Chapter 2

Nativism:
Concept and Meaning
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“All the great European or American works are, in fact, nativist. That they get a worldwide audience is an appropriate appreciation of one native culture by the others.” - Bhalchandra Nemade

2.1 Prelude

It is true that in this era of globalization, there is no East and no West, everything is global. However, it is expected that native perceptions naturally express themselves in any literature. It is, in fact, an expectation – either social and ethical or spiritual.

At the same time, it is also true that modernity is a historical fact, but each culture has its own native modernity. Nemade is of the opinion that it is high time to tell people who are used to elitism (resultant modernity after colonialism) that any human being or literature can stand tall only in its own native land’s linguistic group. Those authors and works do not need any sort of support from the international dimensions. The greatness of a literary movement, a work or an author is not decided by international standards; it is determined by how many functions ranging from spiritual elevation to linguistic experimentation it serves. A great writer writes primarily for his own time and for his own community. No great writer whether Sophocles, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Kabir, Tukaram - no one ever wrote for prosperity or for a foreign audience. If at all any international recognition comes in his way,
it is purely incidental, contingent upon non-literary factors, often accidental and, therefore, cannot be a substitute for its raison d’etre. In fact, all genuine literature including the classics is essentially nativist in character, and the very core of literature. Dante and Shakespeare, considered “world” writers, were basically nativist writers. It was the imperial might of their countries which was responsible for making them world writers at a later stage. Actually, in any great writer, there is always the dormant potential of becoming universal. Any literary work, sculpture, piece of music, or painting is an inseparable part of its environments, place, and period. Its stylistic principles, forms, and structures bear the unmistakable stamp of its native place and time.

Hence, it becomes essential, first of all, to understand the term nativism and then study it with reference to literature and (Indian) culture.

2.2 Nativism: Concept and Meaning
Nativism is, primarily, a social, political, psychological and linguistic term. It also has philosophical, religious, moral, cultural, racial, ethnic, anthropological, scientific, and medical connotations. Though it is an ethnocentric term, it is a doctrine. It is a doctrine that innate ideas exist. It is a belief that knowledge or behaviour is inborn. It is also a policy. It is a social policy – a policy for dealing with social issues. It is a policy for perpetuating the culture of the natives of a colonized country. Nativism is an attitude, too. It is a superior attitude of natives towards new comers. It is philosophical idea that all ideas are inborn.
‘Nativism’ of course is the term to start with in the present context. It is a term borrowed from social sciences in its immediate geneology, from a kind of ‘anthropologico - politics’.

Universally, Nativism is defined as:

Oxford dictionary (available at oxforddictionary.com as on August 6, 2012) defines nativism as “a return to or emphasis on indigenous customs, in opposition to outside influences.”

Yourdictionary.com defines nativism as “the revival or preservation of a native culture.”

Webster’s dictionary (available at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nativism) defines it as “the revival or perpetuation of an indigenous culture especially in opposition to acculturation.”

Online dictionary available at http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nativism puts it as “the policy or practice of preserving or reviving an indigenous culture.”

The University Desk Encyclopedia defines nativism as turning in of a country or society towards its own culture through movements rejecting foreign influences, ideas or immigrants…” (717)
World English Dictionary available at http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nativism defines it as “the policy of protecting and reaffirming native tribal cultures in reaction to acculturation.”

Further, Nativism is not simply xenophobia. Actually, it refers to a person’s place of birth. The targets and rhetoric of nativism shift over time, making difficult a single detailed description of it.

According to the great anthropologist Ralph Linton, nativism is the result of culture contact. He has proved on the basis of his studies of native American tribes, that whenever a culture is under threat from another more aggressive culture, weaker one’s awareness of its native values is expressed in many ways.

Being specific, Nemade says “being native means being attached to a particular place. … when non-native, alien, imported values, languages, and cultures coming from outside threaten native values, languages, and cultures, communities have to become nativistic in order to survive.” (Nativism – Desivad, 15)

The concept of Nativism appears to consist of two constituents held together in a dialectical relationship: the Self and the Other. The Self is a whole with which a desi identifies himself / herself, almost fluctuating boundaries where a community has evolved a relatively stable ‘form of life’ over a stretch of time. A common mode of production, a common matrix of religious, social, moral,
artistic practices, a common belief structure, language, a shared history - are commonly taken as indicators of a ‘form of life’ that has been evolved. It is not necessary that all the indicators must be present, but it is expected that many of them should be.

