

Chapter I

Chapter I

Introduction

Fabrication of the Earth model from the core to the crust is replete with a potpourri of resources that are pivotal to the sustenance of life on the planet. All matters ranging from the unicellular to the multicellular is made up of the five cardinal elements namely air, water, earth, fire and ether, thereby forming an interdependent link between the being and the environment that hosts them. This interdependence is strengthened by the indispensable role of the resources that has fuelled the dynamics of civilisation resulting in the formation of culture. The great civilisations like the Indus Valley, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and the Fertile Crescent, consisting of Nile Valley and Delta regions of Northeastern Africa and Western Asia, bloomed around the water resources that ensured steady supply for multifarious uses such as making the land fertile for agriculture and transportation. Thus, the hydraulic empire exercised power through controlling the water resources.

From the genesis, resources have become a connotation for the birth of civilisation, hegemony and sovereignty. The availability of natural resources exerted influence on national security. National security has traversed beyond the availability of armed forces and has become inclusive of the availability and affordable access to the basic needs which comprises food, clean water and hygienic living space and also other renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Thus, national security is directly proportional to the availability of natural resources.

The presence of natural resources as a national asset defines the value of the geographical location, formation of the cultural identity, regulation of the economic

growth and ensures secure living conditions. In the current Anthropocene epoch, attention has shifted towards environmental vulnerabilities and the scarcity of resources is a bigger threat to the sustenance of life. Solar, wind, hydro, geothermal and biomass are the renewable resources found in the ecosystem. These resources are a predominant part of the ecosystem and can replenish after use. The reliability of the renewable resources depends on the relationship between the rate of usage, population growth and the rate of replenishing. Sustainable use is the advised method to avoid exploitation like drying up of water resources, deforestation, land erosion, and the like.

Renewable resources exist and are “deeply interlinked” (Parthemore and Rogers 7), with the natural ecosystem. Thus, the loss of one resource can invariably affect the availability of other resources as well. This in-turn will have a direct effect on the life forms sustained in that particular ecosystem and results in migration, endangerment or extinction. For example, the destruction of forests impacts rainfall, causes landslides, dries up rivers, affects aquatic life and leads to loss of livelihood for the communities depending on these natural resources for their survival. This in turn leads to environmental and societal pressures. Despite all this, renewable resources have been significant in the formation of the early civilisation until the coming of the modern age defined by machines, industrialisation and advancement in science and technology.

The non-renewable energy resources found in the ecosystem have become the most sought-after fuel resources because they are rich in energy and the cost of production is cheap compared to the renewable resources. The replacement of non-renewable resources is a protracted process, and the rate of consumption is higher than the rate of replacement. Over the years, the modification in the use of non-renewable resources like the fossil

fuels propelled the reconstruction of the lifestyle of people associated with it. Meticulous geological activities are carried out in the particular region to excavate fossil fuels, and they have a deep impact on the environment. Geological explorations involve drilling, seismic operations and explosions which affect the vegetation and wildlife.

The necessity and use of energy resources and their availability has largely shaped the planet that life inhabits today. The narratives of modernity concentrate on the progress that involves scientific and technological advancements, gaining of freedom, revival of rights and the dominance of capitalistic economy. The critical discourses dissect the vision of modernity by reading in-between the lines to understand the reality hidden beneath the progress, which is assumed to be getting better with every year. The postcolonial narratives have unearthed the fact that the progress was related only to the global North at the cost of exploitation of people and resources of the global South.

One important aspect of these exploitations is that they are highly governed by the presence, accessibility and usage of the fuel resources. The critical inquiries into the energy resources have given rise to an interdisciplinary approach that integrates science with humanities to bring about an understanding of energy and view it not only as a fuel resource that powers the technology but also as a paramount element of environmental, social, cultural and economic dimensions of modern civilisations. In that case, fossil fuels govern the progress of humanity and the connection between energy resources and environmental crises was established because of the unethical extraction, exploitation and inflicting too much damage to the planet.

