Chapter I

Nation a

And Narrative

The idea of man without nation seems impossible to modern imagination. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity. But, it has emerged that nation is an inheritance, a cultural determinant. Nation and nationalism have become an integral part of people’s psyche. Geography and psychography cannot be separated from human thoughts, moods and emotions.

Nations, in simple terms, are lived communities whose members share a homeland and a culture. Nation is thus defined by geography, both physical and cultural. Nationalism, on the other hand, is a political ideology the object of which is an existing or envisaged nation-state wherein cultural and political boundaries coincide. But these basic definitions become inadequate when they are considered in varied perspectives. Nation-ness, indeed, is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of contemporary society.
Nation is different from the concept of state. The state refers to an institutional activity; it is an expression of political sovereignty, while the nation is a collective identity and it denotes a type of community. In Joseph Stalin’s view, “a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (Qtd in Smith, -11). This typical view in the conception of nation has evolved recently. During the last century the term “nationalism” acquired the range of meanings that are associated with it today. Most of its meanings are associated with the struggle of the former colonies against the imperial regimes and colonial hegemonies.

The attempts to define nations in terms of the possession of a common language, race, religion, culture or descent, a distinct territory, and so on, seem inadequate in the constitution of a modern nationality. Ernest Renan’s influential lecture, “What is a nation?” illustrates that the definitions based on such objective attributes could not distinguish all the entities now recognized as nations. For Renan, a nation is a “soul” or a “spiritual principle” (Bhabha, 19). It is the result of the profound complications of history: a spiritual family beyond the divisions of language, race, religion, culture, territory, and so on.
Renan identifies two qualities which constitute this soul or spiritual principle called nation. The first one is the possession of a rich legacy of memories from different sources. The second is the present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form (Bhabha, 19). What ultimately holds a nation together, as Renan insists is, “the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together” (Bhabha, 19). A nation is thus, a “large-scale solidarity” which presupposes a past and envisages a present with a consent to live a common life.

Nation is often an ambiguous term and it has been a site for contestation. In a way, the term nation is both “new” and “historical.” As a term, it refers to both the modern nation-state and something more ancient and nebulous. In this regard, Timothy Brennan’s reference to British cultural historian Raymond Williams in “The National Longing for Form” is significant:

‘Nation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native.’ We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and ‘placeable’ bonding is of quite
fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial. (Cited in Bhabha, 45)

This perplexity between nation and nation-state is familiar among the theorists of nationalism. They are often caught between the historians’ perspective of the objective modernity of nations and the nationalists’ perspective of their subjective antiquity.

There is an ambiguity and ambivalence in the concept of nation. Nation is something between a concept and an object. Nation’s existence is at once conceptual and objective. So there is a geography and a psychography associated with a nation. A psychological geography consolidates a physical geography. So a community like Moses’s Israel in ancient Egypt of the early Palestine in the Middle East or the theocratic state of Dalai Lama cannot be termed a nation as they exist only in concept and often called “nation in exile.” Likewise, Antarctica cannot be called a nation as it has only mere physical existence. It becomes a nation when a community conceives it as a nation and lives there. So the idea of a nation is two fold; it has a conceptual and an objective aspect.

This ambivalence in the idea of the nation is evident in the writings of many modern theorists. In his book, Nation and Narration,
Homi K. Bhabha details this ambivalence in the context of the modern nation-states:

It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the ‘origins’ of nation as a sign of ‘modernity’ of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. (1)

The ambivalence arises from the conflict between the historic view of nation and its cultural temporality, an attribute it acquires recently.

Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities*, expresses the ambivalent emergence of the nation. He attributes this ambivalence to ideologies and cultural systems: “... Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being” (12). According to Anderson, the term nationalism, and its variants, nationality or nation-ness, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. In order to understand it properly we need to consider its evolution as a historical being.

With a view to resolving the ambivalence, Anderson proposes his celebrated definition of the nation: “it is an imagined political community -
and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Anderson calls it *imagined* as the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members. But the image of their communion still lives in the minds of each person. It is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of the nations, boasting a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. The adjective *imagined* signifies the lack of intimate understanding among the members of the communities on the one hand and the elastic nature of nation’s boundaries on the other.

The nation has been imagined as *sovereign* since the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution had destroyed the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical, dynastic realm. The sovereign states emerged with the disintegration of the imperial / colonial power structures which pervaded the world till 1950’s. The nation is a paradigm of resistance to imperial and colonial hegemony. Lastly, the nation is imagined as a *community* because, despite the inequality and exploitation that may prevail, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. It is the sense of community that inspires people to feel proud in the achievements of compatriots and to feel sympathy in their miseries and misfortunes. It is the spirit and unity of this imagined nation which makes the members willing to make sacrifices for it.
In a similar vein, Timothy Brennan, in the essay “The National Longing for Form,” deals with the baffling subject of the “myths of the nation.” It is baffling in the sense that it shows the nation as a myth, as a distortion of fact or a lie or nation is treated as a surrogate mythology, legend, or oral tradition, as literature per se. It shows nations as mythical since there is no “scientific” means of establishing what all nations have in common. A scientific irrationality may be traced in the evolution of each nation.

Nation and literature share an inherit relation. The study of literature comes under a discipline with its roots in a philosophical tradition formulated with the idea of the nation in mind. Literary narratives share an intrinsic relation with the concept of the nation. Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, has initiated a postcolonial literary analysis of nationalism’s relationship to narrative forms such as the novel. The structure of literary narratives is intricately related to the power structures existing in a society. If phrased differently, literary genres are structural paradigms of the concepts of nation as evolved in history.
The widely acclaimed analysis of this idea is Homi K. Bhabha’s work *Nation and Narration*. Bhabha begins his book with an exploration of this idea of the correlation between nation and narrative:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation—or narration—might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west, an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. (1)

Bhabha observes that the nations and narratives have simultaneous origin. Nation, according to him, is a metaphor synthesized from political thought and literary language of any age. This synthesis is synchronic in its nature.

Bhabha regards nation as analogous to narration. He analyses that “nation, as a form of cultural elaboration... is an agency of ambivalent narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for ‘subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding’” (3-4). The Janus-faced ambivalence of the nation, as a sign of the historical modernity as well as the cultural temporality of the nation, is exemplified in the Janus-faced ambivalence of
the language and the narrative of the nation. Language in the narratives of the nation is often polyphonic, while the narrative itself is a hybridized form. This is essential to convey the cultural effects of the nation. This is especially true of novelistic discourses or fictional narratives. Novel is a colonialist discourse that provided ideological support to the expansion of the empire. But the same discourse was appropriated for nationalist liberation. Thus, novel has become a nationalist discourse that resists imperialism and supports nationalistic struggles. Among the narratives, novel occupies a paradoxical position: it is at once a colonialist discourse and a derivative nationalist discourse.

