hilly and wooded areas of Central India and the Deccan. They also occur in all parts of India. The Browns mainly live in the plains.

The geographical distribution of the peoples of India is not however, constant. Owing to a number of factors, people in larger or smaller groups migrate from one place to another over the years. Chaudhuri describes one of the most acute and baffling problems of India, i.e. the ethnic conflict. This age-old human antagonism raged in the past and is still continuing. In his words:
...the most outstanding feature of the ethnic history of India is that whenever there has been an active stage in the formation of the population of India there have always been conflicts. It is not necessary to go back to past times to illustrate this. Everybody knows that India did not become independent in 1947 without an ethnic regrouping, which in two provinces, the Punjab and Bengal, brought about large scale displacements amounting virtually to an exchange of populations. (1965:36)

Chaudhuri gives a couple of more recent examples of human conflicts which illustrate their nature in India. The seeds of conflicts are rooted in the intensity of the cultural consciousness of the ethnic communities. They are always acutely conscious of their respective cultural identity. They seldom tend to compromise with each other on even condition of peaceful co-existence and hence are at daggers drawn.

Chaudhuri, however, discusses the main ethnic groups of India namely, the aboriginals, the Hindus, the Muslims, and the products of European conquest. Among these, he considers the Hindus as the most important and the enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims has been the greatest. He gives a short account of the entire ethnic history of India which has placed these groups. He discusses the reasons behind the Hindu-Muslim conflict. According to him, the Muslim conquest of India could not be made harmless for the Hindus through the caste system. Muslim rule in the country was the rule of a colonizing people who did not forget their affiliation with the greater Islamic world. Moreover, the Muslims did not consider admission to the Hindu fold as a promotion. They had a fanatical conviction of their superiority to all others, and thought it
was their duty to propagate it even by force. The Hindus on their side had an almost equal attitude. When the new invasions began, they had lost their assimilating power and adaptability they had, and hardened into a closed society with a conviction of its own superiority. So, the inevitable happened.

Chaudhuri’s analysis of the Hindu-Muslim conflict is no doubt historical, but he seems to ignore lots of evidences of Hindu-Muslim unity especially in the long collective movement against the British rule, at least in its initial stages. Similarly, the sharing of faith and devotion by both the communities at certain places of worship is a fact quite conspicuous even in modern India.

He gives a long description of the aboriginals of India in the chapter, “The Children of Circe”. He claims that no modern anthropologist could describe them in a better and more precise way than he could. He shows how they remained happy despite a lot of climatic, zoological and human obstacles.

As to the attitude of the Hindus towards the aboriginals, he says that although the Westernized Hindus publicly showed a liking for them, that also gradually died out in keeping with the decline of their sensibilities. He adds that the British rule, however, brought back the lost respect of those Hindus for the aboriginals. But that was artificial and confined to a particular section of people. He considers the survival of the aboriginals through numerous difficulties as an “incredible achievement”. He glorifies their achievement as an incomparable success. To quote:

I do not think there is any other country in the world in which primitive communities of so many kinds and with fairly large populations have been able to resist the
proximity of civilization so successfully. This, the aboriginals of India have to their credit and not only have they survived, they have even been able to continue their way of life, keep it largely intact and unimpaired, and maintain themselves in social and cultural health. (1965:73-74)

Chaudhuri’s analysis of the aboriginals of India is brilliant but his notion about the Hindu’s reaction to them is not beyond question nor is his claim to the best treatment of them acceptable. C. P. Verghese cogently refutes:

One wonders why Chaudhuri wants them to remain innocent forever. Do they gain anything by being kept separate from the mainstream of national life? Chaudhuri does not have any answer. That the tribal people and the aboriginal should continue to exist in their natural state unsullied by industrialization or civilization is a bee in Chaudhuri’s bonnet which of course is enormous enough to accommodate such bees as the caste system and class distinctions. Perhaps he prefers an unschooled Caliban to a schooled one. There is no doubt that Chaudhuri’s sympathy for ‘the children of Circe’ is quite misplaced. (1973:84)

Chaudhuri deals with a peculiarity of Hindu mind which governs all aspects of its total expression. He calls it a “terrible dichotomy”. As the puts it:

Every Hindu is divided against himself, and it would seem throughout his historical existence he has been. The human personality is indeed contradictory everywhere, but normally one set of traits can push their opposites into the background and become dominant. But with the Hindus the opposites almost neutralize one another, and the indecisive tug-of-war stultifies all their actions. (1965:106)
To exemplify such opposites he has mentioned the Roman god Janus as the symbol of the Hindu character. As Janus has a lot of faces, so has the Hindu personality numerous contradictions, which he calls “Janus Multifrons”. Among them he has mentioned only those which influence their domestic and foreign politics. He names them:

A sense of Hindu solidarity with an uncontrollable tendency towards disunity within the Hindu order; collective megalomania with self-abasement; extreme xenophobia with an abject xenolatry; authoritarianism with anarchic individualism; violence with non-violence; militarism with pacifism; possessive- ness with carelessness about property owned; courage with cowardice; cleverness with stupidity. (1965:106-107)

R. K. Kaul says: “Such a formidable cluster of paradoxes reveal Chaudhuri’s capacity for turning out epigrams. Its value is scarcely more than that of some of the epigrammatic utterances in Bernard Shaw’s plays” (1998:129). This may add to Chaudhuri’s literary merit, but questions his analytical objectivity.

Chaudhuri of course tries to substantiate his notion about Hindu duality with a number of examples, allusions, and references from ancient, medieval, and modern India most of which fail to carry conviction. That is why, C. P. Verghese considers Chaudhuri’s treatment of the dichotomy of the Hindu mind as “a vitriolic attack on the entire Hindu society” (1973:87-88).

Dilip Chitre has evaluated Chaudhuri’s attitude towards Hindu psychology giving his own ideas about that. To quote:
It is obvious that ‘the Hindu psyche’ is not a biological, genetic, and ethnic endowment. What is typically Hindu is a set of Hindu cultural norms, mores, and patterns of social operation. The Hindu tradition has been polymorphous and heterodox in spite of the formidable and abiding presence of the Hindu orthodoxy. There seems to be a pact of non-confrontation and non-interaction between the Hindu orthodoxy and the heterodox cultural drop-outs in India. This is a special feature of the Hindu view of society: parallel, stratified, and mutually non-intersecting communities co-exist within Hindu society without cross-pollination or mutual confrontation. Thus the caste-system operates at all levels.... There is no secular Hindu tradition and Mr Chaudhuri is brilliant when he illustrates the Hindu motivation in accommodating contradiction as a means to nullifying the effects of heterodoxy.... Hindus lack even the pre-modern sense of historical determinism which is implicit in Mr Chaudhuri’s view.... Mr Chaudhuri, who is always at his best when he finds an object for his vituperative urges, assails these features of Hindu culture with evident delight. It makes very good reading, too. (1969:49-50)

In regard to the Hindu militarism Chaudhuri cites a number of mythological and historical examples ranging from Asoka down to Subhas Bose. He refers to the wars fought by the Hindus, described in ancient Sanskrit epics and long poems. He draws our attention to what he calls the most significant feature of the new Hindu militarism, which is consistent with the traditional militarism of the Hindus. That is the concept of Dharma Yuddha or a war of righteousness without falling back on which no Hindu can make war. He believes that this is how militarism is gaining religious support and the tendency to war and violence is remaining. He, however, considers New Hindu militarism as much feeble less than before.
In these circumstances, he casts doubt on the effectiveness of Hindu non-violence and hints at the reasons for it. In his own words:

Now, if the Hindus were and remain basically militaristic, though at present only inefficiently and grotesquely so, where does their non-violence stand?... The very extremism of the doctrine of non-violence as preached by the Hindus, taken with the practice of a degenerate compassion, should serve to indicate that both were a panic-stricken recoil from something equally extreme in the opposite direction. So it happens to be in actual fact.... The non-violence was as irrational as the violence.” (1965:129)

Chaudhuri considers Gandhian doctrine of non-violence as a reaction to the counter violence of the Muslims, as was Christian non-violence a reaction to the Roman violence. As far as its application to the Indian nationalist movement is concerned, it has, according to him, led to some of the bloodiest riots. R. K. Kaul, however, does not agree with Chaudhuri on point of Hindu militarism. He says: “There is certainly no evidence of it except perhaps in the guerilla tactics of the Maharattas and the desperate chivalry of the Rajputs” (1998:133).

Chaudhuri’s rethinking of Indian nationalist movement has no doubt added a new dimension to the study of Indian history, but his concept of the doctrine of non-violence and its application may not be agreed by others. It has been widely acclaimed that Gandhian ideological precept of non-violence (ahimsa) along with civil disobedience has contributed a great deal to Indian nationalist movement. It is almost a founding principle of the modern Indian
polity. Opinions may vary as to the degrees of its effectiveness but its importance cannot be totally negated.

Chaudhuri explicates the conduct and behaviour of the English people ruling India. He thinks it was the effect of the Indian climate and weather which led to the deterioration in their collective behaviour. Regarding their relations with the Indian people he says: “… the British in India lost all sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, charity and malice, and paraded a racial arrogance whose mildest form was a stony silence or in the case of unavoidable meetings an abrupt, businesslike termination without even any wishing back to an Indian’s wish and the worst was an obstreperous violence” (1965:138).

Chaudhuri has described the tribulations of the Aryans in India whom he considered the first Europeans in India, who colonized the country in ancient times. His view on the origin of the Aryans does not conform to those of other historians who think the Aryans came from central Asia. C. P. Verghese says: “Though scholars generally hold the view that the Aryans came from the steppes of Central Asia, Chaudhuri maintains that they came from the Danube-Dnieper basin” (1973:80). Of course, Lokmanya Tilak’s theory of the Arctic origin of the Aryan has its own validity. Similarly Chaudhuri’s idea about the Aryans’ being the first civilized people coming to a ‘virgin land’ (India) is not in line with the ideas of many experts on history. While concepts on ancient Indian civilizations are being radically changed, Chaudhuri throughout his life stuck to his views on the Aryans. He seems to have liked to see the Europeans always as rulers and colonizers and hence even does not touch on the pre-Aryan civilization of ancient
India. Keki N. Daruwalla raises the question, “Can such statements go unchallenged?” (Dasgupta, 1997:109) R. K. Kaul also casts aspersions on this. He says; “Chaudhuri does not take the non-literary sources into account. It seems somewhat rash to draw such sweeping generalizations about the Aryans from the Rig Veda alone” (1998:122).

