Chapter 2

A Theoretical Overview

The major theoretical approaches used in the study are guided by the basic tenets of Cultural Studies. The inter-disciplinary nature of Cultural Studies provides an opportunity to make use of critical theories which help to develop a unique framework to discuss the subjects. It provides a rich insight to develop a critical perspective to identify and interpret the environment. It helps to build up the argument that the environment is connected to a broad range of historical, cultural, political as well as ethical concerns of a society. The interdisciplinary nature of Cultural Studies helps to analyze different power relations by incorporating environment as a factor. It helps to develop a framework which connects cultural, political, social and economic processes and its impact on the environment. This chapter is a brief overview of the discipline of Cultural Studies and it tries to define certain terms or concepts which have been used in the dissertation.

2.1 Cultural Studies: Meaning, Scope and Methodology

"Cultural Studies can be defined as an intellectual and political tradition, in its relations to the academic disciplines, in terms of theoretical paradigms, or by its characteristic objects of study" (Johnson in Storey 2012, 78). Cultural Studies developed as an academic discipline with an aim to understand contemporary culture and its meaning making process. Cultural Studies has offered critical perspectives to analyze various forms of cultural texts. Cultural Studies originated in Great Britain in the 1950s.Initially it was concerned with how the youths from the working class resisted the domination of the culture of the "mainstream".

The inequalities of society were reflected in a general attitude towards culture. The youths from these societies, in comparison to those of the mainstream, did not enjoy the same status in respect of education, money and healthcare and in other spheres. Cultural Studies with a Marxian influence worked for the interest of the working classes, women, and the large portion of the African-American community. Culture in Cultural Studies was not 'an abbreviation of a 'high

culture' assumed to have constant value across time and space.'(During 2007, 2) As an academic enquiry Cultural Studies was developed out of Levisism.

Cultural Studies is thus an interdisciplinary method to study the processes and products of representation of different power relations in a particular socio-political context. It is based on different theoretical frameworks. It studies culture as the product of different power relations. Culture here is regarded as a process. Cultural Studies in this connection is regarded as a discursive formation where power plays a significant role.

2.1.1 Meaning of culture

Raymond Williams remarks that "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1983, 87). Cultural Studies is basically concerned with meaning, experience and culture. Culture in Cultural Studies means the meaning-making process which is constructed and shared by the people. Knowledge and power are the basis of this meaning-making process. Knowledge means both the concrete and technical ideas about the meaning of culture as well as the process of dissemination of those meanings. On the other hand, power indicates the force attached with the state of affairs in respect of unequal distribution of a state's resources. Culture in Cultural Studies is only about power. Culture is formed as a result of the condition of experience and imagining of human being. When these experiences and practices enter a subject's symbolic order, then they can be termed as meaningful. The important thing is that the human experience keeps on changing with time. The way of thinking, imagining and the meaning- making process is also changing with the human experience. Therefore, culture itself is also changing. It is a dynamic process which refers to the beliefs, customs, practices as well as the general way of life of particular group of people. The meaning-making process and human imagination are the important things in defining culture in Cultural Studies. Jeff Lewis in his book *Cultural Studies – The Basics* (2002) has proposed the definition of 'culture' from the perspective of Cultural Studies. He puts more stress on the characteristics of culture in terms of meaning- making and human imagining. The summary of his definition can be discussed in the following way:

1. The assemblage of imaginings and meanings can be termed as culture.

2. These imaginings and meanings may be *consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous.*

3. The assemblage of these *consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous imaginings and meanings* may operate through a wide variety of human social groupings and social practices.

4..In contemporary culture the experiences of *consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous* imagining and meaning-making may operate through a wide variety of human social groupings and social practices which are intensified through the proliferation of images and information offered by mass media.

Lewis's understanding of culture indicates the meaning–making nature of culture. Human being constructs culture for the purpose of creating and communicating community. A community or society is created by a group of people. Hence culture is the imagination of a whole society or community: what they think about their surrounding world. These imaginings are represented by different forms, i.e. discourse, language, symbols, signs and texts which can be applied to meaning systems. These imaginings and meanings are not a fixed phenomenon. The important point is that culture is an open system. It is always transitional and capable of producing different meaning. "… [A] culture can be subject to an infinite array of meaning disputes and gaps. There may be a 'dominant' meaning or 'dominant' ideology which attempts to direct meanings in particular ways, but a culture can never be closed since it is made up of competing interests and many different individuals (subjects) and groups" (Lewis 2002,13).