The remapping of the narratives of modernity from the perspective of oil resources offers an accurate criticism of contemporary life and progress because of the centrality

that these resources occupy in the critiques and in reality. This centrality and interdisciplinary approach allows for the conversations of energy crisis and conservation and does not only limit itself to environmental aspects but also defines the structures of hegemony, consent and oppression that makes the oil apparatus. The ever-increasing demand has largely turned the world's attention towards the availability and extraction of finite fossil fuel resources that take millions of years to replenish and the consequence of their exhaustion on society and the environment is critical. The quintessence of its presence and power can be sketched by interrelating its dominant status in relation to the position that it occupies in governing the development of a nation.

The representation of this predominant role of fossil fuels in literary imagination has traversed beyond viewing it as only an energy resource to include cultural context as represented by the Canadian cultural critic Andrew Nikiforuk. He envisioned oil resources as a replacement for slavery and a tool of abolitionism. When the oil powered machineries replaced manual labour, it brought with it freedom from the slave culture. John McLaurin in his work *Sketches in Crude Oil* published in the year 1896, views crude oil as the means to end class disputes and gender inequity. Yet, inhibitions lie in wondering about the right way to write about oil and address the silence with which it was treated by various forms of art, literature and media despite its overpowering presence in life since the twentieth century.

Stephanie LeMenager in her book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (2013) debates her position as a professor of literature in writing about oil. The oil narrative, according to her, is an unstable medium and is constantly shifting in perspectives. The shift makes the oil narratives demand a more interdisciplinary approach to the problems

of energy crisis rather than a monotonous approach and understanding. A literary persona would not concentrate on the political or economic aspects of oil to envision a future, but will also understand how the presence of fossil fuels has come to play an important role in shaping the American imagination. LeMenager's description restricts itself to the American imagination, but the review of Amitav Ghosh takes into consideration the Global South in oil narratives.

Ghosh in his famous review of Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* titled, "The Oil Encounter and the Novel: Petrofiction" which appeared in *The New Republic* on March 2, 1992, writes about the phenomenon of oil encounter, investigates the reason behind its minimal representation in literature and coins the term 'petrofiction' to open up a dimension within the literary world to document the oil aesthetics in literature. One of the prime reasons behind oil not being the protagonist of any literary piece of work is because the history of oil is ignominious and brings into talk two major cultures and distinctive standpoints as the Orient meets the Occident.

The rise of geopolitical spaces and cultural studies have given rise to critical regionalism in which the particulars of world culture and their functionality are viewed, understood and analysed through their dialogues with the specific region and effective in understanding and comprehending the spatiality and commodity regionalism as in the oil fields in Nigeria, Middle East and other oil producing nations. Regionalism also has facilitated in understanding how the fossil fuels have deeply penetrated into everyday life starting from skin care products like lip balms, to aspirin tablets. It also governs the economic status, global transportation of commodities and without it movement will be arrested. Oil as a capital defines the space and alters the quality of the environment by

impacting the air, water, and land that delineates it. Thus the centrality of oil and its global dominance always calls for the collaboration of all the fields like science, academics, art, criticism and so on in understanding life through oil resources, “Without such collaboration, there can be no narrative intelligence capacious enough to approach oil’s culture and ecological legacies.” (LeMenager 18)

The novels chosen for study reflect the centrality of the oil in everyday life by accommodating its hidden presence in social, cultural, economic, environmental and even psychological aspects of the geopolitical territory that was bound by it and examines how, “Oil is the ultimate natural- cultural artefact” (Foreword, Stoekl xii). The *Cities of Salt Trilogy* by Abdelrahman Munif is a benchmark in oil narratives because for the first time it produced an authentic picture of Middle Eastern oil scenario by accounting the difference in lifestyle for the ruling class and the proletarians after the encounter with the West and capitalism.

