Chapter One

Regionalism: An Overview of the Theoretical Terrains

The term ‘region’ came into English from the Latin word ‘regionem’ meaning ‘direction, boundary or district’. The OED defines region as an “area of land or division of the earth’s surface having definable boundaries or characteristics”. The term connotes wide parameters such as physical spaces, products of past events or experiences, centres of human activity and cultural traits. For the past few decades it has been the concern of varied disciplines ranging from economics, architecture, anthropology, geography, political science, history and literature. Despite this widespread interest, it has been difficult to arrive at a consensus regarding its definition as each discipline involved in regional studies has its own perception of the term. In the light of the ontological disagreement over what constitutes a region, it is natural that regionalism also becomes a much contested concept. On broader terms, ‘regionalism’ can be stated as a belief in the distinctiveness of the region– a “consciousness of distinguishing conditions and traits that characterize the region and its inhabitants, as well as identification of self with regional particularities” (Encyclopedia of Nationalism 2: 438). These particularities may include culture, language, race, ethnicity, topography, history, tradition or economic systems.

Regionalism is a comparatively recent phenomenon in the intellectual discourses and its origin and growth can be better understood by analysing the concept of nationalism. As
nationalism is directly related to the spirit of European Enlightenment, this analysis will begin with a brief discussion of the Enlightenment. It emerged as a social, philosophical, political and literary movement during the seventeenth century and reached its heights in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment thinkers regarded the past ages, particularly the faith-dominant medieval period, with extreme resentment and found them bereft of genuine human achievements. They sought to evaluate and understand life by way of scientific observation and critical reasoning.

In England, the thought and the world outlook of the Enlightenment are usually traced from Francis Bacon through John Locke to the late eighteenth century thinkers such as William Godwin, Descartes, Voltaire and Diderot (in France) to Immanuel Kant (in Germany). The eighteenth century reworked and diffused the ideas of the seventeenth century and majority of the intellectuals came to the theoretical conclusion that human behaviour and institutions can be studied rationally, like Newton’s universe, and their faults corrected. This human approach to the problems of life and the emphasis of reason in solving them gave the Enlightenment an iconoclastic appeal.

While on the one hand, discoveries and scientific milestones helped to support the Enlightenment belief in the superiority of the intellect, political and cultural change was taking place in Europe as a result of exploration and the extension of the overseas empires. This led to a sense of relativism with regard to non-European cultures. Encouraged by this progress, the Enlightenment historiography ventured to formulate general rules
governing the development of human societies. One of the most important documents of Enlightenment’s self-explanation is Immanuel Kant’s “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? (1784).” Kant sees Enlightenment as “man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.” Taken in the broader sense, maturity is the ability of the self to make judgments through proper thought and action. So conversely, immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This inability is not due to a fault but due to a lack of courage and an individual finds it difficult to work himself out of the immaturity that has all but become his nature:

He has even become fond of this state and for the time being is actually incapable of using his own understanding, for no one has ever allowed him to attempt it. Rules and formulas, those mechanical aids to the rational use, or rather misuse, of his natural gifts, are the shackles of a permanent immaturity. Whoever threw them off would still make only an uncertain leap over the smallest ditch, since he is unaccustomed to this kind of free movement. (41)

Kant maintains that the Enlightenment is the possibility which offers mankind a way out of immaturity, into the improved condition of maturity, thereby acquiring the status and capacities of a rational and adult being. Voltaire, whose name is synonymous with the Enlightenment in all its aspects, was the leading figure responsible for popularizing its scientific spirit and social
awareness. His books *Elements of the Philosophy of Newton* and *The Philosophical Letters on the English* are important milestones in this respect.

The ideas of universal freedom and reason propagated by the Enlightenment phase were not as harmless as they seem to be. In their daring thesis *The Dialetic of Enlightenment* (1972), Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno have argued that it is the logic of domination and oppression that hides behind the Enlightenment rationality. However, it becomes evident from their thesis that they do not wish to totally discard it as a disastrous experiment but rather to reinitiate Enlightenment’s reflection on itself. Lucius Outlaw has argued that the Enlightenment thinkers formed the view of a harmonious universe in the light of the theories that originated from their own cultural traditions. The traditions that developed out of Enlightenment have become a camouflage for the Whiteman’s understanding of his traditions (37). The post-structuralist thinkers of the 1970s like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault represent a specific repudiation of this kind of Enlightenment-modernity. Repudiating the Enlightenment, Jacques Derrida remarks that the European takes his Indo-European mythology as the paradigm of Reason and explains the rest of the world (213). The Enlightenment reason miserably fails to grasp the operation of reason in its pluralistic ideas. Foucault questions Kant’s suggestion of acquiring maturity for all humanity through Enlightenment. This move sets in motion an imperialistic hierarchy between the mature European and its immature, colonised Other. Commenting on Kant’s Enlightenment universalism, Foucault says
it is “an exhaustive ordering of the world as though methods, concepts, types of analysis, and finally men themselves, had all been displaced at the behest of fundamental network defining the implicit and inevitable unity of knowledge” (75-76). This proposes a global and unitary view of thought which maintains that if all things are knowable in the same way, they must be virtually identical.

Amid today’s many voices of the critique of the Enlightenment project, there is a singular voice that would still argue for the project. For the German sociologist and philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, it was the case of Enlightenment that gave rise to “the project of modernity” which has developed “within the horizon of reason”. In his influential paper “Modernity – an Incomplete Project”, Habermas holds that modernity is a partial but an important achievement of the progressive humanist agenda of European Enlightenment. For Habermas, the Enlightenment fostered a new faith in the power of reason to improve human society. His brings to the fore the argument that under the influence of contemporary capitalism there has been a split of everyday life from the various cultures such as art, science and technology (9). The layman fails to understand or participate in these spheres that affect his existence. Habermas asserts that the best way of controlling this fracturing of social life is by retaining the notion of emancipation which is one of the grand narratives of modernity. It is in this sense that modernity is an unfinished project. He further argues that universal emancipation is possible but has not been fully achieved and mankind should continue to strive for it.
In Habermas’ view, the poststructuralists like Derrida and Foucault attacked the ideals of reason, clarity, truth and progress (14). He is also critical about the post-modernist thinker, Jean-François Lyotard who celebrates the fragmentation of modern life. This intellectual position taken up by Habermas prompted Lyotard to make him the target of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). For Lyotard, the Enlightenment whose project Habermas wishes to continue is an authoritative and totalizing explanation of things. Lyotard argues that a work “can become modern only if it is first postmodern” (*Postmodern Condition* 79). Thus understood, postmodernism is not modernism at its end, but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.

At this juncture, an analysis of nationalism becomes essential, as stated earlier, for the better understanding of regionalism. It is the grand narratives of Enlightenment that led to the emergence of the concept of nationalism which cushions up the pluralistic facets of the nation and maps out the entire territory with its ideology of reason and homogeneity. In order to understand the ideological and historical compulsions that resulted in the evolution of regionalism as an irrefutable political concept of great impact in recent times, a bird’s eye view of the vast terrain of the origin and growth of nationalism would be of relevance. Hence this study endeavours to locate the problem of the region within the context of the nation, the nation being a very significant contribution of modernity in the political field.
The term ‘nation’ has a long history. By the 1960s and 70s the modernist perspective was thoroughly established and the concept of nations and nationalisms were considered to be the products of modernity. As highlighted by Anthony D. Smith, the modernists assert that:

1. nationalism, the ideology and movement, is both recent and novel;
2. nations, too, are recent and novel;
3. both are the products of ‘modernisation’, the global movement of societies to the state of ‘modernity’. (6)

This view undoubtedly asserts that the nation came into existence in the latter half of the eighteenth century and all earlier notions to trace its roots to pre-modern epochs were baseless. The “twin founding fathers” of the academic study of nationalism, Carleton B. Hayes and Hans Kohn have strongly authenticated this view. The scientific and economic changes in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries led to the creation of the nation in the late eighteenth century. The various processes of modernisation namely industrialisation, capitalism, urbanisation and secular education have rendered the traditional categories of collectives as inadequate. Such a category befitting modernisation was offered by the creation of the nation. These ideas influenced the social anthropologist, Ernest Gellner’s theory which posited a wave of modernisation sweeping out from the West eroding traditional societies. In Gellner’s view, this transformation from rural agricultural societies into complex, secular societies necessitated a
common language and culture. Thus it became necessary that with modernisation, nations be established in places of the earlier agricultural societies ruled by local elites. This rightly paves the way for the fact that it was nationalism that invents nations where they do not exist (168). It was nationalism and the state, according to Eric Hobsbawm, the British Marxist historian that engendered nations, not the other way round; and to effect this, nationalists had to invent myths, traditions, suitable history and the like (10). Both Gellner and Hobsbawm stress that nations are ideological constructs. Gellner has put forward yet another modern theory of nationalism focusing on the cultural sources that stressed on the mass education of modern societies making it effective in generating nationalisms and nations.