One individual may be the representative of different cultures at the same time. Each of these cultures has its own ideology, world view, own vocabulary. This perspective makes us understand that the assemblage of cultures is operated through different social groupings of a larger society. Mass media is an influential tool to disseminate particular cultural trends in contemporary period. The experiences of human imagining and meanings are proliferated through

various tools of mass media. It is the most influential medium of popularizing a particular discourse which can stimulate new meanings.

Thus Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary academic discipline. It analyses culture in relation to power. It tries to explore and examine various power relations.

2.1.2 Key Concepts in Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies is not only about the study of culture. Cultural Studies is interested in studying the underlying political meaning inherent in the construction of a particular cultural text. The discipline is based on certain ideas. To talk about the key concepts I have to mention the following: Marxism, discourse, power ideology, identity, subjectivity, hegemony, popular culture, text, representation and agency.

2.1.2.1 Marxism

Marxism has had a far reaching consequence in the formation of cultural ideology. This philosophy has been the basis of many theoretical frameworks of the later period. The philosophy of Karl Marx (1818-1883) the great German philosopher stands as the foundation of many cultural as well as political theories. Contemporary cultural analyses concentrate on the concept of power. Marxism believes that the history of the world is nothing but the struggle between the rich and poor, or, in Marxist terminology *the haves* and *haves not.* The politics and economy are the determining factors in Marxist analysis. The concept of ideology and the base-superstructure model offered the basis to understand the relationship between meaning-making and power. Marxism provides the very basis of Cultural Studies. "Cultural Studies writers have had a long, ambiguous, but productive relationship with Marxism. Cultural studies is not a Marxist domain, but has drawn succor from it while subjecting it to vigorous critique" (Barker 2003, 13). It helps to understand various problems of our society. "In its engagement with Marxism, Cultural Studies has been particularly concerned with issues of structure, praxis, economic determinism and ideology. On the one hand, Marxism suggests that there are regularities or structures to human existence that

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lie outside of any given individual. Cultural Studies, along with other disciplines like sociology, has sought to explore the characteristics of those structures. On the other hand, Marxism and Cultural Studies have a commitment to change through human agency achieved by a combination of theory and action (praxis)" (Barker 2003, 14).

2.1.2.2 Discourse

Discourse is a significant concept in Cultural studies. Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse is largely used in Cultural Studies. He claims that power and discourse are everywhere in the world. Cultural Studies stands on the assumption that the reality of the world is constructed through different discourses. These discourses are formed as a result of kind of power relation. Language plays important role in particular discursive formations. There exist competing discourses in a particular social situation. Cultural Studies analyzes the role of discourses in the meaning making process and challenges the dominant force in a given context.

2.1.2.3 Power

Power remains another important concept within the discipline of Cultural Studies. It can be stated as the central idea in cultural Studies. Cultural Studies believes that in every social relationship power plays an important role. "Power is not simply the glue that holds together or the coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another, though it certainly is this. It is also understood in terms of the processes that generate and enable any form of social actions, relationship or order. In this sense, power, while certainly constraining, is also enabling" (Barker 2003, 9).

2.1.2.4 Ideology

Ideology is produced and shaped by the society in which it is exists. By following the initiative of Karl Marx the concept of ideology has been discussed largely by different philosopher cultural theorists of the later period. The names of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault figure in this list. Karl Marx interprets ideology as *false consciousness*. According to Althusser, "Ideology is a

'Representation' of the Imaginary relationship of individuals to their Real conditions of existence. Ideology interpellates individuals as Subjects" (Althusser 2006, 109).

2.1.2.5 Identity

Cultural Studies is concerned about the construction of identity both at the individual and collective level. Identity in Cultural Studies is concerned with the act of negotiation between the self and the external. Fluidity is always present in respect of identity. Identity according to Cultural Studies is result of cultural construction.

2.1.2.6 Subjectivity

Subjectivity can be defined as the condition as well as the process which constructs the social reality of an individual. Cultural Studies is concerned with the process of construction of subjectivity, exploring the process of defining ourselves. Althusser defines subjectivity as the result of ideology. "I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that *the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects* (Althusser 2006, 116). According to him an individual "voluntarily" occupies the position that is offered by his/her society.