Abdelrahman bin Ibrahim al-Munif (circa 1933), was a Jordanian born, Saudi Arabian journalist, philosopher, economist, short story writer, and novelist. He was a prominent Arabic writer who used his art to satirise the cynicism of modern society. Munif, belongs to the Second World War generation that witnessed the decolonisation as well as the rising of America and Britain as powerful capitalist through oil. His writings inculcate subversive intellectualism, which is considered as the main element of Arabian modernity culture.

Munif’s father died soon after his birth and he was brought up by his Iraqi maternal grandmother, who filled him with stories of the city named Baghdad. Until eighteen, he lived in Amman and his book titled *Story of a City* published in 1994 chronicles his life in Amman and his memories of Baghdad through his grandmother’s vivid descriptions.

He studied law in Baghdad University and holds a doctorate in Petroleum Economics from University of Belgrade, Cairo. His political views once aligned with the interest of communist party but after his nationalistic sentiments and opposition to Israel especially in matters related to Palestine, he left the communist party and joined the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. He was an exerting influence in politics and took part in lots of demonstrations against the Baghdad pact of 1955 which promoted shared military, political and economic goals for Great Britain, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Pakistan. His political activities led to his expulsion from the university, and then he moved to Cairo to continue his studies. His radical and critical political views made the Saudi government revoke his citizenship in the year 1963. He resigned from Ba'ath Party in the year 1965 and entered the oil industry.

Munif had a commendable career in the oil industry, and it encompasses his role as the Director of Planning for Syrian Oil Company and Director of Crude Oil Marketing during the years 1964 to 1973. During his years in Baghdad, he was an editor of the *al-Naft wa al- Tanmiyya* (Oil and Development), a monthly periodical that was funded by the government. In 1981, he moved to France and during his five years of stay there, he wrote the first part of his monumental quintet in Arabic *Mudun al-milh* which was translated into English as a trilogy titled *Cities of Salt*.

The first volume in Arabic titled *Al-tih* was published in the year 1984 in Beirut and the English translation appeared in the year 1987. The other books in the quintet include *Al-ukhdud* (1985), *Taqasim al-layl wan-nahar* (1989), *Al- munbatt* (1989) and *Badiyat az-zulmat* (1989). They were translated into English as a trilogy titled *Cities of Salt* (1987), *The Trench* (1991) and *Variations on Night and Day* (1993). The quintet laid a benchmark

for modern Arabic literature and during the time of its publication, *Cities of Salt* was the longest modern Arabic novel to be written. The detailed characterisation and narration made the quintet to be compared to *Cairo Trilogy* (1956-57) written by Naguib Mahfouz. The realistic and satiric portrayal of the oil industry and all the follies of modern life in the Middle East in the novels of Munif resulted in his works being banned in Egypt and Gulf States.

Munif debuted with his novel, *Al Ashjar wa-ighiyal Marzuq* (Trees and the Assassination of Marzuq) in 1973. His other works include *Sharq al-Mutawassit* (East of the Mediterranean, 1975) and *Al-Nihayat* published in 1978 is a collection of stories that highlight the environmental concerns of the desert communities and the changes that are set in motion. He collaborated with the distinguished Palestinian author Jabra Ibrahim Jabra for a book *Alam bi-la khara' it* (A World Without Maps), a metafiction published in 1982. Munif is the author of fifteen fictions and ten non-fictional works in Arabic and five works in English including the trilogy, *Endings* and *Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman* which were published in the year 1998. After his sojourn to Paris, Munif returned and took up residence in Damascus, Syria with his wife Souad Qawadiri until his death. He had already established himself as a prominent Arab novelist of the twentieth century by the time he settled in Syria.