Along with Gellner, the other most influential modernist and Cornell anthropologist, Benedict Anderson, provides a different account of the context in which nationalism emerged. Anderson relates its emergence to print capitalism, new technological developments and the rise of the vernacular. Though many national historians have probed into this area, it was Anderson who seriously took up the question of the origin and spread of nationalism. In his theoretical study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and spread of Nationalism* (1983), Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (15). By “imagined” he means that people who define themselves as members of a nation “ will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the
minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Anderson claims that it is a “limited” community because it encompasses individuals who, regardless of their actual inequality and exploitation, think they are part of a greater collective who share a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (16). This very idea presupposes that there are other nations and that national identities are constituted in relation to others (Anderson 16; Eriksen 110). Such an aspect of nationalist representation leads to the construction of otherness. It is also imagined as “sovereign” because it “was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm” (16). Anderson argues that nations were not the determinate products of language or race or religion but nations had been imagined into existence to address the problems of culture and identity of a community. Taking an anthropological perspective, he maintains that “nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind” (13) which once created becomes “ ‘modular’, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (14). He further points out that the concept of nation-state was built on the earlier European and American models where national ideals and cultural values tended to be moulded in the image of the West. They provided subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms wherein the nationalist elites in Asia and Africa could opt from. Here Anderson’s view converges with the older notions of nationalism. In
a similar vein, Timothy Brennan in his essay “The National Longing for Form”, is of the view that the Enlightenment ideals and the commercial needs of the rising industrial classes forced the invention of the nation-state which was later on exported to Europe’s dominions. It is acknowledged that the ideology of nationalism was created in the imperialist countries but the national aspirations were formulated and the nation-state constructed only with Europe’s exploration and the extension of the overseas empires: “The ‘national idea’ . . . flourished in the soil of foreign conquest” (59). This, however, proved beneficial to Europe in forging a self-identity that became universal. Brennan asserts that “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” (49). Agreeing with Anderson, Brennan feels that along with the newspaper, it formed a major vehicle of the print media in helping to standardize a language and “allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation” (49). In his The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (1997) [cited hereafter as NF], the eminent scholar of Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies, Partha Chatterjee sums up his central objection to Anderson’s argument: “If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain “modular” forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?” (NF 5). The only two subjects of history – Europe and America will have laid down “not only the script of colonial enlightenment and
exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery.” Hence Chatterjee claims that our imaginations must forever remain colonised (5). Another renowned South Asian historian who greatly influenced the Subaltern Studies group, Ranajit Guha opines that to attribute the origin and development of Indian nationalism primarily in terms of print capitalism and “official” nationalism would be taking a narrow view that ignores the complexity of the situation (“Nationalism Reduced” 513). For Guha, what undermines the value of Anderson’s thesis is that it disregards the importance of the peasantry in nation-formation (515).

English historians have claimed that countries like India and Africa nurtured their ideas of freedom from Europe and hence their anti-colonial nationalisms were shaped by European political and intellectual history. As Liah Greenfield puts it: “The birth of the English nation was not the birth of a nation, it was the birth of nations, the birth of nationalism” (23). These nationalisms have been classified by the political philosopher, John Plamenatz into two types—Western and Eastern (23). Unlike Western nationalism which developed on singular lines, Eastern nationalism developed along dissimilar lines. Eastern nationalism grew in an entirely different environment as a reaction to the success and confidence of the West. As nationalism is believed to have originated in the West, Western nationalisms are considered to be progressive and genuine while the eastern are imitative and conservative (29). The Eastern nationalisms have measured the backwardness of their nations in terms of the standards set by the Western. Initially, this
division of West and the East existed within Europe but later it was between the European and the non-European world. The postcolonial nations of the world find it quite difficult to assimilate the universal ideas of progress and emancipation associated with Western thought as they realise that a blind imitation of the Western model would mean losing their distinctive identity. For Elie Kedourie, the British historian and a staunch critic of nationalism, every part of the nationalist doctrine is a clear indicator that it is derived from Western thought totally alien to the non-European world. He asserts that “it is neither something indigenous to these areas nor an irresistible tendency of the human spirit everywhere, but rather an importation from Europe clearly branded with the mark of its origin” (29). In Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse (1986) [cited hereafter as NT], Partha Chatterjee questions the rationale behind non-European colonial countries having “to approximate the given attributes of modernity “as if they have no other historical alternative. This raises the issue of why they let themselves be subjected to “a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control?” (10).

Taking up the case of India, Chatterjee observes that the official histories of Indian nationalism confirm to Anderson’s thesis which considers nationalism as a political movement. Exploring the history of Indian nationalism, it could be ascertained that it began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress. Chatterjee observes that such historians make a mistake in believing that nationalism is only a political movement. Indian
nationalism did not begin with the anti-colonial struggles. Before the advent of the British, the Indians had their own efficient administrative system and were content as a nation. But the colonialists were under the misconceived notion that it required them to make India into a nation. Chatterjee argues that scholars have been mistaken in equating political nationalism with nationalism. Chatterjee’s historiography is devoted to the tracing of those elements of Indian nationalism that part company with the European role model and identifies the area of divergence in the spiritual domain wherein the East was superior to the West (*NF* 120). Indian nationalism articulates the Western model of the modern state with its own creation of the distinctly ‘Indian’ cultural domain predicated on the rhetoric of “love, kinship, austerity, sacrifice” (*Chatterjee, NF* 237). He shows how anti-colonial nationalists produced their own domain of sovereignty within the colonial society well before beginning their political battle with the imperial power. Chatterjee identifies a bifurcation of the world into material and spiritual domains as a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa:

The material is the domain of the “outside”, of the economy and of state-craft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. . . . The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material
domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. (*NF 6*)

The colonial state is kept out of the “inner” domain of national culture but it is not left unchanged: “In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a “modern” national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being” (*NF 6*).

In India, the bilingual elite schooled in the coloniser’s language considered its own mother tongue as belonging to the inner domain from which the colonial intruder had to be kept away. Language thus “became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world” (*NF 7*). The domain of sovereignty which nationalism thought of as “inner” or “spiritual” was based on a difference between the cultures of the coloniser and the colonised. The more nationalism engaged in a contest with the colonial power in the “outer” domain, the more it emphasized its marks of difference in the ‘inner’ domain to keep the coloniser out of it. “What was necessary”, says Chatterjee, “was to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture” (*NF 120*). The search therefore, was for a renewal of the national culture modified to meet the requirements of progress but simultaneously retaining its distinctiveness (Chatterjee, *NT 2*). By challenging and interrogating
Western colonialism, nationalism in India “succeeds in producing a different discourse” (NT 42). As Anthony Smith observes:

> Whatever the elements of imagination that go into the making of nations, the result is much more than a construct and a discursive formation. Because, once created, national communities have ‘lives of their own’; that is, they have real consequences, and their members act in certain ways which they did not or would not not were there to be no nations. (13)

By the second half of the nineteenth century, as the Europeans extended the institutions of the modern state into their colonies, they found it essential to maintain the difference between the ruler and the ruled. The basic premise of the colonial state was to never totally reproduce its project of the “modular” state and to sustain its “rule of colonial difference” which was achieved by “the preservation of alienness of the ruling group” (Chatterjee, NF 10). Chatterjee claims that as the domain of the state gradually became more extensive, it became internally differentiated and took up the form of the national or postcolonial state. The colonialists conceptualised India as a “mélange of communities” (NF 223) and felt that only Western education could improve their moral standards and make them fit to inhabit a society. They found it difficult to believe that these diverse communities could constitute themselves into a singular whole called the nation. But if they were to be understood as communities and not as nations then “those communities had to be singular and substantive entities in themselves, with determinate and impermeable
boundaries, so insular in their differences with one another as to be incapable of being merged into larger, more modern political identities" (*NF* 224). Though these contentions made the Indian nationalists defensive, they were firm in their belief that they could still be constituted into a nation. For this Indian nationalism insisted on a fuzzy sense of community, devoid of any communal affiliations so that the “community did not claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of selfhood of its members” (*NF* 223). This finally led to the creation of a nation-state which both confirms and deviates from the “modular” form: “Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state” (*NF* 11).

Apart from their political domination, the British established their cultural hegemony through the teaching of English literature in the colonies. The introduction of English literature in the newly founded universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras was meant to serve the colonial interests that devalue native Indian literatures. The case has been put down by Thomas Babington Macaulay, the architect of English education in India in his infamous “Minute on Indian Education” of 1835 where his Eurocentric view of India gets clearly displayed in his suggestion that English education would train natives who were “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (430). This demonstrates the need of the coloniser’s power for a people who were deemed to be of low standards. An Orientalist hierarchy is asserted between a knowledgeable,
civilized West and an ignorant, savage East. Thus the education of Indians was part of a civilizing process that involved a certain moral development. Gauri Viswanathan reiterates the importance of English literature in the “civilising mission” as “it represented a convenient replacement for the direct religious instruction” (93). Literature implied that moral behaviour and English behaviour were synonymous, so that the English literary text functioned “as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state” (20). In the learning of English literature, Indians were being exposed to a code of values deemed Christian and universal. Even Indian social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy strongly advocated the study of English as a language and a culture. Many leaders of Indian renaissance firmly believed that their salvation lay in creating a strong Indian state and embracing modernity. To achieve this, “Indians themselves must come to believe in the unworthiness of their traditional customs and embrace the new forms of civilized and rational social order” (NF 119).

Taking its cue from the universalist resources supplied by the post-Enlightenment thought, the nationalist project attempted to don the mantle on a few selected elites to take up position of domination and mask cultural differences. When nationalism accepts the claim to universality, it becomes “in a real and not merely a metaphorical sense, a colonial domination” (Chatterjee, NT 11). As the historian, Tapan Raychaudhuri notes: “There was a shadow boxing in Indian critiques of the west: all the nuanced assessments, rejections and qualified acceptances went with a surrender in real life to much that was being criticised and
questioned in the intellectual discourse and popular stereotypes” (10). The colonised native intelligentsia played a crucial role in forging this national consciousness because they were bilingual and had better access to the so called Western culture as also the cultural artefacts of “nation-ness and nationalism.” The Western education created a class of Indians in tune with the developments of modern civilization in Europe who provided leadership to the nationalist movement. The English educated Indians who had imbibed the European ideas and sentiments were to act as teachers and translators. They were to convey to the native community these values which were deemed necessary for their upliftment (Viswanathan 149).