Foucault defines subjectivity as the result of discourse. Foucault's approach is concerned with the investigation of the processes which constructs the subject position of an individual in a particular ideological and historical context. In this thesis, I have used Foucault's approach to investigate the process of formation of ecological subjects.

2.1.2.7 Hegemony

Hegemony is a significant theoretical concept in Cultural Studies. It refers to the idea of imposition of power and the control of the subordinate class by the dominant body in a state. The dominant classes can resort to the use of physical

force such as the use of police as a repressive force to ensure their control over the subordinate classes.

Hegemony can be interpreted as the power or ability of the ruling class in a state with a motive to regulate the society. It involves in the process of making dominant cultural motifs in a society. Many a time, it reinforces existing inequalities. Neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was the chief exponent of this wave of critical thinking. "Gramsci claimed that the activities of **organic intellectuals** were central to the propagation of hegemonic beliefs. These are people like priests and journalists who translate complex philosophical and political issues into everyday language and who offer guidance to the masses on how to act. Intellectuals also played a role in making possible the establishment of a **hegemonic bloc**" (Smith 2001, 40). The theory of Gramsci refers to the kind of class conflict in pursuit of breaking down hegemony. Popular culture, according to Gramsci, reflects the kind of conflict between the classes.

2.1.2.8 Popular Culture

Popular Culture is one of most significant concepts in the discipline of Cultural Studies. It is a useful tool for doing Cultural Studies. There are different perceptions regarding popular culture. Sometimes it is claimed that popular culture is the antithesis of 'high culture'. Ideology and hegemony play a significant role in defining popular culture. "Subordination is a matter not just of coercion but also of consent. Cultural Studies has commonly understood popular culture to be the ground on which this consent is won or lost" (Barker 2003, 9). Gramsci's theory of *hegemony* presents a new perspective on popular culture.

2.1.2.9 Text

Text can be defined in Cultural Studies as anything which generates meaning. "The concept of text suggests not simply the written word, though this is one of its senses, but all practices which signify. This includes the generation of meaning through images, sounds, objects (such as clothes) and activities (like dance and sport). Since images, sounds, objects and practices are sign systems, which signify with the same mechanism as a language, we may refer to them as

cultural texts" (Barker 2003, 10). However the idea of text originates in the literary text. Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' poses questions regarding the role of the author and it gives the reader full autonomy to interpret the text. Texts are forms of representation and contain the possibility of multifarious meaning.

2.1.2.10 Representation

Representation refers to the way of presenting the meaning of an object or an idea. Cultural Studies looks at the politics of representation. Culture itself is regarded as constituting the signifying practices of representation. Different cultural texts have myriad meanings and to investigate and to interpret the process of meaning formation is the business of Cultural Studies.

2.1.2.11 Agency

Agency is commonly associated with the idea of freedom, free will and the sovereign individual. Cultural Studies believes that an individual has the ability to act and make change. The idea of agency is always associated with the independent action of an individual. Hence their (individuals) independent actions have the capability to bring change and can make a difference in the world.

2.1.3 Methodology

Cultural Studies follows the interdisciplinary kind of methodology. The discipline of Cultural Studies uses a diverse range of methodological practices. The interdisciplinary nature of Cultural Studies assemblages many of the methodological traditions of humanities and social sciences. It has borrowed different techniques and methods from other disciplines. "Empirical enquiry has been treated with suspicion or regarded as woefully insufficient in itself, primarily because of the emphasis in cultural studies on fully conceptualizing a topic of enquiry and locating it within a more general theoretical problematic" (Pickering 2008,1). Cultural Studies tends to rely more on textual analysis. It applies techniques for analyzing a broad range of cultural phenomena very closely. The main features of Cultural Studies are it's 'openness and theoretical

versatility, its reflexive even self-conscious mood, and especially, the importance of critique' (Pickering 2008, 75). Barker rightly remarks that Cultural Studies does not follow any strict methodology. "Cultural Studies has not paid much attention to the classical questions of research methods and methodology…Indeed, my own concern here is not with the technicalities of method but with the philosophical approaches which underpin them, that is, methodology" (Barker 2003, 25). The methodological approach for the Cultural Studies I am discussing can be broadly divided into following heads: Theoretical Analysis, Critical Investigation, Deconstruction, Textual Studies, ethnographic approach and policy-based research.