Timothy Brennan observes that the rise of modern nation-state in Europe is inseparable from the forms and themes of imaginative literature. The political situation of the nation-states is intricately connected to the ideological as well as aesthetic structure of literary forms. The political tasks of modern nationalism have determined the direction of the course of literature. Literature has also played its part in the formation of nations through the creation of national print media, like the newspaper and the novel. In this regard, Brennan remarks:

Nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. And the rise of
European nationalism coincides especially with one form of literature - the novel. (Bhabha, 49)

The creation of the nation involves the work by many political institutions, ideological movements and groups. Among these, the role played by imaginative literature or literary myth has been crucial. Literature compliments the political movements that lead to the creation of the nation.

Among others, the novel, as a composite work of art played a crucial role in defining the nation as an “imagined community.” The novel, in a way, mimics the heterogeneous nature of the nation. In this context, Brennan observes: “It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles” (Bhabha, 49). The novel’s created world has facilitated a meeting place for the previously foreign language which forms an unsettled mixture of ideas and styles. They represent how the previously distinct peoples are forced to create the rationale for a common life. As a discourse, the novel plays a crucial role in standardizing the language of the community. The novel’s manner of presentation allows the people to imagine the special community called the nation. The language of the novel is heterogeneous and dialogic. The novel’s attempt to standardize the language is inherently oppositional. This conflict is endemic in the novelistic discourse.
Literary narratives in general exist in an ambivalent relationship with ideologies that inhabit and shape culture. With their undeniable relations with national life, narratives can mobilize dominant ideologies and serve as vehicles for their dissemination. They can also undercut such dominance and give seductive shape to new and subversive ideologies. Hence, the power bestowed in literary narratives makes the writers conduct new experiments with their styles and forms. This makes the novel a curious laboratory of narratives.

Conventional narrative styles followed for different genres of literature are too rigid to defy structural patterns. As the rigid mould is an obstacle for the true representation of the self, many contemporary writers try to subvert the structures of the conventional narrative. They incorporate different forms of languages, narratives and styles to the conventional mode and make the literary texts site for new experiments. Thus, narrative techniques form a tool in the hands of the writer which helps him to convey his ideas effectively. He synthesizes the texts from Eurocentric narratives and native indigenous narratives, often folk or oral in its origin. This leads to a heterogeneous composition of the narrated text.
Postcolonial studies emerged in the 1980s. This period coincides with the end of third-World anticolonial nationalist movements. Violent forms of ethnic communalism evolved during the period gradually assumed global dimensions. Such political shifts have led the postcolonial theorists to regard nationalism as inherently dominatory, absolutist, essentialist, and destructive. So, at the beginning postcolonial studies appeared to be inimical to nationalism or nationalistic struggles. Nationalism as a dominating politics cannot account for the genealogy of ethnic groups or the marginalized. But the culturalist bearing of social and literary theory, post-structuralist critiques of enlightenment rationality and modernity have encouraged post-colonial studies to review nationalism as a primarily cultural and epistemological response, rather than a socio-political movement. Critics like Anderson have defined nation and nationalism in terms of their cultural contexts. Postcolonial scholars like Bhabha have followed Anderson’s perspective of nationalism as a constitutively paradoxical formation. In her essay “Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies,” Laura Chrisman discusses Anderson’s view that “nationalism is construed as Janus-faced, paradoxical in its cultural, temporal modernity and simultaneous radiance on the past to define and legitimate itself.” (Lazarus, 183). The paradox arises from the historical rupture of capitalist modernity. It is constituted by the complex analogues of
conventional structure of society superimposed with modern system of production and its market economy.

Nationalism is often considered the product of modern secular consciousness. It analyses the emergence of nations as part of the progression of history. Nationalism’s imagined community stretches back to antiquity where the nation’s identity and credibility depend on the assertion of unbroken cultural tradition. Nationalism is thus the paradoxical expression of a historical rupture that asserts itself as a cultural continuity. But it is the structural paradigm of the history and culture of the mainstream society. The subalterns are conspicuous by their absence in the representative field of nationality.

This paradoxical nature of nationalism is often subjected to contestation. In *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Robert J. C. Young views the Marxist inspired anti-colonial nationalism as an integral part of the postcolonial world. He remarks: “The historical role of Marxism in the history of anti-colonial resistance remains paramount as the fundamental framework of postcolonial thinking” (6). Postcolonial theory functions within the historical framework of Marxist critique from which it continues to draw. However, it simultaneously transforms itself, as confirmed by the tricontinental, anti-colonial intellectuals and politicians.
Postcolonial critique, as Young maintains, integrates the syncretic traditions of Marxism that developed outside the west. It has led to the development of other forms of liberation, especially of gender, ethnicity and class, from bourgeois nationalism. These other forms consist of the practical discourses of unorganized, everyday struggles, the activist discourses of organized struggles, the critical discourses of cultural and literary theories and the creative discourses of art, literature and culture. Young further views the postcolonial critique as a form of “activist writing”:

that looks back to the political commitment of the anti-colonial liberation movements and draws its inspiration from them, while recognizing that they often operated under conditions very different from those that exist in the present. Its orientation will change according to the political priorities of the moment, but its source in the revolutionary activism of the past gives it a constant basis and inspiration—it too is dedicated to changing those who were formally the objects of history into history’s new subjects. (10)

Young’s proposal is often contested by other postcolonial critics. They argue that the predominant trend of postcolonial studies is non-Marxist or even anti-Marxist.
Neil Lazarus, for instance, argues in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* that postcolonialism is essentially anti-Marxist. Lazarus refers to Homi Bhabha who regards postcolonialism as constitutively anti-Marxist. He points to the emphasis Bhabha places on the disavowal of all forms of nationalisms, while exalting migrancy, liminality, hybridity and multiculturalism—(4). Lazarus traces the reason for postcolonialism’s antagonistic approach to the Marxists in the anti-colonial nature of nationalism. Postcolonial studies has emerged in the context of decolonization which also coincides with the end of third-World anticolonial nationalism. These were accelerated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of historical communism in 1989, and the subsequent dominance of world capitalist system. The end of Cold War, the emergence of new capitalism, the rise of global corporates, the pervasive influence of global capital, cultural commodification and new hegemonies also contribute to postcolonial studies.