Munif publicly detested Saddam Hussein's regime. He died on January 24, 2004, in Damascus, Syria due to multiple organ failure. Writing about the important revolutionary works of the century, Edward Said said that the impediments posted by democracy, progress, and destiny are intellectually and courageously portrayed in the works of Munif, Eqbal Ahmad, Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who are, "...major

thinkers and artists whose suffering have not blunted the intransigence of their thought, or inhibited the severity of their punishment.” (Said 18)

Cities of Salt Trilogy was translated to English by Peter Theroux. He was born in Boston in 1956 and was educated in Harvard University. His one year in University of Cairo helped him discover his interest in Arabic literature. Since then, Theroux has been involved in translating a variety of Arabic texts that hold historic significance into English. He mainly works with contemporary fiction from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq. *Cities of Salt Trilogy* was his first Arabic to English translation, and it was followed by many other works including *Yalo* by Lebanese author Elias Khoury, *Dongola: A Novel of Nubia* by Nubian author Idris Ali, *Saraya: The Ogre’s Daughter: A Palestinian Fairy Tale* by Palestinian-Israeli author Emile Habiby, *Naphtalene: A Novel of Baghdad* by Iraqi author Alia Mamdouh and *Children of the Alley* by Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz. Apart from this, he has also authored a book titled *Sandstorms* published in the year 1990 which chronicles his Middle Eastern travel tales.

Munif’s invocation of the Middle East is a social commentary on the presence of oil and similarly Helon Habila also pictures Nigeria and the Niger Delta to understand the centrality of oil and its severity in everyday life. Helon Habila Ngalabak is a Nigerian novelist and journalist, born in November 1967. He graduated from University of Jos, Central Nigeria with a degree in English Language and Literature. He worked as a journalist for *Hints* magazine and *Vanguard* newspaper. In 2005, Habila was selected as the first Chinua Achebe Fellow and was invited by Chinua Achebe, the Nobel Prize winning Nigerian author to Bard College, New York. He spent a year teaching and taking up writing under the fellowship of Achebe. Currently, apart from being a writer, Habila is a professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia and teaches creative writing.

The political instability and military control that surrounded Habila's childhood made him choose writing as a mode of resistance. His writings generally reflect his love for his homeland, the fight for justice and the reality of the exploitation caused by oil exploration in Nigeria. His poem titled *Another Age* won the Music Society of Nigeria National Poetry Award in 2000. He also won the Caine Prize 2001 for a story titled "Love Poems" from his short story collection named *Prison Stories* published in 2001. His debut novel *Waiting for an Angel* was published in 2002 and won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize 2003 for Africa region under the category Best First Book. His second novel *Measuring Time* was published in 2007 and won the Virginia Library Foundation Prize for Fiction in 2008. His third novel *Oil on Water* was published in 2010, and it was critically acclaimed for the realistic portrayal of oil exploitation in Niger Delta and the environmental destruction. The novel was shortlisted for Commonwealth Writers' Prize 2011 and Orion Book Award 2012. He is the winner of Windham-Campbell Prize for Fiction 2015. His recent work *Travellers: A Novel* published in the year 2019 was shortlisted for Grand Prix of Literary Associations 2019.

Habila's other works include an anthology titled *New Writing 14* published in the year 2006, *The Granta Book of the African Short Story* published in 2011 and *Dreams, Miracles, and Jazz: An Anthology of New Africa Fiction* which was co-edited with Kadija George and published in 2007. Habila has also written a non-fiction book titled *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria* published in 2016 and it was inspired by the incidents that followed the kidnapping of 276 Chibok school girls by the terrorists in 2014. He is the founding member and currently serving on the advisory board of African Writers Trust, a non-profit organisation. With his works bent

on social cause and justice, Habila has carved a place for himself among the Nigerian writers who are working hard to take their culture, struggles, experiences and knowledge to the world.

Like Habila, Mei Mei Evans also portrays the presence of oil in the particular geopolitical region and the destruction it causes to the environment and indigenous life bound by it. Evans has been an Emeritus Professor of Alaska Pacific University since 2000. She teaches a variety of courses in literature, cultural studies and creative writing. She got her MFA in Creative Writing from Vermont College in the year 1984 and doctorate in English from University of Washington in the year 1999. When she was twenty years old, Evan hitch-hiked from New England to Homer in Alaska to lead a reclusive life in a cabin with no running water, electricity and involved in all sorts of jobs from waitressing to fishing. When the Exxon Valdez oil spill happened in 1989, for an environmentalist like Evans, the destruction was an excruciating experience which made her take up creative writing and teaching to employ it as a medium for awareness.