The Other is that which is appreciably different from the Self on many of the above points. The relation between the two can be one of peaceful co-existence. But often it is conceived to be a power-relation, not a relation between Differents but of Opposites. When one community forcibly tries to bring about changes in another community, the relation obviously becomes a power relation.

To condemn or avoid everything English only because it is English is to blur the distinction between the Different and the Opposite. The Opposite is always hostile; the Different can be neutral and sometimes even helpful.

Here, it should be remembered that Nativism is not an obsession with roots. Instead, it is a concept which has come to challenge the very idea of Eurocentric modernism and internationalism – the tendency to compare every literary text / trend with some Euro-American product (as said by Indra Nath Choudhuri in his welcome speech at a seminar on Desivad in Indian Literature organized by Sahitya Academy in collaboration with the Centre for Creative Writing and Publication, IIT, Kanpur in 1995.). (Nativism: Essays in Criticism, 2)
Every culture in the world has held its own land in high esteem. Nationalism is one crude form of this feeling of being native. Exile, imprisonment, confinement, and other such punishments were therefore in fashion to make a person realize. In anthropological studies, nativism is seen as a major impulse of survival in culture contact. Nativism, therefore, says scholars needs to be treated with due sanctity.

Nationalism is primarily a political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its centre, while Nativism is primarily cultural – linguistic term. However, it has the potential of developing into a full-fledged political ideology when it develops links with the movements for regional autonomy like the Jharkhand and Uttarakhand movements in India, Democracy will be able to accommodate such movements so long as they demand only cultural parity and a little more autonomy within the structure of a multinational state, it can tolerate even the demand for the creation of a separate state within the federal polity; but it can hardly cope with the separatist demand for outright independence and secession as in the case of the Khalistan movement in the Punjab.

The human self is composed of multiple identities and roles, familial, territorial, linguistic, class, religious, ethnic and gender being the most prominent of them. Ideologies of identity are constructed by foregrounding anyone/some of these elements; imagined communities from groups to nations are projections of these ideologies. Nativism too is such a literary - cultural ideology, spatial and verbal at the same time. Its relationship with other
ideological formations like the nation, class, gender, religion, race and caste is extremely complex and highly mediated, since the languages community often cuts across these divisions. It receives its political content from the context in which it is invoked as well as the ways in which it is employed.

One more meaning of the term says that Nativism is also a puritan urge; an anti-pagan philosophy directs it. There is, in the very hypothesis, a dualist/duelist assertion, a power universe in which the sword decides whose honour is fitter to survive. But consider some old information. The Greeks learnt how to write from the Phoenicians. The Romans wrote their poetry and drama and organized their gods and their festivals after the Greeks. Chaucer wrote English poetry after the French and the Italian. Persians wrote their poetry after the Arabs who in turn wrote after the Persians, who borrowed from Indians. None of these ‘cultural exchanges’, to use another term from social sciences, ever inspired any negative feelings.

Makarand Paranjape defines nativism as “a form of indigenism whose agenda can be summed up as a cry for cultural self-respect …”. (Nativism: Essays in Criticism, xii) He describes it as a militant or aggressive form of the passive and self-evident quality of nativeness. He also calls it the value of being native. It is the value which is inherent in any cultural object, belief or practice. It implies the natural state of sustaining the status quo. Nativism is, thus, for Paranjape and Nemade, establishing of one’s right to exist as one is.
Nativism by its theoretical position is bound to locate itself and its forces in the place of its birth and by its practical operations must go against its birthplace. There is the problem of migration. Is T S Eliot, a modern American poet looking at England or is he an English poet who was born in the United States of America? He himself aspired to be the latter but the British generally do not accept his claims and class him into the former category. Take a parallel example - Mirza Ghalib who asserted that he was an Iranian poet born in India. Ghalib’s case was relatively much more complex than the manner in which T S Eliot took up British citizenship.

One more definition was also attempted by The Times of India on January 18, 1995. In its editorial, it said that nativism aims at “an unchanging cultural self, believed to lie buried like a tuber beneath the top soil of foreign influence. While the project of digging the lost tubers may keep the ideological pot boiling, it generates an extremely constricting aesthetics.”

A meaningful modernity which is truly Indian, can be developed not by merging the Western modernism with the Indian realities and creating a new category to go with the emergence of a new writing and critical awareness in respect of modern Indian literature in different Indian languages.