Benita Parry, in the article “The institutionalization of postcolonial studies,” shares the view of Lazarus in connection with the anti-Marxist stance of postcolonialism. She endorses Lazarus’s view by saying that: “the prevalent modes of postcolonial theory are not the progeny of Marxist-inspired anti-colonialist thought, since postcolonial criticism typically evinces a hostility both to Marxism and to movements for national
liberation” (Lazarus, 77). This standpoint both stems from an aversion to all nationalism, at all times and rests on a misreading of anticolonialism as always nativist, essentialist, atavistic, and linked to pre-modern ideologies. The discussions of colonial histories, its socio-economic forms and institutions, the class alignments, international alliances, and so on, are not often conducted in the field of postcolonial studies. They are dealt with in special domains of social sciences, especially historiography, area studies, international relations or strategic studies. She also differentiates between the moderate movements for independence that aimed at to inherit the colonial state and the revolutionary programmes animated by socialist goals. Parry is critical of Robert Young who views postcolonial theory as a political discourse functioning within the historical legacy of Marxist critique.

The term “Postcolonial” refers to the contemporary theoretical discourse that represents the interaction between European nations and the cultures they colonized in the modern period. The term also refers to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (Ashcroft, et al., 2). Postcolonialism deals with the transformation brought out by European colonization and the struggle of the colonies to retrieve the cultural identity prior to colonization. This, in fact, points, to the cultural and identity politics that pervades the art and literature
created in the erstwhile colonies. It involves the construction and representation of a cultural identity of the colonized community on the one hand and the articulation of cultural resistance and attempts at decolonization on the other. Postcolonialism analyses many issues prevalent in societies that have undergone colonization: the dilemmas of developing a national identity in the wake of colonial rule; the ways in which writers and artists from colonized countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonizers; the ways in which the knowledge of the colonized people have been appropriated to serve the interests of colonizers and how this knowledge system is neglected and destroyed through the introduction of alternative systems; the ways in which the literature of the colonial power is used to justify, support and fortify the perpetuation of colonialism through the portrayal of the stereotyped images of the colonized as inferior to the colonizer; the ways in which the perpetuation of the colonial rule by force is represented as a generous attempt to civilize the “barbaric” communities.

Postcolonial studies as an institutionalized field of academic specialization emerged after 1970s. This does not mean that no work on issues related to postcolonial cultures and societies was done before. There was a large volume of such works, most of which is deeply consequential and perennially significant. But the popular use of the term “postcolonial”
was in a historically and politically delimited sense; this was to identify the period immediately following the decolonization. Thus, it was a periodizing term rather than an ideological concept. The term reflected no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order. However, since late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization; how European colonialism has altered the lives and thoughts of the colonial subjects and transformed their cultural identities.

Colonialism began as early as in the fifteenth century. European nations took about half a century to establish colonies around the globe. The Industrial Revolution in the European countries like Great Britain, Spain, France, Portugal, and Netherlands led to the geographical discoveries as the new industries were in need of new markets to sell the surplus goods and to buy raw materials for the industrial produce. The colonies proved to be the best place for the bilateral trade. This trade establishment gradually got transformed to a political establishment as in the case of the East India Company.

In the colonial world, political power is represented in terms of economic and cultural hegemony. The Europeans have projected themselves as everything that is “ideal” and “civilized,” and have denigrated the natives
of the colonies as wild, barbarous, and uncivilized. In order to justify their act of domination, the colonial powers often put their hegemonic act of oppression concealed in a mask of civilizing the barbarous folk: they used pseudo-cultural phrases like “the white man’s burden” or “the civilizing mission of the British race.” But in reality, the objective of any colonial rule is to grab the people’s land and to seize what that land produces. Political subjugation and economic exploitation have been the real motives of the colonizers.

The legacy of colonialism follows even after the process of decolonization. Both Europe and the decolonized countries still try to come to terms with the long, violent history of colonialism which began over 500 years ago. It is a legacy which includes histories of slavery, of untold, unnumbered deaths from oppression or neglect, of enforced migration and diaspora of millions of people – Africans, Americans, Arabs, Asians and Europeans. It is also a history of the appropriation of territories and of land, of the institutionalization of racism along with the destruction of natures, cultures and the superimposition of hegemonic European cultures. Colonization was not primarily concerned with transposing cultural values. They evolved as a by-product of its real objectives: trade, economic exploitation and settlement.
Postcolonial cultural critique entails the re-evaluation of the history of colonial oppression, predominantly from the standpoints of the colonized subjects who suffered its effects. It is also concerned with the identifying and defining processes of its contemporary, social and cultural impact. As a result, the postcolonial theory always blends the past with the present. It is aimed at the active transformation of the present liberated from clutches of a colonial past. Consequently, the postcolonial does not show any privilege to the colonial. It is concerned with colonial history to the limited point that history determines the patterns and power structures of the present. These patterns and structures cannot be studied in isolation. There is a structural continuity between the past and the present in the exercise of power and construction of identity.

The shift in focus brought by postcolonialism has changed the way scholars understand history, culture and politics. As already stated, postcolonial studies have gained momentum since late 1970’s. Edward Said’s “Orientalism,” an influential critique of the Western construct of the Orient, marks a landmark in the development of postcolonial theory. Said relentlessly unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism embedded in the deep structure of the European construction of the Orient. He appropriately defines Orientalism, “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). He argues that the
Europeans have exploited cultural Othering as means to domesticate and control the Orient. The best way to control the Orient is to construct it as the cultural Other of Europe. Cultural Othering is a conceptual process used to subordinate and control the Orient. Said’s other works like Culture and Resistance and Culture and Imperialism contribute to the study of postcoloniality at two different levels: the relation between articulation and resistance, cultural identity and imperial structures.