Evans was the public information officer for Homer during the Exxon Valdez oil spill and that experience greatly shaped her novel *Oil and Water* published in the year 2013 by University of Alaska Press, which comprises the events following the Exxon Valdez oil spill and how it disfigured Alaska's ecosystem and native life. The book was the finalist for PEN/ Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction, which was established by Barbara Kingslover in the year 2000. Evans along with Joni Adamson and Rachel Stein edited *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy* which was published in 2002 and it is considered as one of the seminal critical texts in ecocriticism.

Her contributions to creative writing and environmentalism have highlighted the power of writing and literature as a medium for raising the voice and being the change.

Through the futuristic and dystopian set up, Omar El Akkad registers his own contribution to the oil narratives. Akkad, born in 1982, is an Egyptian-Canadian novelist and journalist with a Computer Science degree from Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. As a journalist, he worked as a staff reporter for the Canadian Newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*, and reported on various issues around the world like Afghanistan wars, Arab Springs, military trials that happened in Guantánamo Bay and movements like Black Lives Matter.

Throwing light upon the peak oil situation which according to Hubbert Peak Theory suggests that the availability and consumption of fossil fuels have reached the maximum limit and now there is only a downward fall with depletion of the resources. It forecasted the crumbling of the oil-based society and this is portrayed in *American War* by Akkad published in 2017, thereby marking his literary debut. The novel opened with positive reviews and critics often compared it with Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004) mainly because of its dystopian setting and peak oil situation. The novel won the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize and was shortlisted for Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize 2017 and Amazon Canada First Novel Award 2018. In November 2019, BBC listed *American War* as one of the hundred most influential novels. His second and recent work is *What Strange Paradise* published in 2021 and it deals with the Syrian refugee crisis and won the Giller Prize 2021.

The significant contribution by the above profiled authors to the genre of petrofiction has definitely enhanced the oil aesthetics and has set the benchmark for the future of the

genre. The novels chosen for the current study are *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* by Munif, *Oil on Water* by Habila, *Oil and Water* by Evans and *American War* by Akkad. The selected novels are plotted in the energy timeline by evaluating their historical relevance and background setting. After creating the timeline, the novels are critically scrutinised through the lens of neocolonialism, environmental justice and environmental intersectionality to understand the centrality of oil resources in forming the social order of modernity.

Postcolonial theory is dominated by the narratives of race, gender, class, identity and nationality and it places emphasis on the distinctive ways in which they exist in the literature. This result in postcolonial theory paying attention only to inconsistent cultural periphery initiated by colonialism: "...discrete cultural territories that colonialism inscribed in our geographical imaginations - Orient/Occident, west/east, us/them — is a distinct emphasis on the border-zone" (Jazeel 60). Within such dominance, the critique of the political economy in postcolonial theory has been paid negligible attention.

Postcolonial theorists only include minimal information about neocolonialism, globalisation and late capitalism in their text. This inadequacy of the representation must be addressed because neocolonialism in the postcolonial era is important in understanding not only the imperialism of the political economy but also encompasses the cultural, political and social practices that are transmuted in creating the current world order. If necessary importance is paid to the historical, structural and material aspects of imperialism and colonialism, one would understand that in the contemporary times globalisation, capitalism and neocolonialism are much more than the minimal mentions by the postcolonial theorist. They work at all levels of the society and have the power to create or destroy a political economy and culture.