Since Aryan Hindu people’s life was marked by various sorrows and sufferings, their philosophies go on to define these. Chaudhuri divides and subdivides sufferings according to Hindu philosophy and finds faults with it. As he puts: “… The tragedy of all the systems of Hindu philosophy is that they confront man with only one choice: Remain corruptible and corrupt flesh, or become incorruptible and incorrupt stone. The alternatives presented were both cruel, but in a country which was excruciatingly cruel, could there be any kind of life which was not so?…” (1965:172). He casts doubts on what is called the profundity of Hindu thought. He regards a large portion of Hindu thought as “wooly speculation or just mush” (1965:174). He points out that the Aryan Hindus never hesitated to show their loyalty and adherence to four things which have immense influence on the Hindus in general. They are: the Vedas, fair complexion, the rivers, and the cattle. Even the Anglicized Hindus are also respectful of these four. He has discussed the loyalties respectively. In this context, he means only the four basic Samhitas--the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. He regards the Vedas not as the source of dogma or doctrine for the Hindus, nor is Vedic pantheon the classical Hindu pantheon especially in spirit. They have never been read as
devotional books, nor as literature. He considers the modern Hindu interest in the Vedas as totally artificial and as the creation of Western scholarship, because they are reading them in translation not in the original. About the Vedas’ relation to the present day Hindus he says: “... the Vedas are unmistakable museum pieces...” (1965:180). But when they are considered as symbols not as living scriptures, the whole thing changes. They are regarded as powerful by the Hindus even today. “To the Hindu” Chaudhuri says, [they] always were and even now are the fons et origo of his entire way of life” (1965:182).

To explain the Hindu’s infatuation with fair complexion and prejudice against the dark skin, he quotes from his own remarks in his Autobiography:

This adoption of colour in the Hindu has a profound historical basis. The Hindu civilization was created by a people who were acutely conscious of their fair complexion in contrast to the dark skin of the autochthons, and their greatest preoccupation was how to maintain the pristine purity of the blood-stream which carried this colour. Varna or colour was the central principle round which Hindu society organized itself, and the orthodox Hindu scriptures know of no greater crime than miscegenation, or, as they call it, Varna-Samkara, the mixing of colour. This faith in the sanctity of Varna, colour or caste, endures and abides in Hindu society, and the fact—from the point of view of doctrine, the adventitious fact—that the inevitable intermixture with the indigenous element has made many Hindus dark-skinned, makes no difference to the hold and fascination of the ideal of colour. (1965:187)

With regard to the third loyalty of the Aryan Hindus embodied in river-worship, he again quotes from his own comment
in his book on England. As he puts: “The cult of the rivers… is much older in our country than many other cults supposed to be very ancient. The big rivers are sacred all over the country, and they were sacred even before the great gods migrated to their banks. As a matter of fact, they migrated to take advantage of a pre-existing holiness” (1965:188). One must stop to ask, is Chaudhuri missing at the basic agricultural nature of the way of life in the country where the rivers play a life-giving role?

Chaudhuri considers the fourth and the last loyalty i.e., cattle-worship as a paradox of the Hindu system of values and behaviour. As he says:

Of all the irrational Hindu obsessions, none appears more irrational than the fanatical and ferocious determination not to permit the destruction of superfluous and useless cattle, even when the animals cannot be properly fed or cared for. This is a negation of every principle of economy and efficiency in animal husbandry, and all the more so because in India there never is any regular allocation of land for pasture. From the moral point of view, it appears to be a very repulsive form of hypocrisy to worship cows and yet starve them. As everybody knows, the worshipped cattle are, as a rule, pitifully scraggy.” (1965:197)

Anyway, Chaudhuri believes that the cults of the Vedas, the rivers, and the cow evoke in the Hindus feelings which seem to drift in from a transcendental world.

His arguments regarding the treatment of the four loyalties which the Aryan Hindus adhered to, seem to be fairly rational, although his analysis of the present-day Hindu people’s colour-prejudice and cow-worship sounds to some extent overdone.
Miscegenation is no longer a taboo to the enlightened Hindu and their attitudes towards cow-worship have also radically changed.

Chaudhuri has described the sexual life of the Hindus ranging from the ancient down to the modern time in phases. His sources of knowledge are literary materials and personal observations. He draws for his evidences largely on the Hindu myths and legends. According to him, from the Rigveda, down to the epics, especially the Mahabharata, there remains a consistent attitude towards sex life. From the Rigveda, he refers to Indrani’s (the Queen Goddess) defiance of the virility of her lord, Indra, the king of God. He does not fail to point out that in later erotic literature the most aggressive posture in which a woman could offer herself to a man came to be called ‘Indrani’.

According to him, the Vedic and epic gods are as lecherous as the Olympians. He regards Indra, the supreme warrior god, as the reckless who was always used to seducing the beautiful wives of the sages. Chaudhuri shows how as legend has it, Indra to be marked as an incorrigible lecher was once cursed by a sage with one thousand pudenda all over his body and how later, on his earnest appeal, got them turned into eyes and became identified as the thousand-eyed.

To Chaudhuri’s thinking, the sexual life attributed to the sages or Rishis is more significant than the lechery of the Hindu mythical gods. He compares their sexual impulse with that of rogue elephants living solitary life away from the herds.

He clarifies that the early Aryan society also felt the necessity to include something beyond enjoyment in sexual life. So early Brahmanism considered procreation as its prime motive to which it added a lively attachment between the husband and the
wife. He thinks that procreation was one of the features of the Hindu Golden Age, when it “was so exalted that it became an imperative religious duty to go to the wife at the close of her period. ‘Ritukalabhigami syat svadara-niratah sada’--Thou shalt go at the period, and shall attend thine wife’, declared the sacred law” (1965:228). To show the intensity of the procreative motive, Chaudhuri gives some illustrations from the myths.

He hints at the descriptions of sexual intercourse in Sanskrit poetry to have the indications of that romanticized sex act. He, however, thinks that the romanticizing of sexual life was the counter thesis presented by the classical age of Hindu civilization against the thesis of the Vedic and the epic age. And in all this Hindu romanticizing, the woman has the more transfigured role. The Hindu tended to keep lust fresh and strong by idealizing the woman’s part in it. This happened for the infatuation of the ancient Hindus for coitus in the reversed position i.e. with the woman as active partner, which was known as purushayita or viparita rati. He argues that all Sanskrit erotic poetry is full of this theme.

Chaudhuri has his own images for the sexual life of the Hindus and its successive phases. To quote:

Down to the epic age from the Vedic, we see an honest wood-fire, crackling, leaping, blazing: very homely, and yet redolent with the smell of burning pine logs. But in the age which followed, that of classical Hindu attitudes, a benevolent but erratic daimon threw a handful of magnesium into that yellow fire, to change the flames into a dazzling, blinding, and cascading mass of white light. Then it went out, and what was left behind were beds of dirty red cinders, smouldering and hissing, and there clung to them an obstinate ordour of burnt flesh and hair which
always lingers in the atmosphere of our burning ghats or crematoriums, which, of course, are open. It was a world of death, in which fire itself was death. An adventure which had started as an act of generation was ending as an act of dying. (1965:250)

Chaudhuri has beautifully described the evolution of sex life of the Hindus in three phases. He adds that with the passage of time, their sexual life lost even the previous charms and fascination, and became banal and squalid. Its degradation at the beginning of the nineteenth century greatly shocked the Bengali Hindu reformers who tried to save their countrymen from this moral deterioration. Their efforts succeed to certain degree but finally die even in Bengal. He informs that the Hindus today are at the beginning of another phase of their sexual life with a reversion to the traditional Hindu attitudes, with a reassertion of the old commonplace and degrading sensuality and with a hollow carnality imported from the West. He paints a grim picture of the contemporary situation in India. He considers this sexual life as low and cheap.

While dealing with the sexual life of the Hinds, Chaudhuri primarily confines himself to describing the sexual life of the ancient Hindus and the sensuality of the Vedic and epic gods and mythical figures. He seems to have exaggerated and glamorized their erotic affairs in order to attract his readers. For this reason C. P. Verghese says: "... his [Chaudhuri] views... on Hindu attitude to sex ... can only be regarded as subjective dogmas and not as objective truths" (1973:75). His language of the erotic descriptions has been rhetorical in keeping with the nature of the subjects.

He has devoted a full chapter entitled “The Least of the Minorities” to the discussion of the Muslims as a minority in India.
He has described the emergence of Pakistan, its relation with India, and the position of the Muslims in India in relation to the Hindus. The Muslims are called the least of the minorities for their being given less importance than the Goanese Christians with Portuguese names by the Hindu rulers. He argues that since the British took over political power in India from the Muslims, they assumed that the community would remain dissatisfied with and rebellious to them nurturing the hope of regaining the lost power. This position worsened considerably after the Sepoy Mutiny for which the Muslims were held most responsible. He rates Sir Syed Ahmed Khan as the greatest Indian Muslim of modern times who reconciled his community with the British. In the growth of social, religious, and cultural modernization, a number of Muslims alongside the Hindu reformers gave a new form to the Islamic way of life through their writing. He explicates that as the nationalist movement gained momentum, the British changed their attitude and took the Muslims as a counterpoise of the Hindus. Consequently, the Muslims were rehabilitated and the Hindus came under suspicion. Whatever it is, the Muslims, according to him, were quite sanguine about the independence of India.

Chaudhuri refers to the Pan-Islamic movement which reached India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and aroused the Indian Muslim’s sense of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity and a longing for the non-territorial Islamic society. He relates that when they could realize that by regarding themselves as a non-territorial nation, they were in fact without any country of their own, they hit upon the idea of a partition of the country on the basis of religion, which later was known as ‘two nation theory’. It astonished him a
great deal that although the possibility of a partition was not even believed at the end of 1946, it came into being only within six months. He regards the partition of India as monstrous and unnatural and holds three things responsible for this. To quote:

This [the partition] was made possible by a combination of three factors—Hindu stupidity in the first instance and Hindu cowardice afterwards, British opportunism, and Muslim fanaticism. The most ironical part of the whole matter was the fact that the most fanatical and determined of the Muslim champions of a *Dar-al-Islam* in India, the man who made a political impossibility a fact, was Jinnah, a man who had no deep faith in Islam as a religion, but treated it as a form of nationalism. The creation of Pakistan was a windfall for the Muslims of India. (1965:292)

Chaudhuri analyses the status of the Muslim in contemporary India. The attitude of the Hindus to the Muslims is not actively hostile. But there is no social interaction between the members of the two communities. Quoting from the sociologists he calls the Muslims of India in relation to the Hindus “an external caste”. Dismissing the possibility of Hindu-Muslim social intercourse, he dogmatically asserts:

If I were a Muslim I should certainly not have cared to live in India, just as, being a Hindu, I feel I should never have been at home in Pakistan, though I was born and brought up in what is now eastern Pakistan. There is something unnatural in the continued presence of the Muslims in India and of the Hindus in Pakistan, as if both went against a natural cultural ecology. Whether a person is Hindu or Muslim makes a substantial difference in both the countries, though the unnaturalness is less explicit in India than it is in Pakistan. (1965:298)
Chaudhuri adds one more explanation as to the reason for the present political position of the Muslims, i.e. the personality of Nehru. He considers him by social and cultural affiliation, as more a Muslim than a Hindu, whose family belonged to the circle of Islamized Hindus. He accuses him of having no understanding of Hinduism and liking for it. He believes this has decidedly contributed to the status of the Muslims in India.