Various terms like ‘native’, ‘nativeness’, ‘nativist’, and ‘nativism’ are used to talk about feeling, ideology. Nemade (2009) has also cited an example of how the term is used by 1971 edition of Oxford English Dictionary (OED) to give a racist meaning of the term native. It says, “The original or usual habitant of a
country, as distinguished from strangers and foreigners, now especially belonging to a non-European and imperfectly civilized or savage race; a coloured person, a black.”

It is usually dismissed, opines Nemade, as equally derogatively as Welsh `separatism’, Scottish `nationalism’, Gaellic `revivalism’ and so on as if such nativistic tendencies were significant, decadent, and disruptive in comparison with the great international spirit of British colonialism.

In a very derogatory sense, the term also means `the prejudice in favor of natives against strangers, the practice or policy of protecting the interests of natives against those of the immigrants’.

On the contrary, on a positive note, the attachment of a person or community to a particular (geographical) area stimulates an assemblage of thoughts, cherished memories, experienced feelings, individual or group perception, and gained knowledge. Representation of the same by the individual or the group is what nativism studies. Nativism, as Nemade explains it, is a response of the entire people, young and old. It is a life style of the entire people, past and present. Society’s collective power of reflection and emotion is expressed through nativism. Broadly speaking, nativism prefers maintaining the status quo to gaining momentum, as a strategy. While writing about how strong it can be, he further adds that compassion for one’s native soil does not preclude love for other lands. If nativist consciousness wants to survive, like a living organism, it develops its own internal strategies to combat its parasites. It is
also equally true that nativism is the only weapon in the hands of oppressed culture, the weapon which is capable of throwing out the dominant systems of foreign influence which erode capable native systems.

If a person contemplate a little, he / she would definitely find that the crisis of being alienated from history and culture affects the Anglicized / Westernized elites more. It is only they who suffer from the pangs of fragmentation and confusion because at the level of identity, they are thrice removed from their communal centers. They are away from their language, their philosophy and culture and have no acquaintance with common people. Apart from this, their own knowledge, acquired through the Western modes and models also expands the area of their displacement. They know more about the West; they are strangers to themselves.

There is no doubt that return to roots is our emotional need. It is to form the basis of uninhibitedly acquiring our self-worth. This task can only be executed by an educated elite. It is precisely at this juncture that the frustration and agony of displacement is severest.

This is how, nativism is studied from two ends. Critics and scholars on one hand study it in alliance with several movements for the empowerment and self-assertion of regional, subaltern, marginalized groups and people. Whereas, on the other end, it is considered to be a supporting system, a system that supports the broader, wider, more confederate nationalist movement against foreign domination.
Basically, it does not ignore foreign influence. It only aims at developing a sense of nativeness and that nativeness is a consciousness of compositeness of thought. Therefore, it is not a search for Swadeshi but Swarajya, a search for the creation of categories of modernism. It is a search for qualities or principles which can explain our modernity.

Thus, it can be said that nativism is a part of a world-wide phenomenon of cultural nationalism and self-assertion in which colonized and other marginalized literary cultures have begun to vociferate their differences.

Nativism is also studied from an altogether different perspective. It is said that the term ‘native’ has its source in ancient European languages. It is the way we find equivalent Indian term desi. The native is considered to be naïve as against the Picaro. Naïve is a person who is quite innocent. The person does not travel much and has no experiences of the world around. He / she finds a very strong emotional bondage with the land in his village, more popularly known as his / her soil. Emotional literary expression of this attachment to the soil or land of one’s own, or to the society, culture, nation or native of one’s own; or having a word of appreciation for the same; or acknowledging what it has gifted to an individual is what is studied under nativism. It is also about the experiences one cherishes of that land. It is more of nostalgic in nature. It is, in fact, an emotional need of the human beings or the race.
### 2.3 Nativism from different Perspectives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>It is natural endowment which forms the basis of human behaviour, rather than the effect of environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Nativism is a term that has been used to refer to a widespread attitude in a society of a rejection of alien person or culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Nativism is a construct scholars employ to explain hostility and intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its imputed foreign connections. It refers to ethnocentric beliefs relating to immigration and nationalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociopolitical</td>
<td>It is policy favouring the interests of established inhabitants over those of immigrants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Nativism has both ideological and psychological functions. And they are actually clues to understanding tensions and fault lines within national culture.</td>
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<td>It is the reestablishment or perpetuation of native cultural traits, especially in opposition to acculturation.</td>
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<td>It is a state of mind of native born and naturalized citizens seeking to define their own -----ness by condemning real and alleged alien challenges to national values and institutions. It signifies the ideology of persecuting groups, invariably bigoted, while targeted minorities emerge</td>
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generally as victims.