Neocolonialism is the successor and revival of colonialism, but without any direct reign or control. The exertion of control by the developed countries on the developing countries or former colonies through economic, political and cultural dominance is the distinctive feature of neocolonialism. The colonial means of power have direct political and military control over the nation. In neocolonialism, the coloniser intervenes into the geopolitical area and takes control of the nation that is already independent or has gained independence, through indirect means like economy, globalisation, cultural imperialism, capitalism, and conditional aids. The conditional aids also include military and other security forces thereby establishing an indirect military control. Thus, a nation under neocolonial control cannot exercise mastery over its destiny. The economic and political situations of independent countries under neocolonial control are managed by the developed nation through financial monopoly in ties with the native bourgeois.

The first recorded use of the term neocolonialism was in Jean Paul-Sartre's work *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, published in 1964. It is a critical commentary on the policies of France in Algeria. Later neocolonialism was extensively used in the African context. Kwame Nkrumah's *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* published in 1965 is one of the seminal texts that studies neocolonial control on the African economy, politics and culture. The neocolonial state exercised an economic dependency on their colonial masters, which can also be called as post-colonial dependency.

Usually, the countries under the neocolonial control are exploited for their resources by the coloniser who is usually a developed or superpower nation or a private investor. In this neocolonialist framework, the coloniser is not liable to anyone. Nkrumah says that neocolonialism is an abominable form of imperialism which allows for irresponsible use

of power to exploit a nation's wealth, resources and its people: "Neocolonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress." (Nkrumah xi)

The status quo of fossil fuels altered when their hidden presence beneath the earth's crust was brought to light through extraction and was anointed as the feasible fuel resource. Their political, cultural, social and economic presence were brought into existence by their overriding presence in the ecosystem, their neocolonial dominance and the availability of technology to extract them: "The ultimate subsidy to the fossil fuel economy is militarized support for the extraction of fossil fuels, with the oil wars being an example" (Shiva, Conclusion). Thus, neocolonial dominance begins with the economy and affects the society, politics and culture as well.

The spatial distribution of oil resources in the environment is obligatory in consolidating the geographical value of the particular place and its calibre as a contributor to neocolonialism, capitalism and globalisation. The efforts to understand the connection between the presence of oil in the environment, the exploitation, iniquitous extraction, and the consequences of it as faced by the indigenous community is paramount especially in current global talks of sustainable development and climate change.

In such a scenario, the mantle of environmental justice becomes pivotal in correlating the indigenous knowledge and experience with exploitation of the oil resources and ramification of their environment to understand the alarming circumstances pertaining to climate change, peak oil and the urgency of sustainable goals. The idea and phenomenon of industrialisation is always associated with fossil fuels and the economy that succeeded it. It must be noted that actual development must have led to conservation of energy and

other resources while paving the way for human welfare and development, but unfortunately that is not the current scenario.

Hazel M. Johnson and Robert Bullard are considered as the mother and father of environmental justice, respectively. Bullard was the driving force for ‘The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit,’ which was an important event that pioneered the cause of environmental justice. The four-day summit that adjourned on October 24, 1991, was sponsored by the United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice and took place in Washington, DC. The summit had 1100 members from all the fifty states of America as well as representations from Mexico, Chile, Puerto Rico and the Marshall Islands which allowed for minimal inclusivity in representation in discussing matters concerning the environment, and it was the beginning of the change, “Ultimately, the Summit became the embodiment and the celebration of self-determination and leadership from communities of color.” (Berndt)

The major outcome of the four-day summit was the drafting of the seventeen principles of environmental justice, which till date serves as the basic framework in advocating for environmental equity and inclusivity. During the time when the principles were drafted, *Dumping Dixie* (1990) by Bullard was the only book that spoke about environmental injustice. The principles laid the foundation for the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 and were signed by President Bill Clinton on February 11, 1994. The order was ineffective and dormant during the administration of George W. Bush. It was revived, and its significance was reinstated under the government of Barack Obama in 2010, and was strengthened by the Interagency Working Group (IWG). IWG mandated the revision of the environmental justice strategic plans of many agencies and implemented the

‘Plan EJ 2014,’ a blueprint or the roadmap that will help achieve environmental justice in all policymaking, cultural activities and other related programmes. While the principles have been drafted with the United States of America as the national boundary, today the global indigenous fight for their rights and restoring of the environment has traversed beyond the national boundary to include more international voice and vision.