Frantz Fanon is a pioneering spirit in postcolonial theory. Fanon is a French writer, born in Martinique and educated in France. His works are predominantly in the area of “race studies.” However, his education in France and his confrontation with French racism made him aware of the disorientation he experienced as a black man trained to behave like a “white.” Fanon responded to his alienation by writing his masterpieces of racial politics, Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth. These theoretical works have made him a prominent contributor to postcolonial studies. Fanon has illustrated how cultural resistance can be practiced even in the routine life: it can be executed at the personal level in an unorganized and uneven manner.
Said’s concept of Orientalism represents the first phase of postcolonial theory. This seminal work has led to the development of a theory of colonial discourse exemplified in the works of critics like Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Bhabha’s work, informed by psychoanalysis, deconstruction and subsequently by postmodern theory, has emerged from the space of “Orientalism.” It is also framed as a distinct challenge to the representation of colonial hegemony as omnipresent and uniform. Bhabha’s essay, “The Other Question” interrogates racism and racial stereotyping through a theory of racial fetishism. He thinks that the construction of the other springs from racial hatred and xenophobia. In “Of Mimicry and Man,” Bhabha develops the ideas of cultural ambivalence. He finds that ambivalence, political or cultural, is a vantage point for colonizers and a setback to the nationalist struggles. In “Signs Taken for Wonders,” Bhabha elaborates the ambivalence and mimicry of representation through a new term, “hybridity.” He argues that the ambivalence latent in the politics of representation is consequent to the cultural indoctrination conducted by the colonizers. This ambivalence is more marked in communities with no cultural nationalism to counter the cultural imperialism practised by the colonizers along side the political imperialism. Bhabha’s edited volume *Nation and Narration* is concerned with the concept of the heterogeneity in the question of the nation. He elaborates this point in “DissemiNation,” which deals with the implicit conceptual critiques in the directions of
national identities and narratives of the nation. He observes that nations, like narratives, are not natural; they are created on the basis of consensus. The narrative adopted for narrating a nation depends on the nature of the nation itself.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s works have tremendously influenced the field of colonial historiography, and post-colonial studies. In her writings she has skillfully merged the insights of post-structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism to a coherent theoretical framework. Spivak, in fact, has gradually moved away from post-colonial studies to what she terms “Subaltern.” It refers to the position of colonial subjects as permanently subordinate to the control of the colonizers, even after the political termination of colonization. Oppression of cultural patterns reappears in new forms in the postcolonial period. Neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism and new capitalism are some of the forms. The erstwhile colonized are continue to be colonized, not physically, but economically and culturally. These new forms of colonization are difficult to resist: they are internationally organized and spatially and temporally subversive. The Subaltern refers to a concept that reinscribes history from the position of previously silenced indigenous peoples. In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak suggests that sati is one particular “regulative psycho-biography” for women. (Qtd in Wolfreys, 465). It is a kind of sanctioned suicide, a site of contradictory subject positions assigned to Indian women by both
indigenous patriarchal and British colonial regimes. The ritualistic suicide was the natural culmination of a female subalternity which was offered with no alternative choice.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin provide a landmark teaching text in *The Empire Writes Back* which self-consciously analyses the concepts of postcolonial theory to construct a framework for postcolonial Commonwealth literary criticism. Anthologies of postcolonial theory and criticism, especially *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* by Laura Chrisman and Patrick William, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin are important contributions to the field of study. The very phrase “post-colonial” itself is problematic. It has different connotations: the word “post” can be used as a prefix to the word “colonial” at one instance and the two words can be condensed to a single word “postcolonial” at another. The distinctions between the two are very important in any debate on postcolonial theory. Ella Shohat’s essay, “Notes on the Post-Colonial,” attempts to construct a reflexive archaeology of the term “post-colonial.” The phrase is at times self-reflective and self-explanatory. Aijaz Ahmad’s book *In Theory*, attempts to rejuvenate the Marxist connections with the postcolonial. Like Arif Dirlik’s work *The Postcolonial Aura*, Ahmad’s text also warns against the lack of historical specificity and objectivity in the radical process of metropolitan
theorizing. It is worthwhile to note that Spivak has already cautioned against such centralized process of theorizing the postcolonial.

In *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson follow the critical tradition of postcolonial studies, by examining the textual fabric of colonialism and its cultural legacy. They illustrate how the imperial power structures manifest themselves in the textures of a literary work. There is a one to one correspondence between the colonial power structures and the linguistic structures of a text. Stephen Slemon’s essay “The Scramble for Post-Colonialism,” which is included in this collection, finds that the institutionalized field of postcolonial studies has arrived at a point of multiple intersections of ruptures, of territoriality. Slemon locates a policing energy which seems to carry itself across a variety of articulations within the postcolonial problematic. The policing energy, which he proposes, is an internalized apparatus for control and regulation; it is an effect of ideology. He tries to elaborate colonialism’s multiple strategies for the ideological regulation of Europe’s Others.

A re-evaluation of postcolonial studies reveals that it is essentially a product of colonialism. Though the colonizers had left the colonies, the withdrawal was not complete. They left behind a deeply embedded cultural
colonization, the inculcation of a European system of government, European system of education, culture and values that denigrate the culture, morals, values, education and even the physical appearance of the formerly subjugated peoples. The oblique forms of colonization have destroyed the cultural identity of colonized subjects, their systems of knowledge, education and values.

The long years of colonial rule made the people a kind of cultural hybrid. These anglicized and westernized subjects who became free from the colonizers have found themselves caught between two cultures: the acquired European culture which does not allow them being part of it and the native indigenous culture which they have already repudiated, but is still part of their consciousness. Thus, the identity of a postcolonial society undergoes a cultural transformation: it is twice colonized. It was first politically colonized and then by the language and culture of the colonizers, though both deny them recognition. This dilemma position of all postcolonial societies is evident in most contemporary writers of the former colonies.

The field of postcolonial studies has in fact arisen as a result of the dissatisfaction with imperial accounts of the colonized people. The colonizers have projected themselves at the centre of the world they ruled and the colonized are relegated to the margins. They put forth themselves as
the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper “Self,” and the native people as the “Other,” different and, therefore, inferior. This cultural “Othering,” as explained by Said in his theory of Orientalism, divides the world into two: “us,” the “civilized,” and “them,” – “the Others,” – “the savage.” The colonizers left the colonies with a psychological “inheritance” of a negative self-image of the colonized and their alienation from the native indigenous cultures. The native culture has been subordinated or devalued for so long a time that the pre-colonial culture has become extinct.

The term “Othering” was in fact coined by Spivak for the process by which imperial discourses create their “Others”. Relying on Lacanian distinction between “the Other” and the “others,” Spivak explains the other as corresponding to the focus of desire or power (the M-Other or Father – or Empire) in relation to which the Subject is produced. But, the “other,” in contrast, is the excluded or “mastered” Subject created by the discourse of power. In this regard, the authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* observes: “In Spivak’s explanation, othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects” (Ashcroft et al, 171). Hence, Othering describes the various ways in which colonial discourses produce their Subjects.
Postcolonial theorists often perceive the colonized subject as one having a double consciousness: a consciousness or a way of perceiving the world divided between two antagonistic cultures: the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized indigenous community. This double consciousness often produces an unstable sense of the self, which is heightened by the forced displacement that colonialism frequently caused. This feeling of being caught between two cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha as “unhomeliness” (The Location of Culture, 13). Being “unhomed” is not the same as being homeless; it is to feel not at home even within oneself, which is a major concern in the works of contemporary postcolonial writers.