2.1.3.1 Theoretical Analysis

Theoretical analysis is one of the important methodologies of Cultural Studies. Theory and conceptual frameworks are used in cultural analysis. By using theory, a cultural analyst can raise questions related to specific research. It operates like a cognitive map. It helps to investigate the matter in a systematic way. Theory is the basis of cultural analysis. "it frames the questions which should then be directed toward specific research of specific texts, social practices, institutions and relationships….It takes us out of the quotidian immediacy of experience and allows us to see how various elements relate and intersect with one another" (Lewis 2002,33). Theoretical analysis can be used for the purpose of gaining more specific analysis of a particular cultural phenomenon. Theorization helps in the process of judging and evaluation of specific problem.

2.1.3.2 Critical Investigation

Critical investigation is one of the important methods in Cultural Studies. "A codification of methods or knowledge (instituting them, for example, in formal curricula or in courses on 'methodology') runs against some main features of cultural studies as a tradition: its openness and theoretical versatility, its reflexive, even self-conscious mood, and, especially, the importance of critique" (Johnson in Story 1996 and 2012, 75). Cultural Studies always deals with two significant questions: power and ideology. Power and ideology are disseminated through different social practices, institutions and texts in symbolic form. This type of

critical investigation is crucial to a Cultural Studies project. Cultural Studies has adopted various techniques of critical analysis. In many areas of Cultural Studies, particularly in various texts and discourses, particular regimes of power are investigated critically. It throws a critical look at dominant and oppressive ideologies. It raises critical questions of power, politics and the history of a particular discourse or practice.

Looking at the history of Cultural Studies we find that Cultural Studies was first associated with literary criticism. Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart gave a lot of importance to Leavisite criticism. Though it started in Literature, it was later applied to the assessment of everyday life. Similarly in History, the development of a post-war tradition was a significant development. This post-war tradition in social history throws light on "Popular Culture" or the Culture of "the people". The central idea behind all the literary and historical perspective is the criticism of old Marxism.

> "Central in both literary and historical strands was the critique of old Marxism. The recovery of 'values' against Stalinism was a leading impulse of the first new left, but the critique of economism has been the continuous thread through the whole 'crisis of marxism' which has followed. Certainly cultural studies has been formed on this side of what we can call, paradoxically, a modern Marxist revival, and in the cross-national borrowings that were so marked a feature of the 1970s" (Johnson in Story, ed. 1996, 76).

Neo- Marxist Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci were the influential figures in the development of this wave of criticism within Cultural Studies. The concepts of hegemony and ideology are significant outcomes of their analyses.

2.1.3.3 Deconstruction

Deconstruction is another important technique of doing Cultural Studies. Jacques Derrida (1974-79) was the exponent of this approach. He applied this approach to study western philosophy. Derrida tries to deconstruct certain dominant ideas by illuminating the underlying historical and linguistic assumptions. With this technique Derrida examines the construction of dominant ideas. He has

questioned the underlying legitimacy of these ideas. Derrida has used this technique to deconstruct the linguistic and rhetorical structures which are used in western philosophy.

2.1.3.4 Textual Studies

A textual study is another important method in Cultural Studies. Texts could refer to books, films, T.V. programmes, photographs, musical recordings et al. Cultural Studies has developed the technique of Textual Studies to investigate the historical, material and cultural context of a particular text. Cultural Studies has considered these texts as the cultural documents. "Cultural texts are fundamentally and inescapably embedded in social practices, institutional processes, politics and economy. The meanings of texts cannot be treated as independent of the broader flows and operations of the culture in which the text exists" (Lewis 2002, 35).It means the text has a relationship with the context.

These texts are interpreted differently by different thinkers. According to Barthes everything symbolic can be treated as text. On the other hand Michel Foucault termed those as discourse. According to him these discourses are mediated through certain kinds of power relations. Cultural Studies analyzes the symbolic condition of textuality. Here text and context are intrinsically related to each other. Sometimes texts are regarded as primary indicators of the context. Alternatively, sometimes contexts define the inherent meaning of the text as well as its representation. The textual approach could be critical and deconstructive, helping to study the complex interrelationship between the text and the context.