The third wave of ecocriticism vouches for more inclusivity, especially the indigenous rights along with environmental justice on a global level through collective cultural experiences. William Greider in his article “The Right and US Trade Law: Invalidating the 20th Century” talks about how international trade agreements undermine economic justice, environmental ethics and rights of the individual, and offers a significant insight into the third wave of ecocriticism. Edward Said in his work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) expounds the pivotal role of imagination in regaining the land that was beguiled during colonisation and this is one of the main features of postcolonial ecology. The intersection between ecology, indigenous knowledge and rights, environmental justice and critical theory is an important aspect of the third wave of ecocriticism which has been further strengthened by *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP), the seventeen *Principles of Environmental Justice* and *The Earth Charter*.

The term ‘intersectional theory’ was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in the year 1989 in her research article, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” The research article begins with a discussion on Black women to delineate about the privileged and underprivileged in a societal set-up. She claims that the Black women are always eluded from the discourses pertaining to feminism and antiracism because both

the ideologies are based on experiences that do not adequately reflect the interactions between gender and race. She states that these problems of inclusivity cannot be addressed by immediately adding Black women into the well-established framework because the intersectional experience is always greater than the individual entities of racism and sexism and, "...any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated." (Crenshaw 140)

The Critical Race Theory expounds the relationship between race, identity and the influential power structure within which they operate. It looks at race as a societal construct or ideology, and appropriating different operational values for each race within the society leads to inequality. The concept of intersectionality bases itself to address the various forms of inequality and discrimination and the complex manner in which they interact, integrate and intersect in the marginalised experiences of an individual or a group in the society. The eight main identities include gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status and ability. Crenshaw's ideology of intersectionality arises from her identity as a woman and person of colour, two marginalised entities intersected to formulate a theoretical framework that advocates inclusivity. In gender studies, intersectional feminism looks at the ways in which identities and gender intersect in the fight for equality and other rights. Similarly, in the ecocritical studies, implementing an intersectional framework allows for an enhanced and comprehensive approach to environmentalism.

Intersectional environmentalism coordinates social and environmental justice to open up a more inclusive scope towards dealing with environmental crises and other related problems. It provides a space within environmentalism for an inclusive approach

in order to redefine and retell natural history by accepting and celebrating the contributions of all cultures towards a more sustainable perception of life. Intersectional environmentalism according to Leah Thomas works towards the protection of the planet and "... dismantling systems of oppression in the environmental movement..." (Thomas, Introduction). Thus the unity and inclusivity brought in by intersectional environmentalism has the power to undo the neocolonial system of control.

A set of tools that adhere to the qualitative methodology of research has been used in collaboration with the style sheet prescribed by the Modern Language Association in conducting this research. Conceptual qualitative methodology is adopted to elucidate the representation of fossil fuels in select work of fiction and evaluate their centrality in contemporary life. Based on that, the research thesis is divided into following chapters: The "Introduction," deals with the overview of energy humanities, the oil narratives and petrofiction, profile of the authors chosen for study, brief about the critical theories used to support the research and elucidate the idea of the centrality of oil. The cardinal focus of chapter two, titled "Black Gold Rush," is to document the discovery of oil, re-visit literature through energy resources, delineate the historical background behind the premise of each novel chosen for study and prove them as significant works pertaining to petrofiction. A diachronic and descriptive methodology is applied in this chapter to historically trace the presence of fossil fuels in literature, and cross-referencing is used to accommodate various examples of petrofiction. Chapter three, titled as "Blood, Oil, Tears and Sweat," critically examines the petrofictions chosen for study from the perspectives of neocolonialism to understand the oil as the centre and coloniser and the modern society as colonised and the repression of indigenous rights. The fourth chapter, titled "Enviro(il)ment,"

understands the repercussions of oil exploration and exportation on the environment, rights of the indigenous people and the traditional knowledge through environmental justice framework and environmental intersectionality. Chapter three and four employs an interpretative and analytical framework in deducing the presence of fossil fuel in various levels of cultural and societal structures by using events from the primary sources and correlating it with the opted theoretical schemes. Comparative analysis has been carried out to bring out the similarities and differences of experience of an individual or a community as they interact with the oil encounter in their local environment, and they are accumulated to evaluate and reflect on the global circumstances and experiences.