Anyway, the Muslims, according to Chaudhuri, are now expiating for their follies and mistakes. The political blunders they committed during the decades of the nationalist movement are now recoiling on them. He indicates the fragile condition of the Muslims of India, both in the Hindu and the Muslim states. To quote him: “What gave them victory in 1947 was not the opportunistic policy of their leaders, but their fanatical devotion to a cause which was a lost one in history. So, there is no escape for them today from that lost cause, and still less from the intolerable burden of fighting to the last for a lost cause” (1965:304).

C. P. Verghese thinks “Chaudhuri appears to be quite sympathetic in his treatment of the Muslims in India vis-a-vis the Hindus” (1973:69). But R. K. Kaul is of the diametrically opposite view. To quote: “Towards the Muslims Chaudhuri is unsympathetic. At least his hostility is unconcealed” (1998:136). Keki N. Daruwalla holds a moderate view: “[The] chapter on Muslims … is almost a straightforward account of the political history of the Muslims this century” (Dasgupta, 1997:111). Chaudhuri sounds like a staunch disbeliever in the possibility of Hindu-Muslim unity. He appears as a hard-liner in his approach to Hindu-Muslim relation and seems to
be influenced by Kiplingian dictum: “The East is East and the West is West, and never the twain shall meet”. Since Chaudhuri was an admirer of Kipling, his unsaid dictum may well have been: “the Hindu is Hindu and the Muslim is Muslim, and never the twain shall meet”. His attitude in this regard sounds as racial bigotry which is totally against the concept of multiculturalism.

Chaudhuri speaks of a weaker community of Indian society whom he calls “the half-caste minorities”. He has divided the ethnic elements resulting from the European influence on India into two broader groups, namely, the genetic half-castes and the cultural half-castes. The first group is comprised of the communities which are a blend of European and for the most part pre-existing Hindu blood. The second consists of them who converted to Christianity. He, of course, deals with the communities not merely of zoological hybrid but also of psychological and cultural types, who, he believes, do not possess a composite culture.

He clarifies that in the genetic line, European rule in India has given birth to two types of communities, namely, the Mestizo and the Eurasians, now called Anglo-Indians. The Mestizo population lives in those parts of India which were once ruled by the Portuguese. And the Eurasians or Anglo-Indians were the mixed Indo-English breed, i.e. the products of the mixture of British and Hindu or Muslim blood. Both the Mestizo and the Anglo-Indians are, according to him, genetic half-castes. The cultural half-castes are the Indians converted into Christianity and their descendants, who are more heterogeneous than the Anglo-Indians. They are divided into some sub-groups and cease to maintain even social intercourse among themselves.
Chaudhuri discloses many obnoxious things about the Anglo-Indians pertaining to their social life in relation to the Hindus and the Britishers. He speaks about their moral degeneration and shows the reasons for the preference for the Eurasian prostitutes. Their moral laxity in terms of meeting the sensual demands of the Hindus reached such a point that the honest women of the community could not escape condemnation. He treats the Goanese half-castes almost equally.

As far as the Indian Christians are concerned, their position, in Chaudhuri’s opinion, is also vulnerable. They are not liked by the genuine Hindus for their giving up one religion and embracing another, nor are these neo-converts well accepted by the British rulers. So, both the Hindus and the British were inconsiderate to them. He concludes the chapter proclaiming the impossibility of their redemption. To quote: “... no one will redeem the Christians of India, for there will be no traitors among them, and if there will be apostates they will all remain unconscious of the apostasy” (1965:337). His view is, however, questionable. Unice de Souza says: “...his [Chaudhuri] treatment of what he calls the genetic and cultural ‘half-castes’, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians, is virtually pathological” (Mehrotra, 2002:213).

Chaudhuri calls the Hindus of the Anglicized upper middle-class stock, “dominant minority”. He describes the community as a psychological and cultural entity, not a hybrid like the Anglo-Indians. Their number is very small in relation to the other minorities. He is quite disapproving of the people belonging to Anglicized Hindu class who became the heirs of British rulers. He divides them into two groups on the basis of their living at home and abroad. They are quite antagonistic to each other. He makes a
further division based on their professions, which is comprised of the
officers of the armed forces, the bureaucratic, managerial, and
professional elite, the technicians, and the youths in schools and
colleges. He finds faults with the Anglicanism or Westernization of
the first three groups of people. He considers the Westernizing
impulse of the Hindu youths as somewhat idealistic, which however,
was not long-lasting. It is true that he seems to bear resentment
against the dominant minority and his approach to them to some
extent sounds disparaging. Edward Shils says:

Mr Chaudhuri has been a severe critic of... the
Westernised Indian middle class... he thinks that the
present-day Westernisation of the India middle class... is
an assimilation, not of the best ideas and ideals of the West
but rather of the worst of its values, of unthinking
hedonism, crude ambitions, and preoccupations with rank
and office. To these defects, he adds the charges of
spurious spirituality, excessive supineness before authority
and an excessive air of superiority in dealing with
subordinates. (1988:66)

C. P. Verghese, too, agrees (1973:67).

In the epilogue of the book Continent of Circe, Chaudhuri
introduces Circe, a mythical sorceress, who turned her visitors into
swine by drugging them with their food and eventually made them
forget their country. He uses the image of Circe to symbolize India
as her continent, where no invader could resist her powerful spell.
Chaudhuri identifies himself as the son of Circe’s ancient victims,
i.e. the Aryans and he himself had to be a victim in his early age.
But he claims that he could have saved himself from Circe by his
struggle for long years. He shows an inclination to save his fellow
countrymen from the clutches of Circe. But “They” he complains bitterly, “do not, however, listen to me. They honk, neigh, bellow, bleat, or grunt, and scamper away to their scrub, stable, byre, pen, and sty” (1965:376). We can see here Chaudhuri’s Messiah like role, holier than thou attitude. Nissim Ezekiel highly objects to it: “This is insulting rhetoric of righteous indignation. It seeks no cautious qualifications and reservations” (Rao, 2000:193).

The Continent of Circe is a study of the people in India and their degeneration. Its authenticity as a work of history or sociology can be questionable. It is full of subjective interpretations, angry remarks, hostile attitudes, and digressions on the part of the author. K. Natwar-Singh regards the book as “angry, even bitter” which “spewed venom at places” (Dasgupta, 1997:96). M. K. Naik says: “The book bristles with wild generalization on subjects such as history, politics, religion, culture and literature” (1982:267). Rajiva Deva denies its being a historical work. To quote: “Nirad fails to work out the process of degeneration historically—the progressive stages of degeneration have not been worked out. The Continent of Circe, therefore, cannot properly be called a historical work” (1968:72). Chaudhuri here seems self-opinionated and to some extent, orthodox about things he dislikes. He can be accused of having distorted history to suit his preconceived ideas. There can be a heated and wide-ranging debate over the assumed central thesis of the book: The Hindus are Europeans who lost their glorious heritage because of the awful climate of the sub-continent. He seems to be so preoccupied with the idea of climatic influence on human characters that he is unwilling to see the exception or the human ability to adapt to the new situation. Verghese vehemently opposes Chaudhuri’s central thesis. To quote him:
Neither his [Chaudhuri] encyclopaedic knowledge nor his wide reading of Indian history prevents Chaudhury (sic) from making this assertion which contradicts the scientifically established historical and sociological truth that the Aryans (like the later Scythians, Huns, and Mughals) ceased to be foreigners after the first period of conflict and that long before 500 B.C. their culture lost all its pristine purity and became a mixed culture which involved the absorption of several indigenous cultures and in which the non-Aryan element predominated. (1973:85-86)

Despite considering the book as an "original contribution to Hindu cultural anthropology" Verghese critically comments:

The Continent of Circe is clearly not history; it is not a disinterested assessment of the Hindu character; it is not even a satire on India and Indians, for there is no fine raillery, but only bitterness. It is a kind of apology by a man who was born a Hindu and who wants to restore himself from the stigma of his birth through an assertion of the innate superiority of the Aryan whose racial descendant he is. (1973:95)

Although Verghese does not ascribe literary merit to the book, Basavaraj S. Naikar tries to prove its quality as a satire. To quote: "The Continent of Circe is an excellent satire ever written by an Indian writer in English. It can compare with any successful satire in English literature. It stands on par with other works like The Animal Farm, The Gulliver's Travels, and Erewhon etc." (1985:69). Naikar's view is quite formalistic. Harish Trivedi says:

It [The Continent of Circe] remains a wide-angle sociological survey of India, based on a definitely eccentric and partial reading of history, much personal observation, and his own brand of fusty scholarship. It is, at the same time, a potent and pungent book, ever, rambling and
ramifying like all books by Chaudhuri, but packing more of
a punch through its sheer intensity of personal conviction.
(Dasgupta, 1997:126)

Dilip Chitre charges Chaudhuri with self-contradiction as to
his treatment of India. To quote him:

Mr Chaudhuri falls in the traps he warns others
against. He claims to be extremely averse to hasty
theorizing about India and Indians; but this is precisely
what he often does himself. Having chosen a certain fatal
determinism as the basis of his view, he can turn out
tirelessly remarks which have an air of studied resignation'.
'I declare every day that a man who cannot endure dirt,
dust, stench, noise, ugliness, disorder, heat, and cold has no
right to live in India'. (p.22) Apart from questions of rights,
this is a realistic observation of the conditions that prevail
in India. But part of these impressively repulsive attributes
are the property of every overpopulated, poor and illiterate
quarter of the world.... A person who has been condemned
to live in India, or who lives there by conscious choice, but
resents this terrible onslaught of unsavoury sensations,
would try to understand (sic) and change the situation. Mr
Chaudhuri's resignation amounts to a refusal of seeking
any change. He may be being ironical, but he has forgotten
to draw the line. (1969:47)

Sudesh Mishra makes a brief critical appraisal of the book. To
quote: "The Continent of Circe ...is precariously erected on notions
of evolutionary biology and inflated theories pertaining to India’s
climate and geography. Of course there is the occasional sprinkling
of matter-of-fact history, but this is merely incidental to Chaudhuri’s
grand plan to upset accepted scholarship, even if it happened to be
supportive of firmly established truths"(1988:14).

Despite all the shortcomings, The Continent of Circe excels in
Chaudhuri’s creative imagination, his deep sense of history, his
sharp critical investigation, painstaking and minute analysis, and persuasive rhetoric of the writing.¹

In The Intellectual in India (1967) Chaudhuri primarily deals with the contemporary situation of the intellectuals in India. As he mentions in the preface to the book:

All over India those who have any intellectual ambitions and aptitudes are discouraged. Authoritarianism in politics and social life which runs deep among the Hindus, hostility or apathy to intellectual activities, the precarious economic situation of the intellectual who has most often to sell himself to make a livelihood--have all tended to make him feel frustrated if not wholly paralysed.