Due to the lack of their own personnel, the British needed buttresses and they found allies who were already influential in local communities, only too willing to forge an imperial connection to further strengthen their positions of dominance. The easiest way out for the British was to share the legal and moral authority with the upper castes which would not disturb the existing order. It was only natural that the Brahmins who possessed a literary tradition and occupied the top rural hierarchy of landowners to interpose themselves between the British and the native population. The sociologist and social anthropologist, M.N. Srinivas, in his essay “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization” observes:

The result was a new and secular caste system superimposed on the traditional system, in which the British, the new Kshatriyas, stood at the top, while the
Brahmins occupied the second position, and the others stood at the base of the pyramid. The Brahmins looked up to the British, and the rest of the people looked up to both the Brahmins and the British. (209)

Thus upholding the caste segregation, the British attempted to bring the whole country under one political framework. The studies of the Indologists who glorified the learning of Sanskrit and the superiority of the Aryan race enabled the British and Brahmins to claim a common descent. Keshab Chunder Sen, one of the strong advocates of this identity hailed the “advent of the English nation in India” as “a reunion of the parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race” (qtd in Thapar 14). Brahmanical culture saw itself as universal and all others as peripheral or irrelevant: “The discovery of Sanskrit by Western scholars, and the systematic piecing together of India’s past by Western or Western- inspired scholarship, gave Indians a much-needed confidence in their relations with the West” (Srinivas, “A Note” 207).

The emergent colonial elite, sharing a language of intellectual discourse as well as administrative unification, laid the foundation for a pan-Indian nationalism. The nation, thus, came to mean the pan-Indian nation with the Brahmins assuming the role of the pan Indian successor to the British. However, neither the British nor the pan-Indian elite were willing to allude to the Indian nation as comprising of distinct linguistic, territorial and ethnic diversities. For this would amount to granting them a similar status. By creating a unified version of the past and erecting a
uniform administration, they sought to rule over the diverse regions. Thinkers like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, and the reformist movements like the Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj conjured up visions of a unified India and Hindu spirituality. The British historians in India also played an important part in shaping this widely held Hindu view. Sir William Jones, the earliest and the most prominent among them, read Indian history through the distorting perspective of the Enlightenment.

Nationalism captured the people’s imagination through a variety of cultural processes such as history, folklore, songs, popular prints, icons and symbols. Another means was through the reinterpretation of history and discovering its glorious achievements in various fields of knowledge. This had its own problems because the past being glorified was Hindu and images being mainly drawn from Hindu iconography, the people of other communities were neglected. The early nationalists took upon themselves the task of leading their fellow countrymen in wresting power from the British and constituting a new nation-state. Henceforth, as Aloysious claims, “their pronouncements and performances would be judged in the light of the nation and not merely of their own community or class” (110). This microscopic category of nationalists (mainly Brahmins or those belonging to the upper caste communities) adopted a role similar to that of their British counterparts in exercising their authority over the masses. Though the nationalists (as moderates and extremists) had internal differences, outwardly they posed a unity and both were equally distanced from the masses. Local issues never being their concern
were suppressed, leading to the inevitable widening of the chasm between the nationalist elites and the native population. Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji felt that “only issues concerning the whole of the nation could be taken up by the National Congress and local and regional issues were not to bother this august assembly” (Seal 295). This highlighting of only the national proved to be very beneficial as it enabled to weed out issues related to the smaller and weaker segments of the different regions. The basic approach was to keep away from all local and regional issues. As Aloysius explains, “no issue on which there was an absence of unanimity should be discussed.” This implied that national unity was constructed by those present and voting and “the fate of the unrepresented was of no concern to the movement” (120). Partha Chatterjee highlights the irony of “the historical task of nationalism, which insisted on its own marks of cultural difference with the West, to demand that there be no rule of difference in the domain of the state” (NF 10). It is precisely for the same reason that nationalism fails as irrational because “it seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment” (Chatterjee, NT 17).

The anthropologist, Bernard S. Cohn expresses his reservations about the idea of the nation-state developed in Europe during the nineteenth century being functional for a society of the scale and vastness of India: “The effort to establish a single past, a single tradition, and a single cultural identity with one nation and one people has generally proved unsuccessful in India” (India: The Social Anthropology 56). He further opines that “a much looser federal union that is now characteristic of India, may
be more viable than efforts to maintain a highly centralised nation-state on the English or even the American model” (161). Drawing profusely from these insights, it becomes evident that the hegemonic project of nationalism fails to make distinctions based on region, language, religion or class: “The national state and its elites may preach official values and traditional myths and symbols, but the various communities that make up its population go their own ways and cleave to their own cultures and religions” (Smith 81). Questioning the nationalist ideology, Chatterjee feels it’s high time we perceived “the cracks on its surface, the points of tension in its structure, the contrary forces. . . .” (NT 42). A pan-Indian nationalism begins to lose the pivotal position it possessed earlier, especially in the present day context when regional diversity is gaining recognition. Regionalism has been in recent times the most powerful tool to interrogate nationalism.

Nationalism suffers from the very same ideological loopholes of the Enlightenment agenda. It keeps away a majority of the inhabitants from the mainstream of national life. In his essay “Regions Subjective and Objective: Their Relation to the Study of Modern Indian History and Society”, Bernard Cohn rightly asserts the study of regions and regionalism to be a “healthy corrective” to the earlier concerns of historians that excluded this study from Indian history and society (130). The term as discussed earlier is not easily definable and hence it becomes imperative to comprehend the wide panorama of definitions of both the terms regions and regionalism. Cohn conceptualises regions and regionalism to involve variables like the historic, linguistic, cultural,
social structural and so forth (102). A historical region is one in which there are sacred myths and symbols relating the history of the region to its past, while a linguistic region shares a standardised form of a language which is usually identified with the educated groups. This classification mainly ignores issues pertaining to differences between the literary and vernacular standards. There is also a cultural region that shares cultural traits and patterned behaviour among the common people: “Gods, goddesses, rituals, myths, and festivals are the most frequent diagnostic traits used to establish the ‘reality’ or particular regions” (103). Besides these three kinds, there is the structural region in which “there are groups of associated structural variables which differentiate one structural area from another” (104) like caste ranking, ethnic groups and so forth. Though Cohn makes these classifications, he maintains that these variables overlap and cannot be put into water tight compartments. In the same essay, he conceptualises the term regionalism as “the conscious or unconscious development of symbols, behaviours, and movements which will mark off groups with some geographic boundary from others in other regions for political, economic, or cultural ends” (119). Such conceptions of regions involve a deep sense of attachment and loyalty associated with it. This leads to the concept of regional consciousness which is a systematic expression of the ideology of regionalism founded on the linguistic, ethnic and cultural identity of the people of a specific area. Polly Stewart remarks that “a region’s consciousness of itself” defines a region (74). This consciousness, is accordingly, not imposed on
administrative lines but cuts across ethnicity, class and economic lines where the highly educated are just as imbued as the unlettered. In the Indian context, caste acts as an extra variable which problematises the region. Stewart reasons that regional consciousness is “less a matter of geography than it is a state of mind” (74). As it involves a sense of belonging to a place, it automatically posits an Other group of people who do not belong to it.

Another significant term related to regionalism is bioregionalism. Its relevance in this study is to establish the distinctiveness of a region based on its ecology and to accentuate the harmony and interaction between man and his living realm. The term used in the 1970s by the writer-activist Peter Berg and ecologist Raymond Dasmann has grown popular since the nineties. Berg confers:

A bioregion is defined in terms of the unique overall pattern of natural characteristics that are found in a specific place. The main features are generally found throughout a continuous geographic terrain and include a particular climate, local aspects of seasons, landforms, watersheds, soils, and native plants and animals. People are also counted as an integral aspect of a place’s life, as can be seen in the ecologically adaptive cultures of early inhabitants, and in the activities of present day reinhabitants who attempt to harmonize in a sustainable way with the place where they live. ("Bioregionalism (a definition")
Bioregionalists are primarily concerned with their own local areas. The very essence of bioregionalism as identified by Kirkpatrick Sale is:

The kinds of soils and rocks under our feet; the source of the waters we drink; the meaning of different kinds of winds; the common insects, birds, mammals, plants and trees; the particular cycles of the seasons; the times to plant and harvest and forage – these are the things necessary to know. The limits of its resources; the carrying capacities of its lands and waters; the places where it must not be stressed; the places where its bounties can be developed; the treasures it holds and the treasures it withholds – these are the things that must be understood. (42)

Along with these, Sale adds that the cultures of the people of these native regions are also to be appreciated. Bioregionalism includes aspects of knowing and understanding the land and its potential. Furthermore, it emphasises on the self-reliance of the regions and implies the development of the individual potential within the development of the region. Living closer to the land draws one into close proximity to the community. This fusion of the regional landscape with the minds of the people in close association with it, is what Cairns Craig describes as psychological regionalism: “It is on the basis of this fusion of a particular environment with the particularity of the mind ‘possessed’ by it that regionalism came to be founded: the territory of a particular region is a blank until
infused with a memory which brings it to life by being stimulated to the recollection of its past” (243).