Cultural It is actually return to a native culture.

Socio-cultural Multicultural society in which cultural studies of the

Historical society have shown influence by French theorists Jacques

Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. Nativist
defenders of the old order deconstruct such categories as
economics, race, and ethnicity and gender and sexuality.

Philosophical It is a doctrine that the mind produces ideas that are not
derived from external sources.

Anthropological It is social movement that proclaims the return to power of

the natives of a colonized area and the resurgence of Native
culture, along with the decline of the colonizers.

Psychological Nativism asserts certain concepts as being natural, hence,

“native” to a species. Certain skills or abilities are “native”
or hard wired into the brain at birth.

Linguistic Certain capacities or abilities, especially of sense

perception, are inherited rather than acquired by learning. It
is belief that knowledge or behaviour is inborn.

2.4 Nativism in (Indian) Culture

The concept of nativism (desivad in the Indian context) has been an issue of
vigorous debate in our languages since it was first introduced through English
in India somewhere around early 1980s. And this 19th century colonial
language and culture undertaking is also considered the biggest and the
longest one in the human history. Arnold Toynbee rightly says, “Western iron
has probably entered deep into India’s soul.” (Nativism – Desivad, 9) But the real problem is a little different one. We all would agree that today, there is no imperialism and hence the West may not be there. But the fact is that it is very much there in the mind of the East; because cultural imperialism does exist. But, at the same time, it should also not be forgotten that we owe our rejuvenation to the colonial rule. Because our perception of our own culture came to us from Indologists, Sanskritists, archaeologists, and Christian missionaries. It can be studied mainly through nativism, modernity, internationalism and globalization. But, unfortunately, the study leads to a kind of contradictions and oppositions between: the past and the present, the East and the West and the traditional and the modern.

It is expected that native perceptions naturally express themselves in any literature. However, as a result of years of age old slavery, a strange situation exists in all our literatures today. A peculiar kind of colonial internationalism is found to be present there in them. Many a writers and scholars of 1950s and 1960s seem to have been carried away by such an internationalism which also found a favourable socio-political environment in the bogus internationalism of the Nehru Era.

Similarly, in the hullabaloo of formalism, structuralism, aestheticism, and similar branches of philosophy which are indifferent to geopiety, and comparative literature; technique-oriented, extrovertive theories like symbolism, universalist master – narratives of Freud, Marx and others; and popularity of an industrial – technological – scientific – secular – sensibility,
and so on, European literary ideologies forgot that every human group has its own culture. Obviously, it is impossible for every community on the earth to be European.

Narrowing further down the term, Nativism also has its roots in tribal languages of India. Various expressions like desi, desipan, desiya, desiyata, desaja are used and have quite similar meanings. To cite the example from Nemade, the Adivasis of Koraput (Orissa) use the term desi, nata for their oldest dance. Jotiba Phule, a pioneer of several radical nativistic movements of the 19th century used the term desi, whereas Mahatma Gandhi, another great exponent of nativism of the country used Swaraj and Swadesi. Same way the term loka has many other meanings beside des and folk.

More popular are also the examples of Margi and Desi traditions. They are found to be quite the same as Great and Lesser traditions that are given in various work ranging from our Upanishadas to Bhakti period. Desi tradition meant what is inherited or traditional or folk, whereas Margi indicated what is refined and cultivated and elite. Both also seem to have enriched each other. It is also said that Margi evolves from the Desi.

With reference to the gods, religion, customs, garment styles and various food habits, scholars have also given two broad systems. One is called the Jati, the caste system, and the other is des, that is domiciliation. In India, an Individual can always retain his / her identity with dignity once his / her place is fixed by the coordinates of race and region. However, at this point in time, it should
also not be forgotten that who one is, where one is born, or which caste one belongs to cannot be the basis of making value judgements about one. But the benefit at individual level is that a person may settle down anywhere in the region as he / she feels that he / she belongs to that place. Thus, the process of nativization is a continuous and ongoing one in India.

Further, nativism can best be understood with the example given by Indra Nath Choudhuri in the Introduction to Nativism: Essays in Criticism (1997) which is originally given by Niharranjan Ray. He gives us two terms: Kula and Shila. For him, Kula is heredity, inheritance, tradition; whereas Shila means the making of a man, his demeanor and personality which are again continued by Kula. Shila in its own given time and space goes on discarding the elements of Kula which have lost their potency and in the process generates new modes of thought and action and thereby ensures the continuity of culture which, in turn, enriches the Shila making modernity sharp and effective. Hence, a great work of art, in the Indian context, is the expression of both the traditional and the actual.