He has tried to present the true nature of the problem of the intellectual in India in the light of the old traditions and the new. He divides the intellectual traditions into three categories, i.e., the Hindu tradition, the Islamic tradition, and the Modern tradition. As to the Hindu tradition, he shows that the Hindu thought and intellectual interests began their traditional base by the eighteenth century, got concerned with Dharma as a way of life and subsequently became static and authoritarian. The intellectual world according to him, was especially comprised of the priests of the Brahmin caste, who were biased, prejudiced in their approach to intellectual inquiries and interested in spiritual, ritualistic, and occult matters. They also exercised great influence on mundane affairs. They earned their living taking gifts from their clients. With the establishment of British rule their ways of earning their living changed. With a view to encouraging Oriental especially Hindu learning, the British government set up a number of colleges, where the Hindu pundits were employed in large number. As a result of this, he shows, the

¹ It has won Chaudhuri the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize.
old Hindu intellectual tradition was reproduced almost without any modification. He writes:

The form of intellectual inquiry was the formulation of theses by means of textual exegesis... Textual authority had to be cited for every conclusion, and no independent inquiry, deductive or inductive, was permitted. At the most a scholar could stretch logic and etymology. Therefore the purpose and result of this intellectual effort came to be restricted to the perpetuation of the old Hindu concepts. (1967:3-4)

He thinks that this intellectual tradition had been remaining intact till the beginning of twentieth century. According to him, the greatest achievement of the Hindu intellectual tradition was preservation of the knowledge of the Sanskrit language and literature.

Chaudhuri considers the Islamic intellectual tradition in India as independent of the Hindu influence. It was aimed at ensuring the continuation of the original Islamic way of life according to Shariah, the Islamic sacred law. This tradition was carried on by the Ulema, the learned men, who exerted a great influence on the modern Islamic society. They also received the patronage of the Raj and were employed in the Islamic learning colleges or Madrassas. He treats the new Muslim intellectual tradition as a continuation and modification of the old unlike the new Hindu activities. He writes: “… the new Muslim intellectual movement reinforced the old, and the two combined to bring about very important political consequences. Both fostered and strengthened the self-consciousness of Indian Muslims until they came to regard themselves as a separate nation from the Hindus and to demand a state of their own…” (1967:6-7). According to him, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Nawab Abdul
Latif, Nawab Amir Ali, Sir Syed Amir Ali were the outstanding figures of the new Muslim intellectual tradition.

The modern tradition, according to Chaudhuri, took its origin at the beginning of twentieth century as a result of the Western influence. It was the Bengali Hindus who, being influenced by Western education, launched the modern Indian cultural and intellectual movements. He believes that the effect of the Western intellectual traditions on the Hindu mind was so revolutionary that the Hindus developed a new way of thinking and became alienated from the old pundits. He considers Rammohan Roy to be the originator of the new intellectual movements. He points out that the modern intellectual tradition results firstly in the creation of modern literatures on the Western model, secondly in the religious reformation, and thirdly in political consciousness.

His classification of the intellectual tradition in India at the beginning of the twentieth century has been logical and his approach to Hindu, Muslim, and modern intellectuals is historical and objective to a great extent.

Chaudhuri indicates that the ideas created by the new Western intellectual tradition in the nineteenth century worked as a genuine force in the life and activities of the modern Hindus. Influenced by the Western intellectual tradition the Hindus were inclined to discover the means of adaptation to the new political and cultural milieu in a rational way. He writes:

In this attempt they were led to undertake four major inquiries: (1) what were the shortcomings of their own institutions and outlooks, and how were they to be removed? (2) How was national "self-respect and confidence to be revived? (3) In what manner were the incoming and irresistible elements of Western culture to be
absorbed and combined with their own traditions? (4) What attitude was to be adopted towards British rule and since in the ultimate analysis the only aim could be political independence how was it to be secured? (1967:15)

He discusses the Hindu schools of thought and shows that owing to its Western origin, the intellectual movement in India was initially liberal. He makes a difference between the conservative and the liberal schools. To the former, the sole mission of India was to preach her spiritual message and to the latter who put less importance on religious mission, India’s view was to bring about a synthesis of cultures. He observes that throughout the nineteenth century, religion was the subject of prime interest on the part of the Indian intellectuals. They took religion as a means of social reform. But when they could realize that unlike Christianity and Islam, Hindu polytheism was weakening the unity of the society, they preached monotheism as a social reform campaign. As to the nature of Hindu monotheism advocated in the nineteenth century, Chaudhuri writes: “Although...[it] was the outcome of the impact of Christianity it was in theory at all events completely Hindu. Both the schools of religious reform, Liberal and Conservative, went back to the Vedic, and mainly the Upanishadic, texts for their doctrine, and thus the one God of new Hinduism was in concept an impersonal immanent God” (1967:20).

With regard to the cultural life of the new intellectuals, Chaudhuri thinks that their movement gave birth to a great admiration for literary culture. These intellectuals believed that love for literature enlightened their artistic sensibilities and developed a sense of goodness which improved lifestyle.
Regarding the social, political, and economic ideas of the new movement, he indicates that they were all derived from the ideas of European Liberalism and Humanitarianism. Socially they were applied first to secure the elimination of specific evils like the burning of widows, infanticide, polygamy, early marriage and consummation, and then to general social welfare. In political sphere, the new intellectual efforts were aimed at creating an awareness of the necessity of independence in a society which was not yet possessed of even political freedom, let alone social or economic freedom. Compared to the social and political spheres, the economic sphere was greatly neglected. Only two ideas appeared in the economic realm, i.e. the economic exploitation of India by the British and the need for industrialization. Chaudhuri admits that although devoid of originality, the social, political, and economic ideas being influenced by Western thoughts could help develop an intellectual practice.

He has pointed out an aspect of Indian common people’s attitude towards the intellectual and cultural activities. He shows that the basic community has supported successive cultures, been partially influenced by them, but never made any positive contribution to them, nor has it been the active enemy of any. The masses constituting this community have been the Sudras, and Chaudhuri forecasts that if they continue in this state, they will not play a significant part in any further conflict of cultures in India. It is quite natural that nowhere in the world the whole of population takes part in the intellectual and cultural movements equally. So to negate all the further possibilities on their part on pretext of the previous inertia is questionable. Chaudhuri, of course, makes this inertia responsible for the failure of the intellectual and cultural activities
carried on by a minority to change the lifestyle of the messes. He also includes the women of India who too, for the most part remained unchanged by the new ideas. The Western intellectual tradition’s being a less powerless activity is also caused by this. He refers to the middle-class to be taken into account for gauging the influence of any intellectual tradition in India.

It was a weakness of the cultural and intellectual movement that the middle-class as a whole and the intellectual class did not coincide. Besides, people’s taking up the intellectual activities as a means of earning their living or of acquiring wealth and social position has been a great limitation on the movements. Chaudhuri finds all these problems and limitations hindering the advancement of the intellectual activities all over the world more or less but what surprised him in India was “the failure of the intellectual activities and interests to create even among the minority a real intellectual outlook on life” (Chaudhuri, 1967:31). As a consequence of the new intellectual movement, he makes mention of the growth of a social class whose outlooks, ideas, behaviour, and attitudes are utterly different from those of the traditional part of the middle-class. This class was comprised of men belonging to the liberal professions and the higher ranks in the civil service. The rest of the middle class were traditionalists who ceased to be influenced by the Western ideas.

He traces the process of the decline of the intellectual life and points out its causes. By decline he means the decay of intellectual interests. The decline was clearly evident in the sphere of education. He points out many symptoms of the decline. In his own words:
One of the most surprising and most disquieting, of these symptoms is the total absence of any outstanding intellectual... In normal course the years between 1900 and 1920 should have given birth to a number of men who would have attained a national intellectual status today. But nothing like this has happened. (1967:39-40)

The causes of this decline, according to him were, among others, the Indian middle class people’s food habits, especially the lack of adequate proteins, the lack of privacy, the family responsibility, the habits of social life, the general noisiness of life in India, the weather, and the climate. He considers even the effects of the Indian nationalist movement on intellectual life as harmful.

He defines an intellectual and suggests the ways of his survival in the teeth of dangers and difficulties. He writes:

An intellectual is a man who does or tries to do the following: (1) he applies his intellectual faculties ... to understand and interpret the world around him; (2) as a result of study, observation, and experiments he formulates conclusions which he believes to be true or, at all events truer than those which were current before; (3) he communicates his ideas to fellowmen with a view to influencing their mind, life and actions. (1967:54-55)

He is optimistic about today’s young intellectuals’ ability to do better. He suggests the young intellectual to keep ahead with intelligence, firmness, and determination. He indicates the enemies and friends of the intellectual, i.e. the obstacles he would face and the qualities he should cultivate. He adds: “... unless the intellectual is courageous, energetic, patient, and tactful the inertia and the opposition through which he will have to pass, will kill all his enterprise; above all, he must be sustained by faith and vision” (1967:62).
He advises the young intellectual on choice of profession, on the methods of reading and writing, on maintenance of time etc. He considers the universities and journalism as ostensibly intellectual. He ironically observes that the university, which should be the most natural field for an intellectual, is most discouraging. In his words: “They [the universities] are intellectually stagnant. The Indian academic world is laden with a deep somnolence without the justification of deep potations: it is mental vacuum, and not vintage port, which produces the abstracted air on the faces of the professors” (1967:64).

Chaudhuri points an accusing finger at the journalists who are used to supplying all grist to the mill. He considers bureaucracy in India as the most relentless enemy of intellectual freedom. An intellectual may be faced with troubles in his professional career but they can be resisted by his intelligence, courage, will-power, resourcefulness, and inspiration. Chaudhuri wants the intellectual to decidedly have the mental strength to ignore or fight his enemies. He implies that since both what the intellectual will be troubled by and how he will overcome this depend on him, he himself is held responsible for his success as well as failure.

Chaudhuri finally shows how the Indian intellectual can produce and sell his products. He includes only the Indian writer who writes in English and seeks publication in London or New York. He considers the status of a publisher conducive to the writer’s growth. He points out the difficulties of publication in the West. So he suggests the intellectual referring to his own experience not to be disappointed and to have patience.

Chaudhuri divides writers into two groups, the hacks and the conscientious ones. As to the language, he warns the Indian writer
against writing in the fashionable jargon of today imitating the literary journalism of London. He emphasizes the creation of a style completely of the intellectual’s own. He puts further importance on achieving the mastery of the natural rhythms of the English language. He gives the last piece of advice to the Indian intellectual writer to “write on such things on which ...[they] feel deeply and sincerely” (1967:80). Dilip Chitre does not approve of Chaudhuri’s view on this. To quote:

Mr Chaudhuri’s fallacy lies in assuming that the Indian writer in English has to bear, necessarily, the difficult double-burden of creating an adequate Western idiom and writing on ‘genuine Indian themes’. It is not picture post-card Indianness he objects to: he only wants better picture post-cards. He will perhaps accuse any modern, self-conscious and highly individualistic Indian creative writer of being un-Indian. He seems to expect all Indian novelists in English to write in a naturalistic, realistic or documentary vein. That amounts to forcibly pushing them backward into the nineteenth century. (1969:47)

M. K. Naik is, too, of a disapproving view on it. To quote: “Chaudhuri rather unjustly equates the intellectual with the writer--and what is worse--with the Indian English writer alone” (1982:267).