2.1.3.5 Ethnographic Approach

Ethnographic Approach is another important methodological approach in Cultural Studies. "Ethnography is an empirical and theoretical approach inherited from anthropology that seeks detailed holistic description and analysis of cultures based on intensive fieldwork" (Barker 2003, 25). It concentrates mainly on what happens in peoples' lives. This approach relies on the empirical method. "Empiricism is a method of recording and analyzing natural and social phenomena. It may be understood simply as the objective recording of

'experience' (Lewis 2002, 36). Experience is indeed significant in Cultural Studies. It is the principal category to analyze the field data. "One of the distinguishing features of cultural studies is its focus on the subjective dimension of social relations, on how particular social arrangements and configurations are lived and made sense of, so highlighting the complex intersections between public culture and private subjectivity and the transformative potentials that may arise there" (Pickering 2008, 19). Therefore experience is regarded as a useful phenomenon to know about our social world. "Ethnographic cultural studies has been centred on the qualitative exploration of values and meanings in the context of a 'whole way of life'. That is, ethnography has been deployed in order to explore questions about cultures, life-worlds and identities" (Barker 2003, 25). It is a category which is addressed in connection with cultural studies research. It has its critical importance in cultural studies. It is addressed in terms of politics of culture and cultural democratization. It is the meeting ground for "individual perception and cultural meaning, self and symbolic forms, life story and social condition of existence" (Pickering 2008, 27).

The ethnographic approach has become the popular methodology which is embedded in the principle of 'way of life'. "Cultural Studies has proved appealing to some members of oppressed or marginalized groups because it allows a space for the articulation of their experience where it is not available in more conventional or established disciplines" (Pickering 2008, 22).The approach of ethnography is thus an empirical and theoretical approach of research in Cultural Studies.

Thus, 'culture' in Cultural Studies is analyzed in different ways and from different perspectives, helping to interpret the contemporary society and culture with a vision to change the world into a better place to live in.

2.2 Illustration of Different Terms

Following is a brief illustration of the meaning of different terms/ concepts which are broadly used in the subsequent chapters. Different terminologies such as Nature/Environment, Environmental Discourse, Environmental/ Ecological

Subjectivity, Environmentalism, Ethnicity and Nationalism etc. are used for the purpose of analyzing the subject.

2.2.1 Nature

Nature is regarded as the most complicated word in language. According to Raymond Williams, "Nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language…..Nature has meant the 'countryside', the 'unspoiled places,' plants and creatures, other man…..nature is what man has not made" (Williams 1983,219).

Nature has been described differently in different contexts since ancient times. "With respect to individuals, it referred to the properties, inherent characters, and vital powers of persons, animals, or things, or more generally to human nature. It also meant an inherent impulse to act and to sustain action; conversely, to "to go against nature" was to disregard this innate impulse. With respect to the material world, it referred to a dynamic creative and regulatory principle that caused phenomena and their change and development" (Merchant 1989, xxiii).

The word nature is mostly used in contrast to the words art and culture. The emergence of environmental movement has led to widespread discussions on nature. It has created the space to use the word environment interchangeably with that of nature.

2.2.2 Environment

The environment is one of the most complicated terms in the modern world. It has multiple dimensions. In contemporary times the environment produces multifaceted meaning both materially and symbolically; further, the discursive formation of the environment has an impact on the lives of people. Today, the environment has acquired a special identity in the realm of social sciences. The environment is imagined and constructed as our heritage which tells about the relationship between human and natural world. The environment has also become an identity marker of a particular region or a particular community. Moving

beyond the boundaries, it can create an imagined community. Many a time, it is also used as a tool for nation building.

The concept of environment has been viewed from different perspectives. Today the concept not only provides material resources but also rhetorical and political resources. ".... [T]he environments....something that people interact with and depend upon by using its resources for their survival and well-being."(Milton 1996, 32).

As a topic of academic interest, the environment is located at the intersections of political, social, cultural and ecological ideology. Generally the word 'environment' indicates a place of nature. It encompasses all living and non-living things and their interaction with their surroundings. Different ideologies have had a decisive impact in shaping the understanding of environment. They have shaped the various environmental policies as well as environmental imagination.

Instances of ideas which have pre-existed the present understanding of the environment such as resource shortage, open spaces, and pollution do of course pre-date the 1960s. But there are many new understandings of the concept of environment. Environment is today conceptualized as more than *nature.* It cannot be regarded as merely synonymous to nature. It includes both *nature* and *culture*. Here I use the term *nature* to mean the natural world including human beings. "… [T]he environment, is perhaps most misunderstood as a static place, somehow beyond or separated from the practices of everyday life. All too often, when the environment is reduced to a place, we tend to assume that it signifies the country, and forget it also refers to the city. We imply that it is static, and not dynamic. We take it for granted, and turn our attention elsewhere. Under industrial, colonial, developmental, and other arrogant influences unwilling to appreciate its fragility or to listen to its complex composition" (Pezzullo 2011, 1).