Culture is actually a network. It is called a network of interacting systems within a frame of a geographical area or similar traditions. Every culture is believed to have a native system. It always has an in-built capacity to convert and absorb (as given by Nemade) suitable external influences into that native system. The process is termed as nativization. The more efficient this process the more nourishing it proves to the local culture. Through this process of nativization, a person or a society or a culture absorbs events and objects
basically external from things animate or inanimate to animals, plants, hills, rivers, history, geography, traditions, rituals, religion or locale.

Nativization is, in fact, a continuous and on going process. It takes place even in literature. Every human being realizes that he / she is deeply rooted in local traditions and so do the writers. When they interact with other cultures, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, for a purpose or without a purpose, they do absorb various values and beliefs of that culture. In fact, sometimes they adapt larger cultural systems. As given by Nemade, Aryans, Huns, Scythians, and Mughals were nativised here in the same way. For example Panchatantra or Arabian Nights or Shakespeare was originally native works which were absorbed by other cultures through a process of nativization arising out of some need: greater or smaller, felt or not, social, political or cultural.

2.5 Nativism in Literature

Nativist spirit is found by many a critics and literary scholars in literature. It is actually not a new theory or dogma. At the same time, it is also not a set of principles that are clearly stated and defined. Unfortunately, the concept of nativism has not fully been discussed yet. One of the reasons, as discussed by the literary scholars, is that it did not start in Europe. Even then it is found that in every literature of the world, there are periods when nativism enjoy(s/ed) the central place. Best examples in English Literature can be the Elizabethan or the Romantic period.
More commonly nativism is perceived as an attitude, a movement, an urge, or an outlook. Though it is difficult to form or decide evaluation criteria for/from nativism, it helps situate a work of art with reference to the cultural timelines. Means it helps a reader more specifically a critic place the work in a particular society or country.

Literature expresses itself through the medium of language. It is again region and period specific. And, thus, it becomes easier for readers to find out the period and region of the literature. It is as simple as matching the wild animals with their habitats. The concern is the nativeness; otherwise it is needless to say that *Mahabharata* is a work from ancient India and *Iliad* from ancient Greece.

When the principle of nativism is applied to literature, it becomes imperative that the work of art is examined with certain references. They are: the writer, the work, the reader, and the tradition. What needs to be studied is: whether it is an integral part of the work like the plot, style, content or is just present there because of the medium i.e. language.

A revival of native cultural forms and identities was essential to the anti-colonial struggle. It united people from various diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds in the pursuit of a ‘national’ goal. Thus, ‘India’ or ‘back to Africa’ becomes the feeling of the people.
Nativism, thus, is subaltern – the celebration of the local, the immediate, the marginalized.

In the post-independence era nativism assumes a different aspect, troubled by the trauma of a homogenizing national culture – more often than not a culture that is elitist, class-centric (in the case of Africa tribe-centric and in India, caste-centric) and of the numerical majority – local cultures begin to have the same fears as the colony did under the Western that their cultural forms and identities would be destroyed and subsumed in the guise of ‘national identity’.

There is yet another way of locating nativism. Palshikar says that Nationalists movements all over the world have given birth to nativistic movements in all the three domains – domain of language, of literature, and of culture. Similarly, Shantinath Desai, as given by Paranjape in his article on Towards a Contemporary Indian Tradition in Criticism, links nativism to negritude: “Nativism is, like Negritude, an attitude of assertion, the assertion being that of one’s peculiar national and cultural identity.” (Nativism: Essays in Criticism: 173) Later he adds, “Nativism is not primarily an attitude of Swadeshi but an attitude of Swaraj.” (Nativism: Essays in Criticism: 173) The word desh also means region, country or even nation. Therefore, deshi can also be translated as regional, country or even national. Thus, the idea that deshi is somehow regional, as opposed to national, or country as opposed to the city, or national, as opposed to the international. One can also extend desi to suggest the colonial as opposed to the metropolitan.
In the global system, then, native languages do not find a presence and a new wave of colonialism – this time in the form of globalized world cultures and governing bodies - sweeps their cultures away. Hence, as Ngugi points out, in such an unequal power relation, local and native languages seek representation in the national/global iconography and a share in decision making-linguistic, caste, community, tribe-takes place. That is, the identity politics of postcolonial nativism narrows down from ‘nation’ to ‘tribe’. In many cases, such a narrowing results in tribal genocide (Rwanda, Uganda, and other African states), ethic oppression/cleansing (of, for example, the Mayan Indians in Guatemala) and caste/community tensions (Hindus and Muslim in contemporary India). Salman Rushdie, who ought to know about reactionary responses, has this to say about nativism and xenophobic nationalism.