The above appraisal of the concept of regionalism is broadly based on the etymology of the term, the specificity of the locale and the relationship of man and his environment. The historical semantics of any term shows that ideas, categories and concepts are not transcendental but spatio-temporarily specific. Raymond Williams, the British cultural thinker who made an extensive study of the various cultural terms in his book *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, is of the view that regionalism as a cultural term, is used to indicate a ‘subordinate’ or ‘inferior’ form (265) thereby implying that there is a superior or national form. The designation of the region as a definite part has opened the way to a political use in which the region came to be considered as an administered area and thus part of a larger whole. The ‘region’ thus becomes not only a part “but a subordinate part of a larger political entity” (*Key Words* 265). Williams rightly points out that “there is an evident tension within the word, as between a distinct area and a definite part” (264). This tension within the word became tenser in the postcolonial context, and as a result the term has secured a central position in the postcolonial theories and the post modernist discourses in literature. Regionalism as a geographical and cultural term, as evident in the earlier discussion, was relegated in the heydays of modernity and nationalism. Modernity with its elitist and totalising practices has been strongly contested by postmodern and postcolonial discourses. By opposing all forms of totalisation, postmodernism celebrates differences
through accommodating the voices of the marginalised. In granting value to these subordinated voices, postmodernism significantly overlaps with postcolonialism and challenges the claims of any hegemonic force of centrality. The centre (nation) is often contrasted with the periphery (region) that comprises of a community characterised by orality, myth and bizarre forms of beliefs and practices. The special attention ‘regionalism’ received in postmodernist and postcolonial discourses will provide a firm theoretical foundation for the analytical study of the four Indian English novels in the subsequent chapters.

Postmodernists reject the grand theories on nation and nationalism and consider the nation-state as fragmented. The growing ethnic and cultural diversity of the masses has rendered the traditional narratives of national identity incapable of differentiating “the various strata, regions and ethnicities of ‘the people’, each of whom or which may have different ideas and contain a variety of sentiments and preferences” (Smith 74). Hence we have Lyotard’s famous definition of postmodernism in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979) as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv). The basis of modernity is, for Lyotard, a certain type of metanarrative organization that tends to gloss over difference, opposition and plurality:

The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative but also denotative,
prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these.

The decision makers, however, attempt to manage these clouds of sociality following a logic which implies that their elements are commensurable and that the whole is determinable. They allocate our lives for the growth of power. (Postmodern Condition xxiv)

These “dispersed” discourses that make up a society’s knowledge have different sets of rules. Lyotard refers to these different discourses—“the heterogeneity of elements”—as ‘language games’ (concept drawn from Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein) to develop his own notions on metanarratives (Postmodern Condition xxiv). Wittgenstein's concern is to make distinctions between various activities in which language users engage, while Lyotard's application of the term is in the contexts of authority, power and legitimation. Lyotard has summarized what Wittgenstein means by the term as “each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put” (Postmodern Condition 10). Wittgenstein likens it to the game of chess, defined by a set of rules that determines the move of each of the pieces. For this it is useful to make the following three observations about language games. The first is that their rules do not carry within
themselves their own legitimation, but are the object of a contract between players. The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game, that even minute modification of one rule alters the nature of the game. The third remark is “every utterance should be thought of as a "move" in a game” (10). Man exists within this series of language games, whose different sets of rules make up his identity. According to Lyotard:

A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. . . .

. . . even before he is born, if only by virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as the referent of a story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course. (Postmodern Condition 15).

This organization of knowledge in society determines the identity of the people that comprise it. The question that arises here is how the different language games are related to each other in a society and why different societies have different ways of organizing the language games that constitute them. The answer which Lyotard offers is that the narratives and language games are structured through metanarratives which determine the language move made in them. The spread of capitalism and the rapid developments in science and technology have put an end to the grand narratives of modernity. As a result there is no unifying identity for the subject or society. Lyotard comments that this breaking up of the grand
narratives leads to what some authors analyse as “the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion.” He asserts that their point of view is haunted by “the paradisaic representation of a lost “organic” society” (15). In a similar vein, Hans Bertens suggests that these metanarratives or grand narratives are, broadly speaking, “the supposedly transcendent and universal truths that underpin western civilisation and that function to give that civilisation objective legitimation” (124). For him, Lyotard’s games serve as an effective weapon against all totalising pretensions (130).

Lyotard argues that these grand narratives (grands récits) of emancipation like progress, science, history, religion and Marxism which prescribe rules for larger contexts and fail to represent all, have lost their credibility. The focus has now shifted to the little narratives called micro narratives or language games (petits récits). An individual’s identity is located in a multiplicity of language games that do not follow a single metanarrative. Lyotard strongly endorses his position that the best means to resist the globalization of capitalism is by increasing the fragmentation of language games. The wider the range of the different language games, the more open and pluralistic that society can become (Postmodern Condition 37). “Consensus,” he says, "does violence to the heterogeneity of language games" (Postmodern Condition xxv). This could mean that by coming to an agreement we may or may not normally take into consideration the views of all the players. Hans Bertens remarks that consensus puts an end to
freedom and of thought and Lyotard favours dissensus that allows us freedom to experience and think, thereby extending our possibilities. Habermas's attempt is to reach a consensus through the various language games (127). Later on, Lyotard drops the term 'language games' because of its subjective overtones and replaces it with 'phrase regimens' as he feels that such terms like "game" and "player" might suggest a liberal humanist concept of the subject.

A phrase is constituted according to a set of rules (its regimen): "Phrases from heterogeneous regimens cannot be translated from one into the other. They can be linked one onto the other in accordance with an end fixed by a genre of discourse" (Differend xi). In The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (1988), Lyotard introduces the notion of the 'differend' which may be seen as an antidote to the totalizing modes of thought as it cannot be conceived of within the terms of that discourse and always remains outside it. Such differends forming the core of Lyotard's postmodernist discourse are never to be allowed to come to a consensus. All potential players, irrespective of how marginal they are, are allowed to make their moves and are not prematurely silenced because "to speak means to fight" and participate in the agnostics of the game as remarked by Wittingensten (Postmodern Condition 10). The aim of postmodernist criticism should be to do justice to them by allowing them to be heard in their own terms. But Lyotard remarks that such games which allow all players to make moves need not happen in reality. What often happens is that certain moves are ignored or repressed: "The stronger the
'move', the more likely it is to be denied the minimum consensus, precisely because it changes the rules of the game upon which the consensus had been based" (Postmodern Condition 63). Lyotard calls such an act as one of ‘terror’:

By terror I mean the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him. He is silenced or consents, not because he has been refuted, but because his ability to participate has been threatened (there are many ways to prevent one from playing). The decision makers’ arrogance … consists in the exercise of terror. It says: “Adapt your aspirations to our ends – or else.” (Postmodern Condition 63-64)

Lyotard speaks of a similar silencing of the differend, in the broader sense of a linguistic context, wherein “something “asks” to put in phrases”, and suffers from thewrong of not being able to do so. It marks a point of suffering where an injustice cannot find a space to make itself heard. A possible solution is offered by Lyotard:

A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling, unless one wants this differend to be smothered right away in a litigation and for the alarm sounded by the feeling to have been useless. What is at stake in a literature, in a
philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them. *(Differend 13)*

To Lyotard, the differend is a product of a conflict produced by the systems of justice that excludes individuals who do not share the system’s basic premises. The differend is the grievance that cannot be heard because the plaintiff is deprived of the means with which to express it: “I would like to call a *differend* . . . the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim” *(Differend 9)*. A case of conflict between two parties cannot be resolved due to a lack of a rule of judgement which could be applicable to both parties: “One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy” (xi). However, it would be wrong to apply a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend. Any such attempt to impose order on contingency, observes Lyotard, is an act of violence and victimization. The answer for him seems to lie in the proliferation of local languages, local contexts, local resistances, and the radical singularity of the phrase and the differend to which it bears witness. He observes:

Peoples do not form into one people, whether it be the people of God or the sovereign people of world citizens. There is not yet one world, but some worlds (with various names and narratives). Internationalism cannot overcome national worlds because it cannot channel short, popular narratives into epics, it remains “abstract”: it must efface proper names. . . . *(Differend 161)*
In his essay “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism” added as an appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard says that in the nineteenth and twentieth century we have paid a high price for “the nostalgia of the whole and the one” (81). His ideas can be summed up with the clarion call: “Let us wage a war on totality, let us be witnesses to the unpresentable, let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name” (82). Terry Eagleton, the British literary critic, in his article “Awakening from Modernity” describes postmodernism thus:

Postmodernism signals the death of such ‘metanarratives’ whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a ‘universal’ human history. We are now in the process of waking from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern, that heterogeneous range of life-styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalise and legitimate itself. (qtd in Harvey 9)

It should be concluded that the whole world of representation and of knowledge underwent a fundamental transformation opening up new possibilities of social rejuvenation and struggle. Steven Best and Kellner suggest that the postmodern celebration of plurality and multiplicity “facilitates a more diverse, open, and contextual politics that refuses to privilege any particular group or general recipe for social change” (286-87). The Enlightenment thought which took it as axiomatic that there was only one mode of
representation was challenged and replaced by an emphasis upon divergent systems of representations. Postmodernity, thus deconstructs the basic aim of Enlightenment which is “the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject” (“Answering” 73). It becomes necessary that understanding be constructed through the exploration of multiple perspectives. An overarching term such as nationalism is no longer feasible and the forcefully suppressed elements of the region embark to produce a different discourse – focussing on the collapse of the grand narratives into the little narratives.