In opposition to the concept of “unhomeliness,” there exists the concept of “hybridity,” the defining feature of any postcolonial literature. Hybridity refers to the integration or mingling of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and colonized cultures. “Hybrid” was originally, as Robert Young explains, a term of denigration; it literally means the blackening or sullying of a thing. Hybridity as a concept came to prominence in the context of supremacist Eurocentric accounts of racial
origins and racial distinctions. As colonialism opened new possibilities of racial interbreeding and intermarriage, the proponents of racial separation were warned of the dissolution of the blood of the higher races. Young demonstrates how “hybridity” has changed from a metaphor of racial intermingling or purity to one of cultural mixture or separateness: “Hybridity . . . shows the connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse” (27). As the discourse of “race” became invalid, the focus shifted to the less contentious ground of “culture.”

The derogatory connotation associated with the term “hybridity” as one of regression and disintegration, is recovered and used to shatter the very patterns of categorization and control which first gave rise to it, thus making it a progressive term. Andrew Smith in “Migrancy, hybridity, and postcolonial literary studies,” explains two different ways in which the term “hybridity” is used in contemporary contexts, especially in relation to the questions of culture. The first is the everyday sense of the word; the second is the way in which “hybridity” tends to be employed in contemporary critical theory. In this regard Smith observes:

In everyday usage, in … increasingly multicultural societies, “hybridity” implies the mingling of once separate and discrete ways of living. In the idealized liberal view this hybridisation occurs on a level ground of equality, mutual respect, and openmindedness … At the theoretical level, we can note that
this idea of “hybridity” as a synonym for diversity or multiculturalism continues to rely on the assumption that there were primeval, separate, and distinct cultural orders which are only now beginning to meet in the context of global migration. (Lazarus, 251)

Hence “hybridity” can become a term not for the mixing of once separate and self-contained cultural traditions, but rather for the recognition of the fact that all cultures are an area of struggle. It is an arena, where the Self is played off against the supposedly “Other,” where the hegemonic dominant culture is threatened by the return of minority stories and histories and, by strategies of appropriation and revaluation.

Hybridity has in fact become one of the most recurrent conceptual leitmotifs in postcolonial cultural criticism. For the postcolonial writers hybridity turns out to be a handy tool to represent their culture in the dominant language, as it subverts the narratives of colonial powers and dominant cultures. The series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant culture is premised is deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse. The dominant culture is thus “contaminated” by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self. In this regard, Bhabha remarks:
Hybridity is problematic of colonial representation and individualization that reverses the effects of the colonial disavowal...so that other ‘denied’ knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rule of recognition. (Cited in Bhatt, 29114)

Hybridity is an answer to the emergence of the unilateral colonialist discourse or its derivative, the nationalist discourse. As the position of the subjects changes, the nature and the status of the discourse also undergo corresponding changes.

The concepts of centre and margins are of vital importance to postcolonialism. Cultural resistance is in many ways a direct result of cultural marginalization. “Marginalization” is, as Marcia Tucker in the foreword to Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures observes: “that complex and disputatious process by means of which certain people and ideas are privileged over others at any given time” (7). The binary notions of centre and periphery results in the valorization of the centre and the marginalization of the periphery as “Other.” The power of the centre depends on a relatively unchallenged authority. As historically marginalized groups insist on their own identity, the deeper, structural invisibility of the so-called centre become harder to sustain. The identity of
these marginalized postcolonial people is not a singular or monolithic one; it is rather multiple, shifting and often self-contradictory identity.

The continuing struggle of the marginalized groups is to find and maintain a genuine voice in a culture. Their attempt leads them to use their marginality as a starting point, rather than an ending point. Margins, thus, become their fighting grounds: the sites of survival. Margins as sites of deprivation, is more familiar to us as we know the nature of repression. But critics like bell hooks identify marginality as a site of radical possibility, as a “space of resistance” (Ferguson et al., 343). This marginality forms the central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse. It also nourishes one’s capacity to resist. In this context, bell hooks observes in her essay “Marginality as Site of Resistance”: the space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as site of resistance. Enter that space. (Ferguson et al. 343)

Marginality, thus, offers the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. This site of resistance is sustained by the remembrance of the past.
Understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance is crucial for the oppressed, exploited, colonized people. If one views the margin as a site of pain and deprivation, then a certain hopelessness and despair penetrate the whole being. In reality, margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance. Margins are places where one is different, where one sees things differently. Thus, marginality becomes a weapon in the hands of the colonized, a weapon to resist themselves against marginalization.

Diasporas, another vital feature of postcolonial studies, are the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions. The word “diaspora,” in Andrew Smith’s terms, is “a linkage asserted in the context of exile from a homeland, and a unity maintained in the varying circumstances confronting scattered population” (Lazarus, 254). Diaspora is a central historical fact of colonialism. As the authors of *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* observe: “Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world” (Ashcroft et al, 69). The colonies which gradually developed as plantations or agricultural lands necessitated the transfer of workers into the colonies by means of slavery. The widespread effects of these migrations
still continue on a global scale. New capitalism’s global expansion has encouraged the voluntary and forcible dispersion of increasing number of people and this context of modern history gives diaspora a renewed relevance. The displaced populations attempted to trace a story of unity in the face of dislocation and alienation as in the case of the Palestinian Diaspora.

In postcolonial studies, the concept of diaspora reiterates its significance, as the concept of Hybridity does. The pejorated sense of the term is gradually ameliorated and it is used to subvert the forces that degraded the term initially. In this regard, Paul Gilroy remarks about the black cultures’ special conditions of existence: “What was initially felt to be a curse – the curse of homelessness or the curse of enforced exile – gets repossessed … as the basis of a privileged standpoint from which certain useful and critical perceptions about the modern world become more likely” (111). The marginal position attributed to them by the elites has turned out to be a site of resistance. The concept of diaspora, as Andrew Smith observes, makes culture “deterioralized.” The paradoxical position of diaspora is appropriately explained by Smith. Diaspora is a concept intimately linked to a sense of territory, to the lost homeland or the once-and-future nation. Yet at the same time, because diaspora formations cross national borders, they
reveal precisely the fact that cultural practices are not tied to place. (Lazarus, 256)

For many postcolonialists, it is precisely the mobility and fluidity of diasporan culture that become significant. In short, diaspora is taken to have the same kind of critical charge as hybridity has, a conjuncture that exposes the formation of identity as a positioning, or as a project, repudiating the idea of a definite and stable home.