Although the monograph The Intellectual in India starts describing the historical study of the intellectual in Indian, it does not continue the logical sequence to the last. The last three chapters have been like a guide to the new Indian writers in English as to how to read, write, and publish, what to eat, how to lead their life etc. All these give a formal shape to the making of the intellectual which may easily prove ineffectual. Besides, in many of his utterances Chaudhuri sounds patronizing.
C. P. Verghese compares *The Intellectual in India* with Edward Shils' *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation* and considers the latter as scoring over the former especially in regard to the existence and development of the intellectual in India. As he puts: “If Chaudhuri analyses the historical reasons for the plight of the Indian intellectuals, Shils not only emphasizes their role in the intellectual environment in India as proponents of modernity, but suggests what they should do to cease to be ‘ersatz intellectuals” (1973:103). Shyam S. Agarwalla has tried to show the ineffectuality of the ways and means Chaudhuri suggests to help develop true intellectuals in India. As he puts:

India needs intellectuals who would inspire people to break the wall of casteism, communalism, parochialism, regionalism, separatism and integrate Indians into bonds of brotherhood, prosperity and nationalism. Chaudhuri can preach but cannot inspire. He writes for the elites, not for the subalterns. He is a modernist writer, not a postcolonial or a postmodernist one. (Dhawan, 2000:130)

Mr Agarwalla’s view is not fully acceptable. The purpose of writing should be pursuit of truth not to side with a particular class or group of people, which amounts to propaganda. Besides one does not necessarily need to be post-colonial or post-modern to inspire a certain generation. These are amorphous phenomena compared to which modernism is fairly timeless. In addition, the budding intellectuals need not be blindly modelled on Chaudhuri’s recipe. They can take it as a supplementary guideline.

The aim of Chaudhuri’s *To Live or Not to Live* (1970) “is to consider how [the Indians] can have a happy social and family life under the conditions to which [they] are born in this country”
(Chaudhuri, 1970:7). He has divided the book into two parts, i.e. social life and family life and each part is organized into five chapters. He gives an account of the problems of both spheres of Indian life which come as hindrance to living meaningfully. He believes in Plato’s dictum that uncriticized life is not worth living. So he accuses the Indians of living an unanalysed life. He theorizes about the prerequisite for a good social life in context of India. To quote: “... ‘good social life... consists in being positively happy in our human relations. This calls for certain qualities in our environment, in other human beings, and, above all, in ourselves’” (1970:18).

Chaudhuri is always very thorough-going in approach to an issue. That is why he does not leave out even the metropolitan impact on social life. To him the impact is detrimental. He mentions the social life in Delhi, which is a microcosm of the social life in India with a difference only of degrees not of nature. He observes that although Delhi is growing immensely, the growth is more demographic than social. In his words:

... so far as Delhi is organized, it is so mechanically and not biologically. It is a gigantic go-getting machine, and as such it has the terrifying complexity of a modern computer with its logic elements, transistors, thermistors, capacitors, resistors, and so on.... The sole life-blood of the city is provided by the motive of making money, most often by illegal and dishonest means. (1970:20)

He shows that while in the West cities are thought of as material bases for organized human communities, the new Indian megalopolis like Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay are ‘inorganic’, ‘uneccological’ and ‘unhealthy’ both socially and morally.
He points out that all the big cities in India could not make a homogeneous society. What has been done over the years with the changes of socio-political atmosphere, is the mixture of human beings without a definite psychological, cultural, and social unity. Consequently our cities contain many communities with their distinctive personality. Therefore he wishes to underscore the failure of the great cities in creating any form of organized social life. In fact, the majority of the population of a big city in India are merely a collection of individuals physically brought together but living in mental islands.

He does not take a favourable view of the social life in India. He bases his observations on many experiences he had. He gives a survey of the social life indicating the factors necessary for happiness in it. People in India are not interested in the personality of other people, not is there any personality to be interested in. He finds in Indian people an unusual insensitiveness in terms of character. They sum up a man’s character as simply good or bad which makes it difficult to get an idea about a man’s personality. He points at the source of this in the Hindu society. To quote:

This lack of perception comes, not only from lack of social education, but also from something else which is interwoven with the very structure of our character. Hindu society never learned to value man as a man, as an individual, as a personality, without reference to his worldly status. It is a regimented society in which the individual is only a pawn. In this society every individual has to be dull, and thus cease to be an individual, in order to enable the collective entity called Hindu society to survive, and to do so as a fossilized community. (1970:54)
Chaudhuri’s conception of social life is very simple. He considers interest, wonder, sympathy, and love as the prerequisites for a happy social life. He puts emphasis on discovering the personality of people and making them friends. In this respect, he regards social life “as a function of vitality” (1970:55).

He refers to persons who have longing for good social life and are possessed of considerable social capability such as heartiness, sympathy, knowledge, sophistication, and good manners. But they cannot be of use for their shortage of number and discouragement of the upstarts. Again the poor cannot be encouraged socially on account of their overconsciousness of the lack of money and worldly position. So he suggests that with a view to building up a satisfactory social life, the initiative should be taken by the cultured and enlightened persons of the well-off part of our society, who will make special efforts to win over the civilized poor.

He implies that the separation between men and women is the greatest failing in the social life in India. He accuses Muslim conquest of putting an end to all the glories of the man-woman relationship among the ancient Hindus. He adds that this has not been recovered anymore.

This was however, strengthened by a revival of the ancient erotica *Kama Sutra* by the Westernized Hindus. Chaudhuri, of course, claims that the Anglicized Hindu’s taking pride in his teenage daughter’s uninhibited passion for the degraded English version of the *Kama Sutra* is in vain. These erotic treatises have been to them a stimulant of contemporary Western sensuality. They have presented a wrong and lopsided picture of the man-woman relationship in ancient India where sex act appears to be the only concern. The whole gamut of the sex relationship in ancient India,
“extended from the physical, through romantic love and conjugal devotion, to this disinterested but chivalrous social meeting” (Chaudhuri, 1970:66).

He denies calling the present state of man-woman relationship in Indian social life liberal or progressive. In his words:

It would be a mistake to think that the atmosphere has become less charged in recent years because there is greater freedom for women, more mixing of the sexes, more co-education, more working together in offices.... The currency of catchwords like ‘boyfriend’ ‘girlfriend’ ‘dating’ or even ‘call girl’ does not make a society more liberal or progressive in regard to the man-woman relationship. (1970:68)

Similarly tolerance of promiscuity, adultery or fornication is not a proof of social liberalism.

Chaudhuri relates that women were kept confined over the centuries by men. This led to the creation of a dichotomy between them which is unimaginable in Europe and ancient Hindu India. Bengali women have entered the educational, social, and cultural world much later than the Bengali men. Since the thirties of twentieth century they began coming into their own. They are now changing the situation and earning a stronger position in the social life and getting empowered. He thinks it an inevitable outcome of a long-standing suppression. So, he does not get surprised to “look at the faces of even the most cultured Bengali men of today, [who] appear ... to be a dead, wooden lot--at best possessed of a static smugness” (Chaudhuri, 1970:73).

Chaudhuri’s views on women’s confinement in different societies sound partial. It is more or less true of all human societies, all over the world. Women were allowed to receive university degree
Chaudhuri refers to a number of personal letters written to him by different women and girls which he considers as indicative of the possibility of a civilized intercourse between men and women in India. Yet people's desire for that seems to be squashed by obsessions and inhibitions. He does not lose his hope. He suggests to find it in the men possessed of the power of and eagerness for conversation. Above all, his optimism is grounded in the Indian women's capacity for conversation. He argues that they may be conceived of as more silent than the men, but those who are acquainted with the social background of their taciturnity can interpret it correctly. He well interprets the situations when they tend to talk less. "But", says he, "invariably, when they get any opportunity, [they] show their power of speech: elderly women are as noisy as parrots; the young women as mynahs; and the girls as sparrows" (1970:78). So he emphasizes the transference of this loquacity to social use and takes pleasure in the fact that the women themselves are carrying out the transference. He came across a number of women with remarkable social aptitude and capacity for conversation. He saw them to be more active and wide ranging than the men in their mental life. He also bases his hope on the women's power of correspondence he experienced from the letters written to him by the women. He treats correspondence as an integral part of conversation.

Although he hopes for a betterment in the social life by means of the efforts suggested by him, he does not indulge in any over-expectation from them. He writes: "All that our men and
women with social talent can do is to create only an oasis in the
desert of our social life... I see no hope of rescuing our society from
its present domination by the vulgar and the uncultured, and the
most vulgar and uncultured are in the highest strata. But why not
save ourselves, if we cannot save others?" (1970:79). In the
concluding summery of part 1, he gives a prescription for happiness
in social life with a view to saving his countrymen.

Chaudhuri appears paradoxical in his treatment of women in
social life. He seems to be vacillating between hope and
hopelessness as to the possibility of an improvement in the social life
in India. The ways and means he suggests for the improvement are
derived basically from some of his personal incidents which may
well have many exceptions. He seems to have elevated the status of
the contemporary Bengali women. The points of his recipe for
happiness are didactic and sermon-like and completely related to
moral awareness which may be impracticable for people to continue
to follow. His too inductive reasoning has often led him to
fallacious conclusion and sweeping generalization in regard to
man-woman relationship in India. He sometimes concerns himself
with weird ideas leaving behind the pertinent ones. Sex-relationship
is associated with the super structure of the society which emanates
from its basic structure. So to dig out the cause of gender problem
in Indian social life and prescribe remedies for that, he should have
delved far deeper into the socio-economic and political background
of the country.

In part II of his book, he discusses the family life in India,
which is to his thinking, a more important element for a happy
existence in this world. He is at his carping bent here also, and hence
finds nothing good in it. He thinks that Hinduism has imposed
married and family life as an obligation arising from the concept of Dharma. He deals with both joint and unitary family and considers the latter as the genuine one.

He has discussed a catalogue of demerits of the joint family in contemporary India. He points out the major disadvantages of a joint family such as, "the destruction of individuality and the spirit of self-help, and the erosion of good feeling..." (1970:90). With a view to ensuring a satisfactory family life in India, he recommends to abandon the idea of the joint family, large or small, in principle and in practice. His attitude towards the joint family seems to be derived from his personal experience he gathered during his living with his brothers after resigning from the Military Accounts, when he was left with "the sensation of being steeped in the old humiliation" (Chaudhuri, 1987:188).

Chaudhuri thinks the emergence of the working women is hostile to the growth of a real family in Indian society. The unmarried working girls and the married working women are victims of social, economic, and psychological maladjustments. The former harm themselves and the latter their children. He glorifies the role of women in a civilized society especially in terms of building up the personalities of their sons and shows how the working women are jeopardizing this process.

Chaudhuri here sounds extremely patriarchal. As a modern representative of the old and traditional patriarchy he eulogizes women's excellence in son's personality building, not daughter's, being quite oblivious of the reverse. He seems to echo Napoleon's view of a good mother as a perquisite for a good nation. It is needless to add here that his view about working women in India
will surely not be welcomed by the feminists or even by the egalitarians.

He considers a sound, sensible, and successful marriage as the foundation of a happy family life. With this view in mind, he explicates marriage in Hindu society. He strongly resents the compromise between what is called arranged marriages and love-marriages. He treats this as artificial and unsatisfactory.