Postcolonialism rejects the idea of a universal explanation of things and emphasizes the separateness or otherness of post-imperial nations and peoples by not only contesting them but also through developing and rediscovering indigenous theories. It was the postcolonial theories that paved the way for the rise of regionalism in literature. Postcolonial criticism of today asserts the vital importance of the historical, geographical and cultural specifics and do not consider it as a secondary colouring or background. It is impossible to retrieve “the pre-colonial cultural purity” of the colonised people and to create national or regional formations devoid of any implication in the European historical enterprise (Tiffin 27). It thus becomes the task of postcolonial writing “to re-enter, from its ‘peripheral’ position between, and thus within, two worlds, to interrogate and deconstruct European discourse and discursive strategies” (27). A crucial insistence of postcolonial theory is that despite a shared experience of colonialism, the cultural realities of postcolonial societies may
differ vastly. Postcolonial discourse aims to provide a methodology for considering the dialogue of similarity and difference— the similarity of the colonial impact on the non-European societies alongside the plurality of specific cultural effects and responses those societies have produced. Areas excluded by colonialist and nationalist discourses have been taken up by postcolonial theories. So as a necessary prelude to understanding the innumerable ways in which the Other has been constructed, a brief survey of the theories of Orientalism and colonialism which deals with the concept of Othering will be dealt with. This will be further carried to the studies of the subaltern and the suppressed diversities to eventually culminate in the region.

The postcolonial ideological world consists of problematics of Orientalism, colonialism and postcolonialism. Frantz Fanon’s writings are a very important milestone in the discussion of postcolonial theories. His argument contends all that the hallowed ideals of European humanism had stood for and exposes its deep seated complicity with the violent history of colonialism. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he asserts that the impact of European colonialism had resulted not only in the erasure of indigenous cultures but also in instilling in the minds of the colonised a sense of inferiority on the basis of their race: “Colonization is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the natives brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (169). Fanon describes colonialism as a denial of all attributes of humanity to the
colonised- “a systematic negation of the other person” (*Wretched* 200). It is not enough that the settler uses his military power to assert his authority over the natives but he has to paint the native as one bereft of all values. The native is the “corrosive”, “deforming” and “disfiguring” element – the very “quintessence of all evil” (*Wretched* 32).

The colonists, exposed to lands with a diversity of geography and culture, gave that diversity a conceptual shape by using figures which harked back to the home ground. Consequently, familiar metaphors from Europe were used to comprehend the strange and unfamiliar contexts that were entirely un-European. The tendency to construct synonymic connections between different cultural and geographical places by using stock images led to the blurring of their differences and at the same time functioned to maintain imperialist superiority. Elleke Boehmer, in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995) observes that “the way to manage alterity was to homogenize it” (54). This carrier device enabled the colonialist discourse “to reproduce itself from territory to territory, administration to administration.” For the European it was quite shocking that his reason and intellect proved to be inadequate to give him a complete picture of the colonised. As there was no essential consonance between the colonial imported metaphors and the colonised land, the coloniser’s efforts to graft his hermeneutic structures onto the colonised environment met with difficulties. The incomprehensibility of the people made them represent these people as dull, ignorant and totally deplorable. One way of
tackling the incomprehensibility was to thrust it as far as possible to the margins or to edit it out and to name the strange with metaphors which connoted mystery and inarticulateness: “Crowd imagery came handy to suggest a lack of character and individual will” (Boehmer 95). Boehmer organizes the rhetorical strategies employed to manage colonial readability into two groups. The first, a metaphorical reiteration whose nature has already been described in brief above, involved “the editing out or occlusion of extreme otherness: what could not be translated was simply not a part of the represented scene.” The second involved the strategy of displacement, “a device whereby the intransigence or discomfort the colonizer experienced was projected on to the native” (95).

In his preface to The Wretched of the Earth, Jean Paul Sartre speaks of how the European elite instilled their values, ideas and language to create a native elite. This native elite echoed the mother country till “their mouths opened by themselves; the yellow and black voices still spoke of our humanism but only to reproach us with our inhumanity”(7). A new generation, according to Sartre, was created which began to influence the outlook of the native:

A new generation came on the scene, which changed the issue. With unbelievable patience, its writers and poets tried to explain to us that our values and the true facts of their lives did not hang together, and that they could neither reject them completely nor yet assimilate them. By and large, what they were saying was this:
‘You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart.’ (Wretched 7-8)

Fanon asserts that the Third World had begun to voice itself. The European powers became alarmed at the apparently sudden emergence of newly empowered voices demanding that the natives be heard. In Black Skin, White Masks (1952), Fanon depicts those colonised by French imperialism to wallow in their own inferiority. To escape from this, the colonised strive to embrace the ‘civilized’ ideals of the motherland. But however hard the colonised try to accept the education, values and language of France – to don the white mask of civilization that will cover up the ‘universalized’ nature indexed by their black skins – they are never accepted on equal terms: “The white world, the only honourable one, barred me from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man” (Black Skin 114). The point to be deduced from the above observations is that the colonised means little to the coloniser. Far from making any genuine attempts to understand him, the coloniser is preoccupied with remoulding him. At the end of this stubborn effort to dehumanize, Albert Memmi, the Tunisian anti-colonial revolutionary intellectual presents the mythical portrait of the colonised: “He is surely no longer an alter ego of the colonizer. He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object. As an end, in the colonizer’s supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e., be transformed into a pure colonized” (130).
Edward Said makes a similar observation in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), when he claims that the Orient has been instrumental in defining the West “as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (2). What Said stresses here is that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). The Western notions of the Orient are not what it observed in those lands but what the Westerners assumed or fantasized the Orient to be. These imaginative assumptions regarding the Orient are often considered to be true and real. To Said, Orientalism was “ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (Orient, the East, “them”)” (43). Commenting on this difference, Ania Loomba writes:

Said shows that this opposition is crucial to European self-conception: if colonized people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual and lazy, Europe is civilization itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine. (47)

The experiences of writers, travellers, soldiers and statesmen from Herodotus and Alexander the Great, according to Said have become “the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception and the form of the encounter
between East and West” (58). What holds these experiences together is the shared sense of something Other, which is named the Orient. Said cites the example of Flaubert’s encounter with the Egyptian courtesan to indicate the general pattern of domination by the West over the East: “... she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male . . . .” (Orientalism 6). A similar relational collective identity formation of “Europe” versus “the Rest” is posited by Stuart Hall who maintains that “the West’s sense of itself – its identity – was formed, not only by the internal processes that gradually moulded Western European countries into a distinct type of society, but also through Europe’s sense of difference from other worlds” (“The West” 279). However, it has to be understood that the Other was not a simple negative term set up in opposition to the coloniser’s self-image:

It did not simply involve an antinomian pairing of white against black, or colonizer versus colonized. Colonial relations were always heterogeneous and shifting. Rather than being an undifferentiated entity, the Other was based on multiple distinctions. Depending on the context and imperial interest, certain categories of people or cultures were deemed to be closer to the European self than the others. (Boehmer 82)

Colonialism is perpetuated by the very fact that it has the right to rule the others and make them accept their inferior position in the colonial order. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the epitome
was Europe and people from other cultures were ranked on the basis of their difference from Europe. This same metaphoric interpretation which Europe used to represent the colonised people was later used by the elite Indian nationalists to forge national unity.

Said highlights a wide range of literary, historical, political, military and administrative accounts that entailed a formal study of the Orient which in turn constituted certain ways of seeing, thinking, and controlling it in the European mind and thus shaping the operations of the latter’s colonial power. The concept of Orientalism can be best examined as a discourse [in Foucaultian terms] or it would have been impossible to understand “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce– the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period”(3). Orientalism becomes a discourse at a point at which it starts systematically to produce stereotypes about Orientals and the Orient, such as the heat and dust, the teeming market place, the terrorist, the courtesan, the Asian despot, the child-like native, the mystical East. These stereotypes laid down by the colonialists confirm the postcolonial superiority of the West over the positional inferiority of the East. The image delivered is of “a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves” (35). Central to the concept of Orientalism is the relationship of power between the Occident and the Orient. Power is intimately bound with the
knowledge of the Orient which makes it possible for the West to control and manage the Other. Said makes the following observation:

England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes “the very basis” of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation. (Orientalism 34)

This knowledge of the Orient gives powers to the Occident to construct an image of the Orient as inferior and subservient. In Culture and Imperialism (1993), a sequel to his Orientalism, Said asserts that the institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism are nothing without the power of culture that maintains them. By the late nineteenth century, Europe had created a highly confident and authoritative edifice of culture which enabled its imperial assumptions and its centralizing of European life to remain unquestioned. In their view, the colonised have no identity—“no life, no history or culture to speak of, no independence or integrity worth representing without the West” (xxi). Chinua Achebe, in his essay “Colonialist Criticism” comments that when the colonizer claims “‘I know my natives’” he is implying that the native is very simple and “that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand” (58). Racial characterisations of this sort helped to justify the colonising mission. By exercising his
powers over the natives, the coloniser has implanted in the minds of the natives that the values of the West are universal and perennial. It is to be noted that all through colonisation, the myth of universality has been a primary strategy of imperial control.