In postcolonial societies, multiculturalism is another historical problem conditioned by the colonial rule. The term multiculturalism generally refers to an applied ideology of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity within the demographics of a specified place, or a nation. Multicultural societies aim at recognizing, celebrating and maintaining the different cultures or cultural identities within that society to promote social cohesion. The problem of governance in such multicultural societies is how these cultural differences can be accommodated in a single political order. In this context, multiculturalism advocates a society that extends equitable status to distinct cultural and religious groups, with no one culture predominating. Multiculturalism is often used interchangeably with the term “cultural pluralism.” Cultural pluralism is a term used to refer to a situation when small groups within a large society maintain their unique cultural identities. In a pluralist culture, unique groups not only co-exist side by side but also
consider qualities of other groups as traits worth having in the dominant culture. In one respect at least the term “plural” is not simply a “version” of the multicultural society. Pluralistic societies do maintain their unique cultural identities. Though the ethno-cultural groups live side by side in societies, they remain institutionally and culturally separate. In these multicultural societies they mix, but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture, its own ideas and ways.

The aftermath of European colonialism has left the rest of the world almost multiculturalist. India has remained one of the most culturally, linguistically and genetically diverse geographical entity; so, multicultural concerns have long informed India’s history and traditions, constitution and political arrangements. The pluralistic condition of India as the birth place of major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism, the impact of Islam and Christianity, and the two hundred years of British colonial rule resulted in a socio-cultural mix. Postcoloniality in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Indian society is very complicated. The two hundred years of colonial rule over an already divergent culture resulted in a socio-cultural kaleidoscope in the shape of a nation. The legacy of colonial culture and the western education, together with the pull from indigenous culture, have left the colonial subjects in a transfixed state.
The question of identity forms one of the central concerns in postcolonial literatures. The reminiscence of colonialism, the diasporic culture, multiculturalism, hybridity and the Othering it caused often result in the colonized’s search for their cultural identity. In the postcolonial state, identity is often defined by cultural difference, as underlined by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*:

…all post-colonial societies realize their identity in difference rather than in essence. They are constituted by their difference from the metropolitan and it is in this relationship that identity both as a distancing from the centre and as a means of self-assertion comes into being. (165)

Identity involves articulating the difference between the dominant culture of the colonizer and subservient indigenous cultures. Identity is constituted by one’s distancing from the dominant culture and assertion of the native culture.

But the “cultural politics” makes the colonized, the cultural “Other” as explained by Edward Said in “Orientalism”; Orient is seen as the cultural Other of Europe. This process of Othering, the tendency to depict the different as the Other and to denigrate them can be seen in different aspects of social discourse: racial, ethnic, economic, ideological or gender. In this way, woman becomes the Other of man; the Black becomes the Other of
White and so on. This construction of the Other and the introduction of bipolarity are deliberate attempts to undermine the cultural identity of certain groups or individuals. The difference is emphasized at the micro-political level to subordinate certain communities. But at the global level the differences are overlooked to subvert national/ethnic identities and to prepare ground for cultural invasion and global capitalism. The ultimate aim of these attempts is to weaken the horizontal resistance to the consumer culture and new capitalism.

One of the most contentious issues in postcolonial literature has been the choice of the language; whether to express one’s resistance and identity appropriated in the indigenous language or to use form of the colonizer’s tongue. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o takes an extreme position in rejecting English; he prefers to write in Gikuyu, though he could interact with a limited audience in the native language. But the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has argued that English is the only common medium of communication across Africa and therefore should be adopted. A global language like English helps him to interact with a multicultural, multinational audience.

The choice of language, in most cases, is a political choice. Many of the postcolonial writers have opted for English language not just as a
medium of self-expression, but as a means of acquiring control over the dominant language politically abused by the colonial powers. Language represents power or “power is invested in language,” as it provides words for the expression of truth (Ashcroft et al, 165). The struggle for power has, in fact, led the colonized to take hold of the colonizers’ language. The colonized have experienced the hegemonic structure of the colonizer’s language. Their effort is to appropriate the hegemonic language to reconstruct their identity. The adoption of the colonizer’s language is an oblique attempt to retrieve the identity of the colonized submerged in colonial oppression. This struggle for power over language has made the colonized people to imitate the metropolitan impulse suggested by Homi K. Bhabha as “mimicry.” The colonial mimicry, as Bhabha observes, “is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (The Location of Culture, 1223). He stresses the inadequacy of the European mimetic forms to truthfully represent the identity of the colonized subjects. The derivative discourses appropriately naturalized can represent the retrieved identity of the colonized. The hybrid mimetic forms fit into the structural patterns of contemporary postcolonial critique. Bhabha here observes that mimicry itself is a paradoxical feature of colonial resistance because the colonial mimicry is constructed around ambivalence. In order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage or difference. Thus, mimicry
emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal (1223). This questions the significance of hybridity and hybrid text.

After seizing and imitating the colonizers’ language, the colonized have tried to transform the dominant language. This is to articulate their resistance and to represent their retrieved identity. They realize that the interpolation language has to be moulded to give voice to their own experiences. In this context the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* observe:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to colonized place. (37)

It involves a re-orientation of the linguistic structures as a realistic parallel to the transformation of power structure in the postcolonial period. This is an effort to decentre the focal area of the standard dialect of the colonizer’s language: it is a serious attempt at the destandardisation of the language of the former rulers.
There are two distinct processes which contribute to this kind of adaptation: “abrogation” and “appropriation.” Abrogation refers to the “refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetics, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage” (Ashcroft et al., 37). Appropriation is the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages; to make it “bear the burden of one’s own cultural experience” (Ashcroft et al., 38). Postcolonial literature is thus written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of the native tongue.

The need for appropriating the colonizer’s language is explained by Raja Rao, in his famous forward to *Kanthapura*:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. (vii)

Rao further makes it clear that English is not really an alien language to Indians; it is the language of their intellectual make-up. He also exemplifies the hybridity and syncretism of the postcolonial writers. He aptly remarks:
“We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians” (vii). When English is made a living language in India it should carry the spirit of India and also its colonial experience.