He cautions against unsatisfactory marriage saying that such marriages can at best be like a business partnership, but at their worst they will grow partners always cheating each other. After the physical charms fade away the husband and the wife are left with merely a neighbourly interest in each other and sometimes also with neighbourly friction and animosity. The spirit of true family life is jeopardised. He paints a grim picture of the marital breakdown in urban Hindu society. He shows that although the old procedure of arranged marriages is continuing in Hindu society, it is devoid of tradition. Today’s arranged marriages in his opinion no longer assure happiness.

Chaudhuri suggests to reject this sort of marriages. He, of course, does not advocate ‘free love’ or ‘unrestricted flirtation’. He considers knowing each other before marriage as the most important condition of post-marriage spousal relationship. Happy marriages can go fairly well without love, but cannot go without mutual respect and affection. He thinks that these pre-marital and post-marital relationships between young men and women are cramped in the social life in India leading to a perennial problem in family life. He pinpoints the gravity of the problem and gives a solution. To quote:
Looked at from the point of view of the young men and women themselves, the unnatural segregation is the most cruel and frustrating thing in contemporary Hindu society. This starvation of natural cravings results either in a deadening of the sensibilities, or in continuous suffering, or in a wild and perverted breaking out.... The only way to cure this is to reform our social life with an eye to marriage. (1970:153)

Chaudhuri's analysis of the man-woman relationship centering around marriage in context of Indian society is debatable.

The unitary family in his view is the only genuine family, which can, if properly maintained, better serve the real purpose of a family life. He emphasizes the role of the 'husband-and-father' and the 'wife-and-mother' in exerting a decisive influence on the unitary family in shaping its lifestyle and the spirit of atmosphere. But the Indian fathers in general remain absorbed in earning a living or pursuing earthly desires in terms of money-making ignoring their duties towards family. The mothers also neglect the family either for working as servants or for hatred of family responsibility. So, he believes that happiness in family life necessitates mutual awareness and agreement on the fundamental end between husband and wife.

In the concluding chapter of the book, Chaudhuri prescribes some basic principles of happiness in family life. He proclaims that happiness cannot be achieved without self-denial and sacrifice. He adds that the first requisite for getting happiness in the company of others is to render unselfish love to them. He concludes: "The suggestion which matters most and is implicit throughout the book, is that to make others happy is the surest way of getting happiness for ourselves" (1970:176).

The book To Live or Not to Live expresses Chaudhuri's deep concern over what he thinks to be the unsatisfactory social and
family life in contemporary India. Maybe he has tried to identify the underlying problems subjectively and substantiate his notion discursively, but he has not moved on his chief motive of showing his countrymen the ways and means of happiness. How far these would act on the advancement of Indian social and family life is less important. More important is his worry for human welfare and sense of altruism. C. P. Verghese says: "...the book on the whole has a definite aim and a continuity of theme ... What is striking about the book is Chaudhuri’s insistence on the pursuit of happiness as a duty by the Hindus..." (Naik, 1982:204). B. S. Naikar is of appreciative comments on this book. To quote: "The essay To Live or Not to Live is discursive, analytical, explicatory and elaborate in its style and helps the reader to understand the man-woman relationship from a liberal point of view. The clarity of views expressed in this essay is remarkable and speaks of Chaudhuri’s sharp intelligence and stunning scholarship behind it" (1985:91-92). M. K. Naik too, approvingly comments: "[Chaudhuri’s] criticism of Hindu society is not totally unbalanced here" (1982:268).

Chaudhuri’s Culture in the Vanity Bag (1976) is about Indian clothing and adornment. He observes in India a great variety of costumes in keeping with the cultural habits of different types of peoples. He gives an intellectual notion of the sartorial practice of Indian people and shows that it is as evolutionary as the peoples of India. In his words: "... the evolution of clothing in India has been only a part of the historical evolution of the peoples of India, possessing similar features, following similar lines, and producing similar results" (1976:XI).
The first part of the book discusses the orders and taxonomy of clothing. Chaudhuri classifies Indian costumes into six groups in keeping with the categories of the peoples. Firstly, Mongoloid costumes, which are two pieces of loom-woven cloth, whose one piece is worn round the shoulders and the other round the waist. Second comes the Aboriginal costumes which are comprised of one piece of cotton cloth worn by both men and women. The third group of the costumes namely Aryan costumes, is an expanded form of those of the second group. The fourth group is of Nomadic costumes made up of a very full skirt, a closely fitted bodice, and nowadays even a blouse or a kamiz, and a scarf or cotton shawl. Group five is Muslim clothing which is comprised of sewn costumes based on the remains of the original costumes of the Muslim rulers. Sixth is the European costumes. Chaudhuri calls these six groups of clothing “Natural Orders” which correspond to the main ethnic groups of the people of India.

He believes that dressing and personal adornment have a psychological basis. It is an essential mode of self-assertion. This tradition of display is manifested in clothing and jewellery. In ancient India as it is suggested by the sculpture, jewellery had been the major element in adornment. But clothing too, was not neglected. In Hindu society adornment was based on the gold standards.

The picture of the different clothing groups and the concerned people’s attitude towards garments and adornment reveal Chaudhuri’s keen observation of social and cultural life in India.

Part two of the book deals with the conflicts over clothing in India. Chaudhuri believes that the different types of clothing will go on to continue side by side in India as they have existed earlier. But what is more important to him is not their co-existence or even their
overlapping and intermingling; it is their standing in “irreconcilable and unbridgeable antithesis, complete in theory and substantially so in practice. In short, just as there is no Indian nation, there is no Indian dress” (Chaudhuri, 1976:49).

The conflict between different kinds of clothing, however, has not broken out always or in the same way. Chaudhuri explicates that until the Muslim conquest, the clothing of the peoples of different racial origins were distinct and separate. But with the advent of Muslim rule in India at the end of the twelfth century, a rival group of civilized clothing got established for the first time which was in an advantageous position over Hindu clothes. According to him, the new Muslim rulers were militant proselytizers who would impose their costumes on the converted Hindus and others as well who were associated with them. This proved a real threat to Hindu costume which started disappearing to some extent. The Hindus, too, turned militant to defend their clothing and as a result a feud between the two orders of clothing began.

With the establishment of British rule another set of clothes were introduced to Indian people. The Hindus adopted Western clothing gracefully. But the British ruling and commercial classes in India did not like the Hindu to share equal cloth-style and prescribed the Muslim costume for those Hindus with whom they had to deal. So, the nature of conflict between the Hindu and Muslim clothing and that between the British and the Hindu are not identical. But with the variations of degree and nature the existence of conflict over costumes is undeniable.

Chaudhuri goes on to say that the conflict in its current phase is of a low quality. Like the post-independence governance of the country which he calls “Brown Colonialism” and “a caricature of the
British imperialism”, the conflict of clothes is also “nothing better than degenerate aping without any ideal or principle behind it” (Chaudhuri, 1976:87). He accuses the present [ the then ] government of inflicting slights on Hindu clothing almost as the Muslim or British rulers did. He gives many examples of the humiliation of the Hindus in dhoti during the very regime of the post-Independence Government of India. He has been highly critical of the first President and first Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru for their allegedly pseudo-love for Hindu dress and genuine liking for Muslim clothes. He seems to have a hard-line attitude towards the relation between the Hindu and the Muslim clothes. He never allows a Hindu to wear Muslim dress. This is surely a dogmatic attitude. The Hindu and the Muslim have been living in India side by side over the centuries. So it is quite natural to come about social, cultural, and sartorial intermingling. It is liberal of somebody to welcome this.

Chaudhuri sketches a candid picture of the feminine clothing and fashions in contemporary India. He classifies the women in terms of their fashions. The first group is comprised of the elderly women of the upper middle-class holding important positions in Indian society. Although they dress well and expensively, but their style of adornment appears to him as an uneasy compromise between the Hindu traditions and the Western ones. The next group consists of the younger women, mostly the daughters and daughters-in-law of the upper middle-class women. They dress in a naturally Westernized manner and impress others by their fashions. But given their appearance, they are less skilled in conversation. Another group is composed of girls from the new rich families devoid of any
cultural background. Although they apparently look revolutionary, they seem to be unpleasantly film-posterish to him. Some of them are coquettes by nature. Chaudhuri has strongly criticized the blind imitation of Western fashions. He bears resentment against the Indian women who cut off their hair, powder their faces, colour their lips and cheeks in Western manner.

He considers women’s display of the bust as an expression of fashion. What he sees in India today is:

[a]n egregious mammary and even mamillary ostentation stalks where it ought not. Foreign aid which is trying hard to do something for our under-developed economy without much perceptible result, has already succeeded in far less time and with no effort at all in over-developing the bust. No self-respecting Indian woman today is without her ‘bra’, and the more assertive of these articles are always driving out the less assertive. (1976:118)

What Chaudhuri calls “the exhibition of the posterior” is another expression of fashion of the contemporary Indian women. As he puts:

The hips are now displayed both under the sari and the kamiz in their realistic rodnutity down to the very junction with the thighs, and in addition there is a more or less complete indication of the bifurcation or bilateral symmetry. Some women make their dressmakers put a deep seam vertically in their petticoats along the axis of the spine, and wear a thin sari not to allow a bushel to hide that light. This makes the display too anatomical to be pleasing. (1976:120)

He considers the contemporary Indian women’s display of the body as a unique one. It is not being displayed in the traditional Hindu way, nor in the Muslim way “of softening too much flesh by
delicately flowing clothes” nor even the Western way of slipping into the bikini, though they aim at the same effect. “So,” he adds, “they are keeping on their full complement of clothing, only tightening it as if it was skin and not artificial integument” (1976:121).

Chaudhuri brings out the ugly aspects of the vulgar sartorial fashions of the contemporary Indian women. He shows how fashion and sensuality are considered as relational. Chetan Karnani agrees with him in this respect. As he puts: “… the fashions in dress arouse sensuality” (2001:167). Fashionable women are sometimes meeting with unpleasant situation. As Chaudhuri says:

The fashions have even become a police matter, because they are being connected with a scandal, which is growling in all the big Indian cities. This is the molestation of well-dressed young girls by loafing young men. To speak only of Delhi… the nuisance became so widespread in many quarters, particularly the university area that special police arrangements had to be made to protect the girls. (1976:133)

But they seem to have no inkling of what they are doing. So to advise them to do the right thing is, according to Chaudhuri, similar to crying in the wilderness.