As an extension of Said’s *Orientalism* as a discourse, the postcolonial critic, Homi K. Bhabha in the chapter entitled “The Other Question” in his *The Location of Culture* asserts that it is the process of ambivalence that ensures the colonial stereotype its currency and produces “that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed” (66). However, contrary to Said’s neat dichotomy of a powerful coloniser and a helpless colonised, Bhabha argues that both the coloniser and the colonised are mutually implicated in the operation of colonial power. For him these stereotypes are not always stable and emphasises the anxiety that stereotypical representations betray in the coloniser’s sense of self-identity. He demonstrates how this anxiety is matched by mimicry, a concept defined as “the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (“Of Mimicry and Man”86). The colonial discourse wants the colonised to be like the coloniser, but by no means identical. As the colonial discourse is unable to control the consequences of the difference, “mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.” Despite that mimicry seems to be one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge, it also represents an ironic compromise between the Self and the Other. On the one
hand, mimicry appears as a strategy of colonial power while on the other, mimicry is “the representation of difference that is itself a process of disavowal.” For Bhabha, the subversive power of mimicry lies in its purpose to disclose the ambivalence of colonial discourse and simultaneously disrupt its authority. Hence as opposed to Said, Bhabha ascribes an agency to the colonised subject.

Said’s view that Orientalism moves only in one direction i.e., from West to East has been criticised for giving scant importance to how Orientals received these representations. For Ranajit Guha, it loses its historical specificity when it is extrapolated from post-Enlightenment Europe ("Europe and the Exotic" 440). Aijaz Ahmad, one of Said’s critics, argues that Said never thinks about how Western representations “might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonized countries” (172). Ahmad also pinpoints Said’s definition of Orientalism as a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident. He accuses Said of speaking of Europe or the West “as a self-identical, fixed being which has always had an essence and a project, an imagination and a will; and of the ‘Orient’ as its object-textually, militarily, and so on” (183). What Said is doing here, according to Ahmad, is to posit “stable subject-object identities.” In recent studies, it has been noted that the self-identity of the postcolonial societies has been deeply affected by the power of the colonial cultures and their forms of thought and classification.
There has been a tendency to emphasize the contrast between what is taken to be western rationality and the irrationality of the east. The issue to be scrutinized is whether such a bipolar contrast is at all present. A very notable stance has been taken by the economist, Amartya Sen, in refuting Said’s analysis of Orientalism on the thematic level. Said presents a uniform and consistent western characterization of the Orient. But Sen, in his work, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (2005) deals with the contrasting and conflicting approaches to understanding India, it being a part of the Orient. Sen points out that the fundamentally contrary ideas and images of India have had very distinct roles in the Western understanding of the country and also in influencing the self-perceptions of the Indians. The Western approaches have had major positive and negative impacts on what contributes to the Indian self-image that emerged in the colonial period and survives today. Sen remarks that “the deep-seated heterogeneity of Indian traditions is neglected in these homogenized interpretations” (140). He brings these approaches into a threefold categorization: the exoticist, the magisterial and the curatorial (141). The exoticist approach focuses on the wondrous aspects of India. Megasthenes *Indika* which claims to be the first outsider’s book on India and describes India in the early-third-century BC, created much Greek interest. But Sen comments that Megasthenes’ book is “so full of accounts of fantastic achievements in India that it is hard to be sure what is imagined and what is really being observed”(151). Important figures in the Romantic movement,
such as the Schlegel brothers, were profoundly influenced by the magnified readings of Indian culture. But many early enthusiasts were disappointed to find their conceptions wrong in actuality and went into a phase of withdrawal and criticism: “A wonderful thing is imagined about India and sent into a high orbit, and then it is brought crashing down” (152). The second, the magisterial approach sees India as a subject territory where imperial power could be exercised. In this context, Sen cites James Mill who presented the picture of India as “a barbaric nation under the benign and reformist administration of the British Empire” (147). Mill opined that Indian civilization was on par with other inferior ones like the Chinese, Persian, Arabian and the Japanese. James Mill’s *The History of British India* played a crucial role in introducing India to the British governors. He dismissed Indian culture and its intellectual traditions as primitive and rude. This view of “the poverty of Indian intellectual traditions” greatly influenced the educational reform measures in British India (149). Sen points out that such limited attitudes were held by Mill without ever having visited India. The third, the curatorial approach, attempts at noting, classifying and exhibiting the diverse aspects of Indian culture. Unlike the other two approaches, it does not look for the strange nor is it weighed down by the ruler's priorities. Sen includes Arab, Chinese and European scholarship as cases in point of the curatorial approach. However, he remarks that even such dedicated scholarship catered more to the perspective of the observer as the focus is primarily on things that are distinctive in India (144-46).
Regarding the concept of Orientalism, Partha Chatterjee makes a distinction on the thematic and problematic levels. He ascertains that the problematic in nationalist thought is exactly the reverse of Orientalism:

That is to say, the ‘object’ in nationalist thought is still the Oriental, who retains the essentialist character depicted in Orientalist discourse. Only he is not passive, non-participating. He is seen to possess a ‘subjectivity’ which he can himself ‘make’. In other words, while his relationship to himself and to others have been ‘posed, understood and defined’ by others, i.e. by an objective scientific consciousness, by Knowledge, by Reason, those relationships are not acted by others. His subjectivity, he thinks, is active, autonomous and sovereign. (NT 38)

When the West uses its knowledge and reason to define the position of the other, the “object” in nationalist thought is no longer passive and compliant, for he knows now what is necessary for his transformation. On the other hand at the thematic level, says Chatterjee, nationalist thought is based on the very same conception of the East and the West “created by a transcendent studying subject, and hence the same ‘objectifying’ procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western science” (NT 38). In his article, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?”, Dipesh Chakrabarty describes the (formerly) colonised Indian “in terms of a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into
‘inadequacy’”(227 ). This stigma which was produced in the gaze of the coloniser, as identified by Fanon hadn’t diminished with the demise of colonization but continues to haunt him in the subaltern self-representations.

The above study signifies the efforts adopted by the postcolonial theoreticians to grapple with the diversity of the Other. The politics of the Other occupies a significant role even today. But the issue is no longer one of a mere representation of the Other by exoticising or giving an objective account of it but recognising and representing the “other anew with its own powers of recognition, representation, and persuasion intact” (Khare 121). This Other is not inferior but “has an independent presence, much more than the different devices of representation can capture.” The transformation of the Other thus necessitates a rewriting of its history from a different perspective.

The issue has been one of the chief concerns for scholars of the Subaltern Studies group who were greatly influenced by the writings of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. These critics have explored the ways in which representations of Indian nationalism have either elided or suppressed the masses. Akin to the British representations of the diversity of Indian pasts through a homogenizing narrative, the nationalist elites too have integrated the disparate pasts of India into a single unified history. Histories of India, China and Kenya have Europe as their sovereign theoretical subject by which all other histories “tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe‘.” In this sense ‘Indian’ history as such occupies a position of
subalternity (Chakrabarty 223). Indian history articulates itself, according to Chakrabarty, through this “double bind” being at once the subject and object of modernity. The assumed unity of “Indian” people is split into two – the modernising elite and the yet-to-be modernised peasantry. Being such a split subject, “it speaks from within a metanarrative which celebrates the nation-state” and has its theoretical subject “a hyperreal ‘Europe’, a ‘Europe’ constructed by the tales that both imperialism and nationalism have told the colonized” (239). To attempt to impose an overarching metanarrative on such an experience is to perpetuate the violence of modernity and experience that “terror” defined by Lyotard caused by eliminating or threatening. Since the 1960s, historians and sociologists have taken up a new approach towards modern Indian history, quite different from the earlier one which treated it as either imperialist or nationalist. These approaches provide a critique of the monolithic and uncontextualised reading of the movement of nationalism under a unified title (Aloysius 6). For Ranajit Guha, the colonialist, nationalist and Marxist trends of Indian historiography have been “entrenched so well in the post-Enlightenment critique of reason” evading all the “complexity, diversity, and multitude of experience located within the still unassimilated parts of civil society” (“Subaltern Studies” 360). The result of this silencing has been “to leave unheard a myriad stories in the life of our people and deny them the historicality to which they are fully entitled” (360). Guha calls for a total rewriting of history that “will activate and make audible” all the small and silenced voices – the subaltern voices of women, the downtrodden
and the rest of the marginalised (“Small Voice” 316). Just like the novel, the post-Enlightenment historiography is informed by an order of coherence and linearity. Guha demands an urgent revision of this historiography which will probably cause, as identified by Lyotard, a stutter in the flow of the language. But it will be a new historiography “sensitized to the undertones of despair and determination in . . . the voice of a defiant subalternity committed to writing its own history” (“Small Voice” 317). This would assign the differend a new place in the historiography of the nation. As Lyotard affirms: “To give the differend its due is to institute new addresseees, new addressors, new significations, and new referents in order for the wrong to find an expression and for the plaintiff to cease being a victim. This requires new rules for the formation and linking of phrases” (Differend 13).

Colonialism’s failure was replicated by the elite nationalists who too failed in striking new paths in the building of the nation. This was mainly because the metanarratives of the “imagined community” were being framed from a dominant position evading “disadvantaged and diversified subaltern positions” (Aloysius 155). Challenges to this dominant and glorified vision of the nation triggered off manifold responses from the subaltern standpoint to the extent that their antagonism defied even the intellectual foundations of colonialism. For Gayathri Spivak the nation is a hegemonic or oppressive structure forcefully thrust on the subalterns. In her widely acclaimed act of decentring the nation, the margins of the subalterns overtake the centre thereby leading to the dissolution of the nation. To Homi K. Bhabha, the nation is a
fictitious terrain, narrativised to serve some ideological or political end. In the conceptualisation of the national identity, it excludes minorities and culture difference that go on to produce their own counter-narratives. These counter-narratives of the nation that both evoke and erase its totalling boundaries “disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities” (“DissemiNation” 300). The same issue has been problematised in Ranajit Guha’s essay “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”, where he accuses both the colonialist and nationalist historiography of being “one-sided and blinkered” (189) in failing to recognise and represent the complex social and political histories of the subaltern groups. The historical representation of the various lower-class subaltern groups was thus framed in terms and interest of the ruling power. Discussing the issue of marginalisation that takes place as a result of internal colonialism, Ayyappa Paniker notes that the tribals, the first nations and the aborigines are subtly bypassed and marginalized not only in the political sphere but also in the economic and cultural spheres. Illustrations of the tyranny of subjugation and subordination within the same country are the downtrodden communities in India, the Red Indians in America, the Inuits in Canada, the Maoris and the Bushmen in Australia and the Afro-Americans in the U.S (“Vive la Differance!”9).