Lestrade declares that justice must be done, even tribal justice, while speaking of ‘progress’ – a strategy familiar to most postcolonial societies where elites who have usurped the role of their former colonial masters engage in a way of progress to refuse local/native differences and cultural identity. If numerous natives were killed and maimed by the white man, thousands of tribals and ethnic minorities have been executed in the name of ‘national’ identity in postcolonial societies. Nativism in the hands of a (Westernized?) elite, suggests Walcot’s play, is just as discriminatory, exclusive, and oppressive as the former colonial regime.

Novelist critic and dramatist, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is now an icon of anticolonial and postcolonial resistance. Writing originally in English and then
switching to his native tongue Gikuyu, Ngugi has been in exile from his country Kenya for being an outspoken critic of its government. His novels are powerful indictments of the postcolonial condition where dictatorships, corruption and Westernization have ruined traditional tribal cultures in Africa, Ngugi argues that the study of Africa is inevitably treated as a study of its tribes and tribal conflicts. This deflects attention from the real problem, European colonialism that ruined the African cultures. More than economic or military annihilation, it is Europe’s culture was that has devastated African identity. And central to this cultural war is the arrival of English in Africa. In Decolonizing the Mind (1986), Ngugi argued that English language literature, and university departments were responsible for the rule of African language and culture. Language, especially in schools, became the means of subjugation in the colonial context. The child begins to see himself or herself only through European eyes test books, and images. Eventually, the child assumes this biased image is true and accepts that s/he is inferior to the European. What is needed is a ‘decolonizing’ of the mind, of the biased European intellectual traditions that Africans have assimilated. Ngugi’s return to Gikuyu is an attempt to achieve this decolonization, but, as is the case with much postcolonial theorizing, he is able to do so only within the Western (in this case, American) academic system Ngugi is a professor at the University of California, Irvine.

According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, nativism is a “term for desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society.” (The Empire Writes Back: Theory and
Practice in Postcolonial Literatures, 159) Nativism as a theoretical term received its present popularity and even notoriety in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Benita Parry valorized the cause of nativism keeping in mind the practical problem of reviving the indigenous culture with its pristine originality in his famous essay “Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism”.

Rey Chow in her essay “Where Have All the Natives Gone?” problematizes the concept of nativism by asking the important question regarding native’s being silent object or speaking subject?

G. N. Devy in his book After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism claims that India has great literary culture of its own. But for long it has remained submerged in the collective unconscious of the Indian psyche. According to him the cause of this repression or ‘amnesia’ is the colonisation of India, and the only way to get out of the clutches of that amnesia is to concentrate and practice pre-colonial Indian literary tradition. However, as early as 1970’s, the term with its present theoretical overtones was used by African cultural anthropologist Ralph Linton in his essay “Nativistic Movements.”

Linton, Makarand Paranjape opines, “identified a strategic and symbolic mode of protest adopted by groups which feel inferior or threatened by the onslaught
of more powerful or dominant culture.” (Nativism: Essays in Criticism, 160)
The concept with which Linton used the term (at least as claimed by Paranjape) was the guiding principle for the early postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon.

In his book Black Skin, White Masks (1952) Fanon accounts for the endangered state of the cultural independence of the people under colonial rule. Fanon recognises that many black people adopt ‘white masks’ in the sense that, to get entrance into the coloniser’s culture those black people conform to white values and versions of their behaviour. Ultimately this erases their own identity. Fanon urges them to recognise the damage of hiding behind such a mask and the need to seize and shape their own identity. In The Wretched of the Earth, published in French in 1961, he claimed that the first step for colonised people in finding their own voice and identity is to reclaim their own past. For centuries the European colonial power has devalued the colonised country’s own cultural past. It showed the pre-colonial era as a pre-civilised limbo or even as a historical void. History starts, it claims, with the arrival of the Europeans. If the first step is to reclaim one’s own past, the second step is to erode the colonialist ideology by which the past has been devalued. In this respect it is important to mention that eroding colonialist ideology is not an easy task, because ideology works in an insidious manner.