The privilege given to the language and literature of the metropolitan colonizers as “centre” has resulted in the marginalization of all its variants as impurities. This has led to the under-evaluation of all colonial writings. By abrogating that privileged centre and by appropriating the power invested in writing, postcolonial discourse embraces marginality as the fabric of social experience. The disappearance of the centre makes the marginal the formative constituent of reality. So, marginality becomes an unprecedented source of literary and cultural re-definition. The silencing and marginalization of the postcolonial voice by the imperial centre, the abrogation of this imperial centre within the text, and the active appropriation of the language and the culture of that centre, form three important features of all postcolonial writings.

Most theorists argue that the postcolonial identity is necessarily a dynamic, constantly evolving hybrid of both cultures. Thus, writers of this
group often incorporate and adapt traditional forms and native narrative structures to the exigencies of English language. This makes the resultant literature neither a European mimetic form nor an indigenous representation; but a hybrid of both. In this context, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* comment:

> The post-colonial text is always a complex hybridized formation. It is inadequate to read it either as a reconstruction of pure traditional values or as simply foreign and intrusive. The reconstruction of ‘pure’ cultural value is always conducted within a radically altered dynamic of power relations. (108-109)

The construction of a hybrid text involves the transformation of cultural values within the structural paradigms of power relations. What is evolved with the hybrid text is a standard to assess the values in two cultures; it constitutes a relative measure of cultural values.

The writings from the once colonized world have expanded exponentially. In the beginning only a constricted range of writings from the colonized nations had been considered. They had been judged by approximation to the standards of the Western literary canons. But more recent criticism has demonstrated that far from being imitations of the dominant Western modes, works written or performed within other cultural
contexts, or from the margins of the metropolitan centres, often comprised remarkable innovations. Such works, not only incorporate, transgress, and redesign the forms, aesthetic conventions, and cognitive resources of the Western tradition but also draw on traditional narrative forms and idioms.

The incorporation of such traditional forms and native narrative structures has radically changed the rigid structuring and definite categorizing of the existing genres. It has given the postcolonial writers unrestricted freedom and space for experimentation and innovation. The native narratives comprise of folk literatures and oral literatures. Thus, all kinds of national myths, native rituals, flora and fauna, mythlores and plantlores, which form part of native narratives, flow freely into postcolonial literature. Indian novelist Raja Rao’s use of “sthalapurana,” the local myth about a place, in Kanthapura is a perfect example. Raja Rao has also commented that the incorporation of different native narrative styles enabled him to get rid of his “Macaulayan” English. Rao’s Kanthapura is one instance of the spirit of India entering into the language of the British Raj.

This hybrid quality of the incorporation of variant narrative forms can also be seen in postcolonial playwrights. After attaining certain artistic maturity, they try to incorporate their indigenous theatrical and performance traditions into their plays. In contrast to the western tradition of realist drama
and acting, these traditional modes of performance are usually stylized; the
dramatists often incorporate dance, music and songs and operate from an
oral rather than literary base. They embrace a remarkable range of forms,
including classical and folk forms, as seen in the plays of Indian playwrights
like Girish Karnad and Badal Sircar; Yoruba ritual dramas performed in
honour of Ogun and other deities as in Nigerian dramatist Wole Soyinka’s
plays; Aboriginal story-telling and preaching in African-American churches
as portrayed in African-American theatre.

Girish Karnad, for instance, is a noted Indian playwright whose plays
display a perfect synthesis of folk theatre performance traditions, Indian
mythology and thematic contemporaneity. His narrative style is a mixture of
the techniques of western Epic theatre and the Indian Yakshagana folk
drama which includes the Bhagavata, the musical manager similar to the
Sutradhara, the stage manager mentioned in Bharata’s Natya Sāstra. This
kind of amalgamation helps the playwright to portray the contemporary
concerns through a cultural past.

Postcolonial literatures in general exhibit a profound decentring of
dominant traditions of the literary world. To read, to teach, or to write about
contemporary literature today is inevitably to feel the impact of this
decentring. Previously, English literature meant writing by white Britons,
whereas now it is a world language, spoken and enriched by the non-Anglo population rather than the Anglo one. The point has been made well by Salman Rushdie in his essay, “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist,” from *Imaginary Homelands*:

what seems … to be happening is that those people who where once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it - assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers. (64)

The advent of “colonial discourse theory” and “postcolonial literary studies” has transformed the way in which metropolitan writing is read, even if it has no apparent reference to empire, race, nation, colonialism, and anticolonialism.

The last quarter of the twentieth century has borne witnessed a profound decentring of dominant traditions of the literary world. The long line of Nobel Prize and Booker Prize winners from the previously colonized nations bears testimony to this. History changed when the African writers began winning the Nobel Prize for Literature after the mid-1980s. Four have won the Nobel Prize so far - Wole Soyinka (1986), Naguib Mahfouz (1988), Nadine Gordimer (1991), and J.M. Coetzee (2003). The Caribbean writers,
Derek Walcott and V. S. Naipaul won the Nobel Prize in 1992 and 2001, respectively; and the African-American novelist, Toni Morrison, won the Nobel in 1993. Likewise, the Booker Prize since the early 1980s has been dominated by writers either living in, raised in, or with close connection to the former colonial world: Salman Rushdie, J. M. Coetzee, Keri Hulme, Ben Okri, Michael Ondaatje, and Arundhati Roy, among others. Most of the vivacious, daring, and inspiring contemporary writing is being produced by such writers, whose work derives from and reflects the experiences of colonialism and postcoloniality.

Apparently, the concept of the postcolonial has been one of the most powerful means of re-examining the historical past and re-configuring our contemporary worldwide cultural concerns. More than any other concept, the postcolonial has facilitated the gradual disturbance of the Eurocentric dominance of academic debates and has empowered postcolonial intellectuals to redirect discussion toward issues of direct political relevance to the non-Western world. Often suggested as a compound word, “post-colonialism” deals with the legacy of colonialism. Giving prominence to the cultural realm, the term has been used with reference to a genre of writing, and cultural politics, usually by authors from the countries which were previously colonized. The process of cultural decolonization involves a radical dismantling of the European codes and a postcolonial subversion and
appropriation of the dominant European discourses. The project of postcolonial writing is to give expression to the postcolonial culture, which is a hybridized phenomenon involving the complex relationships between the European culture and the indigenous one. It is impossible to return to the pre-colonial cultural purity, or to adopt the European culture. The only way out is to accept the postcolonial hybridity and celebrate it.

The postcolonial celebrates not the colonial, but the triumph over it. The postcolonial era pays tribute to the great historical achievements of resistance against colonial power. The origins of the postcolonial lies in the historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control, the success of which enabled a radical challenge to the political and conceptual structures of the systems on which such domination had been based. Historically, postcolonial theory works from a number of different angles which are still under contestation: a product of revolutionary Marxism, of the national liberation movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the political and cultural consequences of the success of those movements and of the historical effects of migration. Postcolonialism refuses to reduce the history of the freedom struggles to obstinate “third-world nationalism.” The emancipatory narrative of a nationalism
unmediated by socialism brought not the end of oppression, but oppression in new forms.