This subjugation can extend into the domestic sphere in regard to the domination of the male over the female. While Said describes how Orientalism controls the non-Western world by defining it as the Other of Europe, Spivak has tried to displace this
fixed Self- Other dichotomy in favour of an ethical response to the lives and struggles of oppressed peoples in the Third World. In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak highlights the limitations of applying European theories of representation to the lives and histories of disempowered women. This is mainly because the representations of subaltern insurgency give priority to men:

It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (287)

Vasantha Kannabiran and K. Lalitha in their essay “That Magic Time” address the same problem arising from not listening. The small voice which speaks as if in pain has an undertone of harassment pitted against a commanding noise characteristically male in its “inability to hear what the women were saying” (199). Thus we have Spivak’s rhetorical question, “can the subaltern speak?” The focus of Subaltern Studies thus shifts from the subaltern through peasant and peasant community to the community in general. It is this community fighting for channels of representation that partakes to form the region.

By adopting an ideology of the West, Indian nationalists have ended up embracing an ideology that has marginalized and suppressed diversity. The unity displayed by nationalism refuses to
acknowledge difference and has often privileged certain voices over the others. No critical self examination was conducted to ascertain whether linguistically and culturally diverse societies as India and Africa could be forged into a single, homogenous nation. Early nationalists were not concerned about the problem of the Other as they were mainly involved in the success of the movement itself. In spite of Gandhi’s special recognition to the Adivasis and the other indigenous groups in the fringe areas of eastern India, they were not influenced by the mainstream nationalist movement. The religious symbols which were improvised and utilized in mobilizing national sentiments could only very rarely touch the emotion of the minority groups and indigenous communities of India. In order to attain a special place in the polity to preserve their linguistic, cultural and ethnic distinctiveness, they ended up opting for demands for separate statehood as in the case of Madras, north-eastern regions, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Regionalism thus makes demands for greater autonomy and larger share of political power for the region or for a separate political existence from the nation-state. In some other cases it gives vent to feelings of economic deprivation and backwardness. A closer analysis reveals that separatist demands may also arise as a consequence of the recent economic development which treats certain areas as mere resource areas and denies them the attention given to the rest of the state in which these regions fall (A. Banerjee 121). A case in point refers to the biggest hydro-electric project of India, the Narmada Valley Project which provides irrigational facilities to the three states of
Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. But the regions suffer from the evacuation of millions of people and devastation of biodiversity by clearing large acres of forest areas and inundating agricultural lands. Likewise, the Sardar Sarovar dam in Gujarat causes major ecological problems to the region but promotes better power supply, extensive fish cultivation and tourism in Gujarat. When the programmes and priorities of regionalism seriously conflict with those of nationalism, regionalism may be considered as separatist subnationalism (Encyclopedia of Nationalism 2: 438). As analysed by Sajal Basu:

When the concerned ethnic group or community fails to articulate its grievances through various levels of political parties or administration, they may resort to ethnicise, communalise the issues of their grievances. This could lead to the formation of regional, nativist organisation and fronts so as to mobilise the already fermenting ethno-regional grievances. (48)

The rise of regional movements in India could be attributed to the erosion of all primordial identities and “as a response to the imposition of an alien process of nation building” (Basu 105). This study does not intend to make an extensive discussion on political regionalism or address the various regional movements. However, these movements can be traced to 1953, when a separate state was demanded by the Telugu speaking people which led to the formation of Andhra Pradesh. The Dravida Movement which started in Tamil Nadu focused on empowering Dalits, non-Brahmins, and poor people. Later it turned against the imposition of Hindi as sole
official language on non-Hindi speaking areas. Finally, the movement for some time focused on seceding from India to carve out their own Dravidastan or Dravida Nadu. Throughout India, regionalist movements have persisted– in Maharashtra Shiv Sena against Kannadigas in the name of Marathi pride and recently MNS activists against Biharis; in Punjab against non-Punjabis that gave rise to Khalistan Movement and earlier Akali Movement; in Andhra, Telangana Movement with an aim of separate state; in Assam ULFA militants against migrant Biharis and Bengalis; in North-East against other Indians. What all these movements testify is their desire to be heard and carve a niche for themselves in the Indian polity. Such problems undoubtedly point to the lack of congruence between the imported western model of the nation and the profound diversity of the Indian subcontinent. India cannot conform to a unicultural and unilingual nationalism based on a European model. The accepted conditions of nationhood: shared past, common territory, language and cultural homogeneity do not fit in the development of Indian nationalism. The social and political characteristics necessitate that Indian national identity be premised upon its plurality (A. Banerjee 120). The attempt on the part of the regions to cling on to their diversities need not be seen as discordant with the larger system of the nation. In his introduction to Regionalism in India, B. Pakem opines that instead of disintegrating the body politic of India, these varied regions could fortify the national fabric through political, administrative, territorial and emotional integration (13). He maintains that “the
struggle in India today is to make the country safe for diversity” (10) and to accommodate the spirit of regionalism.

The political scientist, G. Aloysius asserts that it is the Regionalist approach that steers clear of the dominant pan-Indian historiography. It provides a better framework for studying the Indian society by becoming more sensitive to the regional variations and exploring the subtle nuances of regional social histories (6). By considering the region as a “part of the larger political identity”, as mentioned earlier by Williams, it need not be construed that the “part” is a “piece broken off – of a pre-constituted whole” (Pandey 296). It is rather, as analysed by Gyanendra Pandey, a disturbance “in the self representation of that particular totality and those who uncritically uphold it.” This brings into focus an alternative standpoint:

It is a call to try and analyse the historical construction of the totalities we work with, the contradictions that survive within them, the possibilities they appear to fulfil, the dreams and possibilities apparently suppressed: in a word, the fragility and instability of the ‘givens’ (the ‘meaningful totalities’) of history. (296)

The tendency is to appropriate and unify the fractured and “broken fragments” as “fully connected, neatly fashioned historical accounts, without any jagged edges if possible” (297). The identities of such “fragments” are not based on some overarching principle which can be unmasked and defined with ease. It is
complex and diffused and can only be grasped by a deep and intimate familiarity with them. Aloysius notes that “what is pejoratively labelled as fragmentation is in fact rootedness in and continuity with the culturally diversified traditions of the subcontinent.” It is through the logic of the dominant political idiom that the very concept of diversity is equated to fragmentation, “an aspect of subalternity” (163). The haloed concepts of unity and diversity in the concrete Indian context of socio-cultural development, observes Aloysius, are not two neutral terms that help constitute a pan-Indian nation. Unity is “dominant and uniformizing culturo-ideological and mythical Brahminic factors and is thus oppressive” (186). Diversity stands “for the movement away from these uniformizing factors, the tendencies of resistance of the subaltern and the locally rooted castes and communities in general.” It is “the defiance of the commoners against the imposition from above” (187).

Another powerful response in favour of regionalism has come from the School of Nativism which strongly foregrounds indigenous elements. G.N. Devy’s nativism is aimed at creating awareness among the people about their cultural heritage from their point of view. He deflates the very idea of the nation called India in his critical work *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (1992): “The term ‘India’ may be valid in the pages of an atlas, but as a cultural label it is hopelessly inadequate and simplistic. A product of colonial historiography, the term brings with it a politically coloured self-image and the suggestion of cultural amnesia” (2). Bhalchandra Nemade, another staunch
nativist, uses the term *deshiyata* as the Indian equivalent for nativism. He points out that the very term nativism has been borrowed from the American cultural anthropologist, Ralph Linton who considered it to be “a strategic or symbolic mode of protest adopted by groups which feel inferior or threatened by the onslaught of more powerful or dominant cultures” (qtd in Paranjape “Beyond Nativism” 160). Every culture has an innate capacity to transform and absorb alien influences into its native methods. In his essay, “Nativism in Literature”, Nemade terms this assimilation as nativisation which strengthens the very texture of a given society. He elucidates:

> It is through this process that a culture absorbs events and objects in the world external to man, from things animate and inanimate to animals and plants. And this process establishes man’s innate relationship with the local hills, rivers, animals, history and geography. (243)

This very same process is at work in literary tradition. Every writer is cognisant of the native and local traditions in which he is deeply rooted. The classics of world literature are, in fact, native literatures rooted in their own soil. Nemade argues that the central positions they hold in the world community transfers the sensibilities of a particular regional group to the whole of humanity, thus lending these works a universalism. He further emphasises the need to render the uniqueness of the various cultures of our country in an indigenous language. Makarand Paranjape, in his essay “Beyond Nativism: Toward a Contemporary Indian Tradition in Criticism” considers it not as a “totally unique or
distinct cultural trend” but as a part of the ongoing theories and developments of the times:

Nativism, in this sense is an offshoot of the crisis in modernism, a reaction to modernism’s alienating aesthetic and its universal claims to knowledge. Nativism, thus, is subaltern – the celebration of the local, the immediate, the marginalised. Hence, it is very much part of the post-modern cultural scenario. (173)

In literature, it thus becomes a movement of fierce self assertion of the indigenous - be it in narration, technique, style or content. Nevertheless, Paranjape accuses proponents of nativism like Nemade, for whom it is a “language-specific way of looking at literature” (After Amnesia 120) which emphasises indigenous language in opposition to writing in English. Paranjape is of the view that the English language which has nearly two hundred years of domicile in India can no longer be called alien. Linguists like Braj Kachru have clearly identified the various processes of acculturation and nativisation adopted by the Indian English writers. Many of these writers have attempted to articulate the specificities of their regions through the skilful manipulation of the English language.