To create nativistic images, postcolonial writers use myth and legend as well as folklore and oral traditions of their own cultures.
Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is full of proverbs and aphorisms from Igbo culture. Promad K. Nayar claims “In Ngugi’s later fiction, especially, *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and *Matigari* (1989) we see the return of a traditional African artist-as-prophet.” (*Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*, 223) This Kenyan writer, who was used to write in English, has now switched over to his native language Gikuyu. African writer Toni Morrison’s (1977) *Song of Solomon* is reworking of the African flying legend. Her *Beloved* (1987) explores the role of supernatural in African traditions. Behind Yole Soyinka’s (1975) play *Death and the King’s Horseman* the presence of Yoruba belief that gods and humans once lived together on earth is clearly perceptible. Ben Okri’s (1991) *The Famished Road* reworks with the concept of ‘abiku’, a southern Nigerian belief in the endless reincarnation of a child. Salman Rushdie also turns to Indian traditions, both written and oral, instead of Western ones. Rushdie himself says, “In India the thing I have taken most from ... is oral tradition.” Promad K. Nayar justly claims:

Postcolonial cultures’ reliance on myth and local legend is an effort at de-contamination, a process of freeing their cultures from colonialism’s pervasive influence. The return to roots – while running the very real danger of fundamentalism, reactionary nativism, and chauvinism – is an attempt to gain a measure of self-affirmation that is not tainted by colonialism. (*Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*, 234-35)
2.6 Scope and Limitations of Nativism

Deeply rooted in our *bhasha* traditions and utterly dedicated to the cause of freeing Indian literary criticism from the shackles of Euro-American dominance. Efforts are being made to make Indian criticism a more responsible, self-respecting and Indo-centric activity.

Their work demonstrates not only the innate strength of native traditions and the capacity of such traditions to offer alternatives to received knowledge-systems, but also the awareness that a continuing dependence on Western modes of criticism, and scholarship, even when apparently helpful in our struggle for selfhood, are ultimately self-defeating. Swaraj, in ideas, is possible only when we set our own agenda, when we stop succumbing to slavish and debilitating imitation of the latest intellectual fads and fashions from the West, when we learn, in U.R. Anantha Murthy’s famous phrase, “to look in our own backyards” for our cultural resources.

The hegemony of videshi ideas is not replaced by a counter - hegemony of Sanskritic or Brahminical revivalism.

What is more, nativism emphasizes the primacy of language in the production of culture. It favours and privileges the language and creativity of the masses over that of the elites, whether these are Anglicised or Sanskritised.

Useful as it is, nativism is ridden with some inherent contradictions and complications which need to be noted. For one, it is oppositional in its
orientation, deriving its strength from what it is pitted against. By itself, nativism is merely a truism, natural and self-evident, needing no proclamation to announce its presence: as Wole Soyinka has said, a tiger is not conscious of its tigritude. It can also, degenerate into jingoism, chauvinism, or narrow-minded communalism. It so it is culturally dangerous and self-defeating. An excessive and reactionary nativism can therefore become a liability.

Even G N Devi, while delivering his Key Note Address at a conference in January 1995 opined that there are times when I wish that our country had accepted the path of complete Westernization. That would have allowed our cultural personality to acquire a desirable completeness and made our country one of those so many other counties that have accepted imitating the West as the only way to modernization. There are other times when nostalgia grips me and I start wishing that India had remained the culture that it was some centuries ago and had not changed at all. But, unfortunately, one can never wish away the history.

The other difficulty with the concept of nativism is that it is deeply implicated in its others. The desi can hardly be separated from marga or videshi. All three are closely intertwined in contemporary Indian society. Their interconnections are so deep that it is impossible to determine what is native and what non-native. Where is the line of demarcation? What is the cut-off point? Such questions are impossible to resolve both politically and culturally: just as it is hard to draw cultural borders between two countries, it is difficult to decide how many years of domicile entitle a person to be considered the native of a
country. Every code is a representation of *marga*. Everything that exists in unwritten tradition is *desi*. Thus to relieve monotony *desi* has to be intermixed with *marga* or *marga* is to be used to refine *desi* for the latter being made acceptable.