2.2.3 Environmental Discourse

Environmental discourse can be defined as "specific ways of ways talking about particular environments and their futures" (Muhlhausler and Peace 2006, 458).

Environmental discourses are the result of the complex socio-political as well as the political economic interaction. "Within environmental studies, discourse has been visualized in a variety of ways, ranging from a 'story-line' that provides a signpost for action within institutional practices (Hajer 1995) to a social movement, a 'frame' that enables the practices of environmental movement organizations (Buelle 2000), to an environmental 'rhetoric' constructed around words, images, concepts and practices (Myerson and Rydin 1996)" (Hannigan 1995, 37). Analysis of discourses has become an influential method to look at different environmental texts, images and ideas. In this study analysis of environmental discourses is used for the purpose of analyzing environmental politics in Assam.

2.2.4 Environmental/ Ecological Subjectivity

Subject and subjectivity are the products of specific culture and ideology. It can be defined as the condition of identifying oneself in a particular location. It is a process which shapes our individuality as social beings. Different schools of thought have referred to subjectivity. Among them the structuralists and Marxist thinkers are significant in offering a comprehensive idea of subjectivity. Ecological subjectivity is formed by the hegemonic discourses of environment that are in vogue at a given point in time. It is the result of interrelationship between different environmental discourses.

2.2.5 Environmentalism

Environmentalism can be defined as a perspective or as a stance against destruction of nature and to protect, conserve or preserve it for future. Environmental consciousness has resulted in the birth of environmentalism around the world. "Environmentalism seemed to transcend the ideological disputes and other sources of division, like class, race, gender, and national identity that were tearing apart the movement I had known, and had felt a part of, through much of the 1960s. It was not that the ideologies or social distinctions seemed to stem from another era" (Jamision 2001, 2). Jamision goes on to say, "… [W]e had to learn to expand our ideas of solidarity and community and our notions of politics and social action so that we might be better able to take into

account the diverse array of non-human beings that we shared the planet with" (Jamision 2001, 2).

Gradually environmentalism has become an international affair in connection with the protection of nature. After the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, environmentalism took the shape of a social movement. According to Guha,

> Environmentalism is by now a genuinely international movement, occurring with lesser or greater intensity in a variety of countries around the globe. Nor do these national movements necessarily work in isolation. In the age of e-mail and the fax machine, information generated in one country can be instantaneously transmitted to another. Environmentalism has thus come to constitute a field of force in which different individuals and organizations, far removed in space, collaborate and sometimes compete in forging a movement that often transcends national boundaries (Guha 2000, 2).

Environmentalism can be regarded as a programme for political reform. According to Guha, environmentalism should be viewed as a social programme. He states, "… [E]nvironmentalism must be viewed as a *social* programme, a charter of action which seeks to protect cherished habitats, protest against their degradation, and prescribe less destructive technologies and lifestyles" (Guha 2000, 3).

The appreciation of nature is to be found even in the classical literary traditions of the East and the West alike. However, modern environmentalism can be said to develop with the emergence of industrialization during which nature provided the raw materials for economic growth. If we look at the history of modern environmentalism Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is regarded as the starting point. It is regarded as the founding event of modern environmentalism. But the concern for nature among the intellectuals was reflected in the eighteenth century. Guha says, "As dynamic social response to the Industrial Revolution, environmentalism bears comparison with three other movements of the modern world- democracy, socialism, and feminism…Meanwhile the environmental movement has expanded human understandings of 'rights' and 'justice', calling for greater attention to the rights of nature as well as for sustainable lifestyles"(Guha 2000,5).

2.2.6 Ethnicity

Ethnicity in simple idiom is a sense of belongingness of a person/ individual to his or her group. It is a cultural concept which is concentrated on the sharing of certain traits like norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols etc. among the members of a particular group. Ethnicity is a relational idea which deals with the identity of an individual. "Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of other groups of whom they are aware and with whom they enter into relationship" (Erikson 2010, 16-17). He again states in the same book that, "Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. In this way it has a political, organizational aspect as well as a symbolic, meaningful one" (Erikson 2010, 17).