Owing to the vast cultural diversity existing in a country like India, the regions have to be understood in their parts for creating a greater harmony. This stresses the need for a shift from the national perspective to an emphasis on the local and regional
concerns. When we speak of the local, there is the general assumption that it operates below the level of the national and this holds true not only for spatial locations but also with regard to ethnic and cultural variations (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial* 215-6). It is essential that the local and the national are not to be seen as mere opposites but as the local contributing to the national. For W. H. New, the notion of the region contains within it the hidden notion of the total structure of the nation. New warns:

Any time a society begins to artificially declare a unity of character, that is, or to institutionalize an artificial norm of culture, the “regions”– that is to say the social variations within the society– will emerge to declare otherwise. In this sense the truly regional voice is one that declares an internal political alternative: in possession of the immediate and the local, representing the voice of the polis, the people, it makes of the vernacular, the local attitude and the spatial allusion not simply a descriptive posture but a political gesture. (17)

The importance of distinction between local cultures and their respective individualities and the necessity to understand the deeply heterogeneous character of each local culture has been greatly emphasized. The individuality of cultures is a serious topic in recent times and the tendency towards the homogenization of cultures, mainly in some uniform mode or under the umbrella of modernity has been strongly challenged. To maintain a regional identity, argues Ashis Banerjee, doesn’t mean it is to maintain a
“sentimental protectiveness” against “an assumed monolith, the nation-state” (122). The innate strength of India comes from the interdependence of the component parts where in each part not only recognises the existence of the other parts but even understands them. Ayyappa Paniker substantiates this:

It may even be said that what constitutes the uniqueness of each individual culture is the differential value of the diverse cultures. So rich and varied are these cultures that it is their dove-tail-like diversity that holds them together as an integrated whole. Their interconnectedness is reinforced and not weakened by their heterogeneity. (“The Multicultural” 21)

Since all cultures being a part of human existence share a set of beliefs and practices it does not necessarily mean that they form a continuum and cannot be differentiated. In the pluralistic cultural environment of India, every regional culture feels the same dilemma as to how to remain separate without being overwhelmed by the culture of the state as a whole. K. Satchidanandan’s observation on nativism as a celebration of the pluralism that is at the very core of Indian culture and literature (28) holds true for regionalism as well. He argues for the need to problematise the idea of cultural homogeneity that has been haunting the dominant discourse of the country. There is, he feels, a need to interrogate the classical canons of “Indianness” to revise our understanding of unity and thereby re-emphasize diversity. It becomes imperative “to see it as a continuous and evolving process of open dialogue and creative interaction among
our different languages and cultures including the marginalised ones of the minorities . . .” (28). Satchidanandan further points out: “Indian culture is no monolith and Indian literature is not a monologue; they have many tongues and many voices, many hues and many worldviews” (28-9).

In today’s world of globalization, where the power of the nation-state seems to decline, the autonomy of the region needs to be carefully evaluated. In this globalising world, the local faces the threat of extinction. Aschroft observes that “the agency of the local, is most powerful when it is transformative” (Post-Colonial 216). The local communities consume global culture and transform themselves whereby the “global culture becomes the object of a tactical appropriation by which the character of local identity is strengthened” (207). Ashcroft identifies that the strategies employed by the colonised to resist imperial culture are being “recapitulated on a global scale in local communities throughout the world” (Post-Colonial 206). As it is beyond question to isolate local communities without involving itself with globalization, the only possible solution could be one of appropriation and adaptation of global culture. Postcolonial theories show that “the key to resistance lies not in dismissal, isolation and rejection but more often in engagement and transformation” (Post-Colonial 214). In his article entitled “Globalization, Resistance and Social Imagination”, E.V. Ramakrishnan asserts that our culture has to find ways to contest and resist the hegemony of globalization and opines that “the rise of primordial identities related to religion, region and ethnicity to the centre stage may be one of the ways in
which a society driven to the walls, responds to the pressure of globalization” (8). The rise of the novel in India, he feels, is one of the ways to creating an indigenous space as against the homogenizing thrust of the alien traditions of globalization (9). Rajni Kothari in his foreword to *Regional Movements*, observes that the world is gripped between two opposing trends. On the one hand, is the homogenizing and universalizing thrust towards the globalization of diverse societies into a single world and on the other, is the “growing assertion of diversity, of pluralizing impulses, of growing differentiation within societies, of the strong upsurge of identities and their search for autonomy and self-determination, honour and dignity” (viii). In a world fast moving towards a global economy, it therefore becomes very necessary that the region retain its distinct identity.

There have been long periods in Indian history when regions have played a more significant role than the overall unified nation. Joseph Schwartzberg’s historical atlas of India illustrates that from the eighth to the twelfth century, the kingdoms were loosely held together by political arrangements among overlords and lesser rulers. This absence of a single predominant power proved conducive for regional polities to promote their regional cultures (186). The emergence of a unified consciousness of belonging to India began to surface only during the colonial period which was further fostered by the nationalist movement. This consciousness was developed on the basis of a cohesive force of “Indianness”. Jawaharlal Nehru’s text on the nationalist interpretation of India’s past, *Discovery of India* (1951), emphasises that the diversity of
the people of India was only outward. What held the Indians together was “a tremendous impress of oneness” (59). Nehru conceives this unity as not something imposed from outside but something deeper within its fold. The nationalists asserted that the essential unity of India was so powerful that “no political division, no disaster or catastrophe, had been able to overcome it” (59). The new Constitution which came into force on January 26, 1950 declared India to be “Union of States” (Art1.1). It made a distinction between the main types of states on the basis of governance as Part A, B, C and D states. Before the States Reorganisation Act came into effect on November 1, 1956, the seventh Amendment also came into force and this distinction of Part A, B, C and D states was abolished. As a result of this linguistic division of states, Andhra Pradesh was formed by the addition of Telangana region of the erstwhile Hyderabad state; Kerala was formed by the merger of Travancore-Cochin state with the Malabar district of Madras state; and Mysore state was formed by the addition of Coorg state, Kannada speaking states of southern Bombay and western Hyderabad state. Nevertheless, this linguistic division failed to address the specificities and issues pertaining to the varied ethnic and linguistic communities.

Vora and Feldhaus, in their text *Region, Culture and Politics in India* (2006), identify three phases through which regionalism has passed since independence (10-11). The first phase encompassing the period between 1947 to the early 1970s was influenced by the partition where the cautious first government of independent India suppressed all kinds of regionalistic demands.
However, the linguistic regions were recognised on the basis of the States Reorganisation Act of 1956. All other regional expressions were seen as threats to unity and were discouraged. Nehru’s charisma combined with the Congress party system aided in consolidating this unity. The national economy, polity and culture thoroughly marginalised the region. This is reflected in the Bollywood movies of the period, the heavy industries sector (dominance of the Tatas and Birlas), the postal and telegraph system, the railways and the banking system (nationalisation of banking in 1969). Thus it is observed that whatever was regional was subsumed under the grand narrative of the nation. In Indian English writings of the period, this pan-Indian strain became predominant. The coalition between European themes, a national setting and the English language was the most conspicuous feature of Indian English writings which purposefully avoided all sorts of regional representation. In the second phase, from the early 1970s to the 90s, as the centre attempted to displace regional movements, they became extremist and challenged them. Such issues manifested itself in the vernacular literature of the varied regions of India as the Naxalite movement in the literatures of Bengal and Kerala and the Dravida movement in Tamil literatures. A deep schism is noted between the vernacular writings and the Indian English literature on account of this as the latter continued to pay its obeisance to the pan-Indian nation and dealt with issues on a superficial level. Indian English novels failed to make an authentic depiction of the varied regions of India by neglecting its regional specificities. In the third phase which began
in the nineties and continues up to the present, the militancy of regional movements had died down. They were legitimised and began to play a dominant role in national politics. The state units of national parties are functioning like regional parties just as regional parties are working as extensions of national parties. Likewise, the regional economy during this phase became well established and regional activity increased (as the I T boom in Bangalore and Hyderabad). The national monopoly in the case of heavy industries and service industries face challenges from regional and global forces. This is equally evident in popular culture as in films and advertisements. Subsequently, one is able to discern a strong legitimisation of the region being accomplished through its links with the international. The usage of an international language to convincingly depict the regions has enabled regionalism to carve a niche for itself in Indian English fiction.

While retaining the authentic cultural features pertaining to a society, contemporary Indian English novelists have been able to comprehend their complex reality with immense heterogeneity at every level. Such writings vouch for spirited and promising developments in the field of regional fiction in Indian English writings, opening up new areas for innovation of the English language by exploring the deep relations between fiction, community and place. It becomes the task of the regional novelist to seek the larger world by understanding the smallest of the small, the individuality of the person.