Thus, if by nativism is meant an attempt to purge culture of *marga* and *videshi* elements, then it is doomed to fail. But if by nativism is meant an attempt to ward off cultural conquest, to resist capitulation, then, obviously, it has a continuing relevance and salience in today’s intellectual environment. In other words, the issue is not native vs. non-native so much as freedom vs. slavery, selfhood vs. subjection, swaraj vs. subordination. Everyone who writes in one of our bhashas is not automatically and necessarily free and self-aware, nor is everyone who writes in English contrarily always colluding with Anglo-American or Sanskritic neo-imperialism. Broadly speaking, a native writer may actually be indulging in non-native cultural practices while a so-called non-native writer in English actually aiding and strengthening native tradition.

There has been no effort to project its strengths or to propagandize its virtues. This is truly a bilingual or multicultural text, so different from the usual Anglo-American and self-proclaimed hybridization of our elite critical discourse. Willy nilly, the true nature of Indian nativism is revealed as a combination and mixture of the *marga*, *desi*, and *videshi* critical idioms, working against derivative and debilitating traditions and practices.
However the questions like what is the extent of regional expanse required for a literary work to be native? and how large and how small should the size of region be in order to be adequate for the full realization of native sensibilities? are still unanswered.

More problematic is the belief that Nemade himself admits, “A dilemma peculiar to the phenomenon of nativism is that, its value is perceivable only in relation to its Opposite.” (Nativism – Desivad, 135)

Still efforts are made to study nativism with reference to fundamental elements like the language, the milieu, technique, theme, characterization, narrative focus, and narrator’s voice.

2.7 Driving Forces behind Nativism

Linguistics, religious, moral, racial / ethnic, and cultural differences are the crucial factors in nativism.

Threats involving language, jibs, pay-scales, control of the government, control of borders and fears of invasion, moral values and loyalties to racial and ethnic groups are also involved in nativism.

But as far the present work is concerned, it looks at some other aspects also. One such aspect is beautifully exemplified by G N Devy in his article on ‘Desivad’ (published in Nativism: Essays in Criticism edited by Makarand Paranjape). He expresses his dislike towards a common belief of the Indians
saying that intellectuals living and working in India today will have to come to terms with the cultural context within which they live and work. The most important aspect of this cultural context, and the one from which there is no escape whatever, is that there exists an artificial hierarchy of knowledge imposed on us. In this hierarchy, whatever is of Western origin in various fields of knowledge is considered ‘good knowledge’ and whatever is of Indian origin is considered, or has been becoming, ‘non-knowledge’. In it, all Western knowledge is considered ‘superior’, all Indian knowledge is considered ‘low-value’. Situations like this, in fact, give birth to the movements like nativism.

However herein it is not perceived as something against or as opposite to the Western, it does value the native knowledge, experiences, attitude, customs, rituals and culture as a whole. Knowledge has always been good irrespective of its source. As Devy puts it any branch of knowledge, any school of thought is certainly good enough for the society that produces it for its own purposes and to satisfy its own intellectual requirements. Yet, what is true of knowledge in certain fields like Engineering and Sciences is not true in the same degree of knowledge related to cultural practices and to the fields of imaginative activity. It is necessary to remember that literary criticism is basically a cultural practice.

Further, there is also a found need in every human being to locate or re-locate himself or herself in some particular society and culture. One is also found to be in search of the sources of the ideas that come to one’s mind. The source is
always obviously found through the formulations of the ideas based on the life the person has lived and the experiences he / she has passed through means native.

Over and above all this, it is also said that during the nineteenth century an intellectual and cultural movement for safeguarding the rights of the native Americans emerged in the U.S.A. It was through this movement that the term ‘native’ acquired the ideological form ‘Nativism’. In Italy, the movement for privileging the native cultural traits took the form of nationalism. A similar movement emerged in Ireland in the early years of the twentieth century. We are familiar with its manifestations in the poetical and other works of W.B. Yeats. This movement, known as the Irish myths and legends. This for the first time, ‘nativism’ moved in the direction of ‘revivalism’. Subsequently, race, nation and myth have been used as the three principles of self-recognition and selfhood in many cultures in Africa, Latin America and Asia in their effort to combat cultural impositions from outside.

In the perspective lies the knowledge that a foreign culture is arriving under the name of enlightenment. Along with knowledge comes language. Along with language comes culture. A new excitement or stimulation is generated by coming into contact with new things. Naturally the comparisons are made. The fact of the matter is that in comparison, we only know one object because we want to, but we don’t know about another.
Following chapters 3, 4, and 5 present the study of nativism in the works of V S Naipaul, Chinua Achebe and Bapsi Sidhwa respectively. It is carried out with reference to the work – form and structure, and author identity, title, subject content and theme, setting and characters, colonial consciousness, narrative technique, and language and style.