The expansiveness of the term “the postcolonial” has given rise to lively debates. The postcolonial critique is the product of resistance to colonialism and imperialism which were treated at the outset as synonymous terms since both involved subjugation of one people by another. But imperialism later expanded its meaning from the primary sense as a political system of actual conquest and occupation to a broader one. It has come to represent a general system of economic domination, with direct political domination as a possibility and not as an indispensable condition. But colonialism is primarily a hegemonic oppression; it can be both internal and external and it operates at different levels like race, gender, class or sexuality. Colonialism is related to power structures and their control of analogous cultural patterns.

The entire world now operates within the economic system primarily developed and controlled by the west. It is the continued dominance of the west, in terms of political, economic, military and cultural power, that gives a continuing significance to the history of imperialism. The continuing control that the west exerts over the once colonized world confirms the resurgence of colonialism in forms. This is called neocolonialism which is
propagated in the guise of modernization and development in this age of increasing globalization and transnationalism. The power structures that internally directly control the former colonies are as oppressive, hegemonic or tyrannical as the former colonizers. The new nation states are also externally/obliquely controlled by the former colonizers in new incarnate forms like the international financial/trade organizations or military alliances.

In this new form of colonialism, the neocolonialists, often identify with the Western Powers, aim at to control and exploit the less developed countries through indirect means. Instead of direct military and political control, the neo-colonialist powers employ economic, financial and trade policies to control them and to make them dependent. Almost all of the European powers or “First World Nations” are in the forefront and they continue to control the former colonies through the ruling native elites who are forced to give concession and monopolies to foreign corporations in return for consolidation of power and monetary bribes.

Thus, neocolonialism has become one such manifestation of the on-going nature of imperialism. Even after independence the political situation in the colonies remains the same. In this context, Kwame Nkrumah observes in his *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*:

“Neo-colonialism is... the worst form of imperialism. For those who
practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it; it means exploitation without redress” (xi). The continuing operation of imperialism in the broader meaning explains why the term “post-colonial” is generally used rather than “post-imperial.” The post-imperial era is yet to happen.

Postcolonialism holds nationalism as an inseparable part. The study of imaginative literature is in many ways a profitable one for understanding the nation-centredness of the postcolonial world. In fact, it is especially in the third world fiction after the Second World War that the functional uses of “nation” and “nationalism” are most pronounced. Literature is in a way formed with the idea of nation in mind. Every writer, in one way or the other, shows his/her adherence to the nation. The interplay of these factors is everywhere behind contemporary criticism, but rarely expressed openly.

The concepts of nation and nationalism have been derived mainly from the west. But the experience of the rest of the world is different from the western experience. Historically, neither the political unit of the nation-state nor the concept of nationalism is necessarily alien to the colonized countries. But the particular administrative regimes and national
boundaries that European colonization created in its colonies are imposed. It is designed to serve the interest of the colonizers. The challenge, therefore, is to reinvent the nation-state to serve the needs of its own population.

Since the Second World War every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms. In doing so, nation has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-revolutionary past. Many “old nations,” which were once thoughtfully consolidated, find themselves challenged by “sub”-nationalisms within their borders. For instance, the partition of India and Pakistan at the time of independence led to the dispute over the territory of Kashmir. The issue over Kashmir remains unresolved, though there is much violence both within the separate parts and at the border between them. Within the territory of Kashmir there exist sub—nationalisms of the Kashmiri people who demand a separate nation. They aspire to acquire an identity and a distinct culture of their own, rather than being a part of India or Pakistan.

The history of Sri Lanka and The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) gives another instance for the rise of sub-nationalisms. The military organization of LTTE has actively waged a violent secessionist campaign that seeks to create an independent Tamil state in the north and east of...
Sri Lanka. This campaign has evolved into the Sri Lankan Civil War, one of the longest running armed conflicts in Asia. The Sri Lankan military has been waging an offensive war against the Tamil Tigers and there is an increasing belief that the final military defeat of the LTTE is imminent which, however, has come true.

The Israeli – Palestinian conflict, which is an ongoing dispute between Israelis and Palestinians, gives another instance. The Palestinian diaspora is the term used to describe Palestinians living outside of historic Palestine, now known as Israel and the Palestinian territories or the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Of the total Palestinian population worldwide, roughly half live outside their homeland and they aspire for an absolute nation which is now imagined. The estrangement and the alienation faced by the people who are unhomed make them revolt for a permanent home, their own nation. For the Muslim population of former Palestine, the Palestinian nation is now an imagined community.

The contemporary phenomenon of increasing Islamisation and Islamic terrorism which has affected almost the entire world is in a way, the result of the identity crisis on the part of the Muslims. Their desire to have a common nation and also the end, or at least the minimization, of direct Western influence in the Arab World, resulted in a “holy war” or Jihad.
against the foreign powers. With the September 11, 2001 attack on World Trade Center, USA, the phenomenon extended from Asia and Middle East to the Western world as well. What they aspire for is an imagined nation the fundamental concern of which Islam is the religion. This nation is imagined and is beyond any boundaries and hence, in Anderson’s terms, it is an “imagined community.”

Though nation can be defined from many perspectives, an accurate definition seems unfeasible. The distinction between cultural nation (united by language, religion or other cultural bonds) and political nation (possessing a state structure) has been useful in understanding the different dimensions of a nation. But it lacks the resonance of an absolute definition. In this regard, Hugh Seton-Watson observes in *Nations and States*: “Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no “scientific definition” of the nation can be devised, yet the phenomenon has existed and exists” (5). This seems true as there is no scientific way of establishing what all nations have in common.

Many nations have an imaginary existence. Some, as in the case of Palestine are an abstraction, a myth, which does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically defined. The ties between the different communities
are all imagined. Race, geography, tradition, language, religion and so on seem finally insufficient in determining the national essence. Still people believe in its existence, fight for it, and die for nations.

Nations are found to be both “new” and “historical.” We can neither neglect its historical emergence as a nation-state nor blind our eyes to its cultural antiquity. The formal universality of nations shows it more as a socio-cultural concept. Nations share this ambivalence with its narratives also. Hence, the narratives of the nation take up pluralistic hybridized forms; forms appropriate to convey the ambivalent structures of the nation.