Culture in the Vanity Bag is a critical analysis of Indian clothing and adornment, but not a thoroughly researched book. M. K. Naik too, judges the book as “an application of Chaudhuri’s favourite theosis on Indian history to sartorial fashions…” (1982:268). It is a racy account of such a subject which usually goes almost untouched by the general run of the authors. Chaudhuri has painstakingly tried to dig deep into the historical, sociological, anthropological background of Indian clothing and in the light of
first-hand experiences formulates his sartorial vision. His treatment is full of wit, humour, irony, and sarcasm. Although sometimes he sounds discursive, repetitive, and biased, the total effect of his work is impressive. His lament for the Hindu’s loss of traditional clothing, gross imitation of the Muslim cloth-style, and failure to accept the true spirit of the Western one seems genuine though dated. B. S. Naikar evaluates the book. To quote him:

*Culture in the Vanity Bag* shows Chaudhuri’s serious approach to the sartorial habits of Indians. He analyzes the philosophy of clothing in a very sophisticated manner armed with the historical sense. He has shown how the Hindus are casual and mindless in their imitation of the Muslim or British clothes and how they are not bothered about contradictions in their sartorial habits. The book is historical, analytical and satirical at the same time and holds a mirror to Chaudhuri’s microscopic intelligence and incisive analysis. (Dhawan, 2000:157)

Unice de Souza remarks: “Chaudhuri’s descriptions are animated by great attention to detail, anecdotes, extracts, from novels and Sanskrit text, but the prose sometimes reads like a blurb in a fashion magazine” (Mehrotra, 2002:215). Chetan Karnani points to the erotic aspects of the book. To quote: “*Culture in the Vanity Bag* is easy prurience. The book is an exercise in erotics. The third section of the book has lot of exciting titillation” (2001:166). But his treatment of the erotic does not sound extraneous or vulgar.

*Hinduism, A Religion to Live By* (1979) is a major work by Chaudhuri on an important Indian theme. It is aimed at describing and interpreting Hinduism, the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. Chaudhuri here emphasizes their religious psychology and behaviour. In the introduction, he tries to define Hinduism as a
special kind of religion independent of the Western approach to it. He shows that Hinduism differs fundamentally from Christianity and Islam although there is a common belief in life hereafter, and in the supra-mundane things which form the basics of every religious system. As to the religious observance and worship of the Hindus he says: “Salvation is never the object of the religious observances and worship of the Hindus. The main object is worldly prosperity, and this absorption in the world has made the doctrine of rebirth in it the most appealing and strongly held belief among all the notions put forward by them about existence after death” (1979:10). Not only is the intermingling of religion and worldliness related to Hinduism, there is also a feeling of holiness given to all kinds of worldly prosperity. Chaudhuri explains that the reason for the worldliness of Hinduism is the Hindu’s acceptance of their religion as a supernatural overlay on the natural world, which is inseparable.

According to him “Hinduism is a human phenomenon of immense magnitude…. [It] is a civilized amplification of the primitive man’s way of living in the world by accepting the conditions which he believes are inexorably laid down by the supernatural spirits who really own and govern it” (1979:21).

He says that the Rig-Veda is the earliest text of Hinduism and is regarded as the original revealed source of their religion by all Hindus. It is still recited with utmost perfection. Gita is another source of Hinduism whose position is even more striking. It is recited everyday by the devout Hindus at religious ceremonies with due solemnity and religious fervour.

As far as the history of Hinduism is concerned, Chaudhuri emphasizes the fact that Hinduism, whose full development as a religion has dated back to the fifth century A. D., has remained
almost the same in contemporary India. The beliefs and practices of the religion have remained substantially unchanged, despite numerous variations and outgrowths. The cult of the three supreme deities, i.e. Siva, Vishnu-Krishna, and Sakti have flourished alongside and are still doing. The only new development according to Chaudhuri, is the transformation of the cult of Vishnu-Krishna into that of Radha and Krishna. The later Hindu pantheon is a development of the Vedic, and all the gods of the older religion have remained gods in the new. In addition, the whole Vedic system of rituals has continued in the public and private practice of the religion. He exemplifies the point: “...the three most important events in a Hindu’s life, initiation, marriage, and funeral—which naturally have a religious character—are conducted according to Vedic rituals even today” (1979:62). Besides the most obligatory religious duties of a Hindu are inherited from the old ritualistic literature, while the doctrines and rites of the later cults are optional. “In a word”, he says, “the Hindus practise their historic religion only *ad libitum*” (1979:63). The Hindus are devoted to all their deities, although they may have some particular local or personal deities, such as Kali in Calcutta, Siva at Benares, Krishna at Mathura or Brindaban etc.

He regards the class differences in spirit and practice of Hinduism as a product of social stratification in Hindu society. The priestly class, the landed aristocracy, and the commercial class are at the top of this superimposed differences. No one except for a Brahmin can be a priest. The Brahmans who belonged to the priestly class did not believe that Hinduism with all its rituals and observances laid down in the sacred texts had undergone any change. A majority of them learnt the texts and performed the
rituals mechanically for the sake of a living. He describes the priestly class:

In fact, only these men performed the function of the Brahmin caste as laid down in the Sastras. They held the conscience of all lay Hindus, who in all matters of orthodoxy and correctness appealed to them. They enjoyed great authority and respect, and exercised the function of spiritual directors.... It was by them... that Hindu philosophy of different schools was studied and the continuity of the philosophical tradition maintained. (1979:137)

He has been critical of the professionalization of the priesthood of the Brahmin class. Apart from the religious life of the priestly Brahmins, the class expression of Hinduism had another aspect, which was seen in the observances of those who had a high worldly position such as the Hindu princes, the Hindu landed aristocracy, and also the commercial aristocracy. The princes and the land-owners could belong to any caste regardless of high and low. The commercial aristocracy was primarily of the Vaisya or trading class. The wealthy landed and commercial families built and endowed temples which were open to the general public. This is how they maintained the hold of Hinduism over the common people. In fine, Chaudhuri admits that these classes were directly instrumental in the preservation of Hinduism. He figuratively calls them “the patrons of the gods in the world” (1979:138).

He also touches on the common people’s practice of Hinduism which he calls “mass expression”. The common people had a Hinduism of their own, which was practised as a folk religious culture, not a civilized one. It was therefore more self-supporting and less dependent than higher Hinduism. But it had also different
layers such as the small tradesmen, craftsmen, and prosperous agriculturists. It was nourished under the influence of popular minor prophets who preached the principles of Bhakti or love. The preachers and minor prophets mostly emerged from these classes.

Chaudhuri explicates the Hindu ideas about after-life. The Hindu rites about the dead, according to him, are based on a Vedic religious view that the departed spirits lived in a shadowy world, which was called Pitri-loka (world of the ancestors) or the Pretaloka (world of spirits). They could not get food and drink unless their descendants offered them periodical oblations called tarpana (satisfaction) with balls of flour or gram (pinda) and water.

Like the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Hindu pilgrimage is not a compulsory duty although practically the Hindus are more used to going on frequent pilgrimages. Chaudhuri opines that the real Hindu pilgrimage is related to water, particularly the river. Tirtha, the Sanskrit word for a place of pilgrimage, primarily means a bathing place.

Chaudhuri depicts the character of Hindu sectarian differences. First, by means of the general evolution of Hinduism, all Hindu beliefs and practices became separated and reduced to three major cults namely Vishnu cults, Siva cults and Sakti cults, which all the sects of orthodox Brahmanism were affiliated to. Secondly, the dissident or non-conformist sects of Hinduism created by the religious innovators, reformers, and popular prophets. Lastly, the sects which were related to the position of a group of people in Hindu society such as the laity, who are connected with worldly interests, and the ascetics, hermits, mendicants, who have renounced the world. These sects are either Vaishnava or Siva. Chaudhuri discovers that among the ascetics and the lower castes, the sectarian
attachment was stricter than others. He observes that the popular sects were the most exclusive in terms of religious observances, but they were not hostile to others. Chetan Karnani appreciates Chaudhuri’s depiction of the character of Hindu sectarian differences (2001:163).

Chaudhuri describes some important taboos and injunctions of personal and social life of the Hindu by his religion. As far as the food habits are concerned, he points out that the food habits of the Hindus in ancient times were different from those of the Hindus of later period. Although the exact time of the advent of vegetarianism cannot be determined, he assumes that by the eighteenth century it had become binding on all high-caste Hindus. As to beef he says:

Beef is the supreme taboo for all Hindus, and observance of this taboo is for all practical purposes the only infallible religious test for them. This is an extension of the worship of the cow and abstention from cow-killing... But ... in ancient times the Hindus could eat beef. In fact, it was considered to be the best food which could be offered to a Rishi (Sage) or a very distinguished guest. (1979:193)

Although fish was the common food in Bengal, but the Hindus of other regions especially of northern India considered eating of fish as the greatest religious offence. Drinking alcohol is a major sin in Hindu sacred law but this injunction has never been strictly followed throughout India. With regard to acceptance of food and drink from other people there remained injunctions. No Hindu could eat with anybody belonging to a different caste. At banquets the different castes would have been seated in wholly separated places.
In respect of the Hindu clothing, Chaudhuri implies that the first requirement was its being unsewn. For both men and women, there were two pieces of cloth, one worn round the waist to cover the lower limbs, and the other thrown round the torso. So far as ornaments are concerned, most of the ornaments worn by them were of solid gold. Widows were not allowed to wear any ornaments, nor were they allowed to use vermilion, whereas using vermilion at the hair-parting was obligatory for the women with living husbands.

While dealing with the Hindu concept of guilt and atonement Chaudhuri shows that the basic feature of Hinduism lies in the fact that the notion of sin here is not confined to only religious or moral matters. It rather includes almost everything that can happen to a householder such as, the death of a cow, being bitten by a dog, having sexual intercourse during the day or on a festival day, not having that at the end of the wife’s menstruation, eating after massaging oil but without bathing, eating while wearing blue cloth etc. The atonements are like fasting, reciting the Gayatri Mantra etc.

The majority of the Hindus, as Chaudhuri relates, believed and still believe that everything in their worldly existence is determined and controlled by the planets and stars. The time of one’s birth was considered as a fact for finding out the future events of an individual’s life. This would have been done by the family Jyotishi or astrologer who would prepare the horoscope of the child. He adds that the Hindu concept of life was dominated by the sense of impurity. All material things, including the human body itself were regarded as terribly impure. The Hindus had gone almost obsessed with this idea of impurity.
Almost all aspects of life of the Hindus are directly or indirectly related to their practice of religion. As Chaudhuri puts it: “A people who had brought religion into its day-to-day life… could not possibly leave the most important events of a man or woman’s life free from its control and sanction, uninvested with its consecration. Thus they made all these events, e.g. conception, birth, coming of age, marriage, and death, as well as many other occasions which other societies look upon as purely secular, subject to religion” (1979:208).

Chaudhuri analyses the most important objects of the religious devotion of the Hindus, e.g. Siva, the Mother Goddess, who is his consort and goes under the names of Parvati, Durga, Kali and many others, and Krishna. The other gods and goddesses of Hindu polytheistic pantheon are beyond compare. The worship of these three deities is the most important feature of Hinduism. The cults of these three constitute the expression in three forms, which Chaudhuri calls “the polymorphous monotheism of the Hindus” (1979:237). He considers it as the most important development in Hinduism in its transition from the prehistoric to the historic age. Siva is a new god created in India, who is thought to have descended from the Vedic pantheon. The mythology relating to him and his consort, according to Chaudhuri, was created after the breach of relations between the Aryans who remained in Iran and those who became Indo-Aryans. Siva is a personal and anthropomorphic god. He is the supreme god of the Hindus. The nature of devotion to him was exceptionally not incorporated with any form of human love. It remained on the plane of divine love. In regard to his distinctiveness Chaudhuri says:
"... Siva was probably the first and only god of the monotheistic Hinduism which replaced Vedic polytheism as the highest expression of the religious sentiment of the Hindus" (1979:241).