For the study of ethnicity there are different schools of thought. Among them, the dominant ones are the primordialist and the instrumentalist. Both these schools of thought have different interpretation of ethnicity. They hold contrasting views about ethnicity. As a result another approach has developed which is known as the situative-primordial approach. Apart from these, the constructionist school of thought viewed ethnicity as a social construction.

According to the primordialist school of thought, ethnicity is innate. It is determined by the individual's primordial attachment to his or her group or culture. The primordialists argue that ethnicity is determined by the birth of an individual. It is an ascribed status or identity which is inherited by the individuals from their ancestors. Thus ethnicity is the permanent identity of an individual. It is a natural phenomenon.

According to the constructionist school of thought, ethnicity is a social construction. Ethnicity is viewed as a constructed identity and therefore, it is considered to be dynamic. According to this school of thought ethnicity is a response to changing social environment.

The instrumentalists view ethnicity not in terms of a primordial status. According to them ethnicity can be explained in terms of gaining resources or achieving

certain goals. Ethnicity is treated as social, political as well as cultural resources for the purpose of achieving certain status by the group. In this context ethnicity can be described as an instrument or strategic tool to serve a common goal.

The differences and similarities between the instrumentalists and primordialists have led to the development of another approach to define ethnicity in social sciences. It is known as the situative-primordial approach.It can be viewed as a dependent variable as well as an independent variable which shapes the political scene. His approach is the amalgamation of the primordial and the instrumentalist ones. He claimed that his approach provided a new reading of ethnicity.

Above all, ethnicity is a cultural concept. The concept of power is always involved in the shaping of ethnicity. It is constituted through the power relations among the various groups.

2.2.7 Nation and Nationalism

The idea of nation and nationalism is the result of a continuous process of historical- cultural formation. Thus the nation is not just a political concept of administrative apparatus. Different narratives of unity to represent a shared identity have resulted in the idea of the nation.

The definition of nation propounded by Stalin is probably the most widely accepted one among the Marxist thinkers. According to him, "A nation is a human group which possesses certain definite characteristics. It is a historically stable community of people. It has a common vernacular language. It occupies a single piece of territory. It has an integrated, coherent economy. It possesses a community of psychological "make up" (a folk- psychology, or national character). And it is a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism" (https://www.marxist.org).

Benedict Anderson's idea of nation can be considered as a pioneering work in the discourse of nation and nationalism. Anderson's concept of *imagined community* (1991) opened up new vistas in discussions of the nation and the formation of nationalism. According to Anderson a nation is an *imagined community* which is

also a cultural construction. The question of national identity is also discussed by him as a cultural construction. He defines a nation as *imagined*:

> It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the images of their communion…The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations….It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordered, hierarchical dynastic realm…Finally, it is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson 1991, 6-7).

Anderson refers to print media capitalism as a vehicle for spreading nationalism in the western world. The rise of print capitalism by producing books and newspapers standardized the vernacular language. To maximize profit the print language encouraged the masses to imagine a nation. It brought the idea of nationalism and created a sense of belongingness among the masses to an imagined community.

Other thinkers like Earnest Gellner (1983), Erick Hobsbawm (1989), Anthony D. Smith (1986) have discussed the concept of nation and nationalism. Nationalism, according to Gellner is a political principle. He views the nation and nationalism as evolving out of the sociological condition within the industrial world. Nation is the product of nationalism. It is not a static phenomenon, rather it changes over time. According to him the idea of nation and nationalism cannot be discussed as a top-down model. It should be discussed from the ground level.

Thus nation and nationalism has become an idea, a discourse, a topic of debate in the discipline of social science. In the changing socio-political situation the discourse of nation and nationalism is interpreted again and again for better understanding of the scenario.

2.2.8 Gender

Gender is an important concept in doing Cultural Studies. It is result of biological as well as social construction. Gender rests on the sociological construction of masculinity and femininity. "The introduction of the term 'gender' into the vocabularies of critical and cultural theory has been motivated primarily by the necessity of surpassing reductionist accounts of femininity and masculinity as coterminous with an individual's biological sex, and of stressing their socio-political determination"(Cavallaro 2001,108). Butler defines gender from the perspective of performance. Gender is performative. According to this concept the gendered identity of an individual is an act or performance.

To conclude this chapter it can be summarized that the discussed terminologies are widely used in the dissertation. The next chapter to follow contains a discussion of the movement of environmentalism in the context of India and Assam and its representation through the mass media.