Chaudhuri refers to Siva’s consort Parvati, known in her cults either as Durga or Kali, as the Hindu Mother Goddess. She is a goddess of rulers and warriors. In her divine personality, she is one. There is no distinction between Durga and Kali. But the iconography and mode of worship are different. Durga was worshipped once a year in an image made for the occasion only which was thrown into water after the festival of worship was over. But Kali was normally worshipped only in permanent temples. Chaudhuri indicates that personal devotion to both Durga and Kali had no relation to their mythology or ritual. No attention was paid to Durga’s warlike posture, and only her beauty and splendour were admired. Similarly the naked image of Kali did not raise any disrespectful feeling.

The cult of Krishna, according to Chaudhuri’s view, is the most important in comparison with those of Siva and the Mother Goddess. This cult is imbued with human quality and hence popular among the Hindus. In India this cult has the largest number of adherents. But they of course, do not refrain from worshiping the other two. The Krishna cult is the most joyous throughout India. It has four joyful festivals connected with the life and doings of Krishna.

Unlike the two other cults, the cult of Krishna cannot be traced back to the Vedic religion. It is a wholly later development. It is not the worship of a god of the Hindu pantheon but of his incarnation in a human form. Krishna himself is a god since he is the
human form of the Vedic god Vishnu. The most important feature of the Krishna cult is that it inaugurated a wholly new form of religious sentiment among the Hindus, known as bhakti, which implies the self-surrender of human beings to a personal god of love. But the concept of bhakti has undergone many changes. But the feature common to all phases is a strong emotionalism.

With a number of examples and erotic references Chaudhuri shows how Krishna cult has been pervasive in the Hindu society although love for Krishna at every level of the society or with all types of character, has not been the same. Finally Chaudhuri emphasizes the pervasiveness of the Krishna cult among the Hindus. To quote: “One thing which should always be kept in mind in dealing with the Krishna cult is that Krishna can be all things to all men. He can give the liar the impudence to utter any lie, the man who serves truth the courage to face the starkest truth, the jester the occasion to exhibit his drollery. But to l'homme sensuel moyen hindou he is the most accessible of all his gods” (1979:293).

This part of the book where Chaudhuri discusses the cults of Siva, Durga-Kali and Krishna, has been regarded by Chetan Karnani as “the most absorbing and original part of the whole book because it is based on concrete observation” (2001:164). R. K. Kaul too admits: “Chaudhuri is undoubtedly right about the Krishna cult. The god is the darling of every Hindu lady, the subject matter of most classical music and shares with Siva the central place in classical dance” (1998:126).

In the epilogue of the book, Chaudhuri unconventionally deals with Hindu spirituality which should have been discussed in the core part of the book. By spirituality he means its current conception derived from Christianity which is “connected with what
is called soul, an entity quite distinct from the body, in which it only sojourns temporarily” (1979:311). Chaudhuri has briefly examined the entire process of the evolution of Christian spirituality in order to bring out the true character of Hindu spirituality. What he finds out is that Hindu religious sentiment never took the equal line of development as taken by Christianity. It remained true to the original motivation of spirituality, which was to get rid of all limitations imposed on man by Nature. “Thus” says Chaudhuri:

Hindu spirituality is a pursuit, not of beatitude, but of power. It has to be pointed out that in Sanskrit there is no word for spirituality, nor was there any in any modern Indian language until the notion was introduced through the English language. Then with a grotesque and illogical disregard of its original meaning, a Sanskrit word (adhyātmik = concerning the self) was made an equivalent of ‘spiritual’ in English. (1979:314-315)

According to Chaudhuri, Hindu spirituality is partly a survival from the original form of bhakti and partly a revival of the impact of Islam. This type of spirituality is evident among the Hindus, who are conscious of the unseen God who is not worshipped formally but remains the ultimate God of all Hindus. He reminds us that the true Hindu spirituality which is seen in the pursuit of power, is not of a single type. The basic two types can be perceived between its introvert and extrovert expressions. As he puts it: “The first is seen in the Way of Knowledge--the Jnana Marga, and the second in the Way of Action--the Karma Marga” (1979:316). Both in his view are important aspects of Hindu spirituality.

He explains that of these two, the brand of spirituality found in the way of action could never have escaped its mundane character, which the other probably could. He concludes his book
Hinduism indicating what he regards as the most important aspect of 
Hindu spirituality. To quote: “So Hindu spiritual life became pursuit 
of power through religion. It is this infatuation with power which has 
nullified the greatest religious discovery of the Hindus” (1979:329).

How far Chaudhuri’s assessment is acceptable is surely 
subject to discussion. If it is true of Hinduism, it should be of other 
religions also. Chetan Karnani points out: “This is true as much of 
Christianity. William Empson compared Milton’s God to uncle Joe 
Stalin” (2001:166). Karnani also accuses Chaudhuri of having 
“queer ideas about salvation” (2001:160), and calls the book 
Hinduism abnormal for its description of a core theme like Hindu 
spirituality in the epilogue. But Chaudhuri has clear explanation for 
this. Always he has analytically sought out the spiritual message of 
the Hindus in his book.

Hinduism has been a major contribution to the study of the 
subject. Khushwant Singh considers it as Chaudhuri’s most serious 
book which is “not the platitudinous repetition of what one sees in 
other books on the subject…but an altogether novel and refreshing 
approach to Hinduism as it is practised and what it means to the 
average Hindu” (Dasgupta, 1997:38). It provides a description and 
interpretation of Hinduism at greater length focusing on the religious 
psychology and behaviour of the Hindus. Rejecting familiar 
assumptions about early Hinduism, the author provides illuminating 
insights into its formative influences and investigates various aspects 
of Hinduism. The historical, descriptive, and analytical aspects of 
the book have given the subject fullness.

Chaudhuri’s treatment of the features of Hinduism is minute 
and his approach is phenomenological. Unlike many of his books it
is mostly objective and wholly an intellectual attempt. R. K. Kaul comments:

Chaudhuri’s later book *Hinduism*... is a more sober work on the subject. The work is scholarly... but the formidable paraphernalia of research which it carries makes it less readable... There are fewer provocative or polemical utterances.... The chief strength of Chaudhuri's exposition of Hinduism lies in his refusal to gloss over the unpleasant features of Hindu beliefs and practices. (1998:142-143)

Chaudhuri seems to want his readers to be fully acquainted with the contents of Hinduism. He shows that a key problem of understanding Hinduism is the confusion between Hinduism and Hindu mythology, which are as such different from each other in many ways. He has meticulously differentiated between the two from a nonconformist angle of vision. Eunice de Souza says: “*Hinduism*...[is] a discussion of beliefs, regional variations, taboos, and myths, [which] derives part of its interest from the fact that he attempts such a discussion despite the fact that he has no faith in Hinduism or any other religion” (Mehrotra, 2002:215). Although K. Natwar-Singh rates *Hinduism* as “a competent work rather than an insipid one,” he however, finds some faults with it. He adds: “Nirad C. Chaudhari did not say much about Buddhism and no study of Hinduism can neglect the Buddha and his teachings. He is not even mentioned in the index. He [Chaudhuri] also, to some extent, exaggerated Greek influence on Hinduism” (Dasgupta, 1997:99). M. K. Naik cogently critiques:

*Hinduism* (1979) is a sketchy and one-sided presentation of a subject to which Chaudhuri returns again and again. The historical account is scrappy and the descriptive part makes too much of several taboos which
are only of peripheral significance; while the analytical part makes no attempt to probe into the basic tenets of Hinduism and merely describes several cults. There is also the usual quota of sweeping generalizations.... The best part of the book is Chaudhuri's observations on Hinduism in Bengal. (1982: 269)

Chaudhuri has described Hinduism as a means of living in the world with the help of supernatural agencies. He has categorically said that the Hindus never took any other view of their religion. He has been highly critical of the tendency to practise religion as a means of the pursuit of worldly profits. He has unequivocally commented on a sensitive subject like religion about which most of the writers tend to hedge their bets. V. S. Naipaul too, deals with Hindu India especially in his India: A Wounded Civilization. He fathomes India by Hindu norms of karma, dharma, and moksha. To his thinking, Hinduism emphasizes withdrawal from the physical and social world. He considers the Hindu concept of dharma as "the right way which all men must follow according to their natures...it touches the high ideals of other civilizations" (1977:69). Chaudhuri, however, does not hold as high notion about Hinduism especially in practice as Naipaul does. His view is more derogatory than Naipaul’s.

A careful analysis of his works on India reveals the fact that Chaudhuri was a dispassionate critic of his country sometimes to the point of being very harsh. Hardly any aspect of Indian society and custom is left uncriticized by him. He approached things around him most critically. His pungent criticism of Indian life and vitriolic attack on Indian culture, shattered many of the age-old ideas and
passionate feelings of his countrymen and he was given the appellation ‘anti-Indian’.

Edward Shils, however, dismisses this charge. To quote him: “... the belief that he [Chaudhuri] is anti-Indian is not true. It is true only in the sense that there are certainly features of India society of which he disapproves very severely” (1988:554). He distinguishes between Chaudhuri and other Indian intellectuals who, too, criticized India. To quote: “It is not uncommon for Indian intellectuals to criticize Indian society. But Chaudhuri’s criticisms have touched the Indian intellectuals where it hurts; his criticisms are more comprehensive, and they allow few exceptions” (1988:66). R. K. Kaul, however, differs with Shils. He says: “... in spite of his monumental scholarship, Chaudhuri’s formulations about Indian history and culture are essentially unsound.... A scholar who approaches his study with so much bias can never arrive at sound conclusions...” (1998:142).

Chaudhuri’s resentment against some aspects of Indian life such as the Anglicized upper middle-class, seems to be so acute that his criticism turns into what Nissim Ezekiel calls “subjective dogmas” (Rao, 2000:193). He appears obsessed with a strong aversion to them. But on the whole he was not oblivious of his greater motive of criticism. R. S. Pathak admits: “Nirad C. Chaudhuri, despite all his dogmatism, eccentricity and arrogance, has paid considerable amount of attention to the problems that have beset India and Indians” (2000:14). While giving a postcolonial interpretation of Chaudhuri’s works, Purabi Panwar says: “...while writing about India and Indians, he is both the insider with his knowledge of history and classics and outsider who would attack
anything he finds irrational, unscientific or simply outdated” (Dhawan, 2000:235).

So, on the basis of his apparent criticism of India without realizing his ulterior motive, one cannot gauge Chaudhuri’s real attitude towards India and the Indians. He was a true lover of his motherland. As Edward Shils puts it: “Mr Chaudhuri was an Indian patriot from the beginning, and he has always remained one. He had a sense of being an Indian more than of being a Hindu…” (1988:588).

Apparently he may seem to be a hysterical Hindu-hater, but in reality, considering the latent aims of his writings, his treatment of India and the Indians can easily prove justifiable. He himself admits:

“I am not a bad sort at bottom, though I have to criticize my people for their good” (1959:115).