“Summation,” converges all the ideas into one rivulet of thought, asserts the importance of energy shift, intersectionality as a means for inclusivity, the importance of sustainable goals and the role of petrofiction in documenting history and bringing awareness in this current fossil fuel-based society. It also includes further scope for study.

As an emergent and young field of study, the genre of petrofiction is strengthened, and its horizon of potentiality widened by the ingenious contribution of the following research works:

Dissertation by Wenjia Chen titled, *Petrofiction in America: From the 1970s to the Present* provides a detailed analysis of selected novels of American literature to examine the silence of oil representation in the American literary imagination and redefine the definition of petrofiction to include oil unconsciousness and involve cultural perspectives to address the lack of awareness.

The research paper entitled, *Gendering Petrofiction: Energy, Imperialism and Social Reproduction* by Sharae Deckard attempts to critically read *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*

by Nawal El Sadaawi and bring in gender perspectives into petrofiction to identify and highlight the relationship between energy and gender inequality and the social and ecological relationship between gender and oil resources as represented in literary imagination.

The research essay titled *Indigenous-Washing and the Petro-Hero in Genre Fictions of the North American Oil Boom* by Sara L. Crosby and Anna J. Willow deliberates about the intersection between indigenous life and the oil boom specifically in Northern America and their representation in literature. The powerful take on indigenous washing as similar to ethnic cleansing in relation with oil extraction and the role of petrofiction as a tool for justice is effectively delineated in this essay.

The research article entitled, *The Great Arrangement: Planetary Petrofiction and Novel Futures* by Shouhei Tanaka is a critical extempore of Karen Tei Yamashita's novels *Tropic of Orange* and *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* as a planetary petrofiction by analysing the location of oil in the particular geopolitical space and imperialistic regime that is fuelled by the oil resources through their bountiful presence and extraction.

The dissertation titled, *"Oh, Awful Power": Energy and Modernity in African American Literature* by Walter A. Gordon dissects the social and cultural synonyms of energy resources and their representation in African American Literature specifically during the first half of the twentieth century by viewing it as not only a material in the economy but also considers its metaphorical presence in culture as well with the help of literary texts like Shirley Graham's *Dust to Earth* (1941), J. McHenry Jones work titled *Hearts of Gold* (1896), Ann Petry's *The Street as a Drama* (1946) and so on.

'This is the Hell that I have Heard of': Some Dialectical Images in Fossil Fuel Fiction is a research essay by Andreas Malm that deals with the presence of dialectical

images in oil narratives with the support of two primary sources titled *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani and *Typhoon* by Joseph Conrad. These dialectical images are used to understand the crisis of the current Anthropocene epoch and the severities of global warming.

The book chapter titled, *The Heat of Modernity: The Great Gatsby as Petrofiction* by Harilaos Stecopoulos views the famous Scott Fitzgerald novel through the lens of modernity and connects all the desire and boisterous way of life associated with it in relation to the craze for fossil fuels. Similarly, Jason Groves in his research work titled, *Goethe's Petrofiction: Reading the Wanderjahre in the Anthropocene* attempts the reading of Goethe from the petro- perspective by understanding the attachment and allure associated with inorganic.

The above-mentioned comprehensive research works adds more zest to the field of petrofiction by identifying several literary works as holding the characteristics of oil narratives and is consequential in facilitating the current research by identifying the gap and encouraging novelty in thought that could make a significant contribution to the evolution of this genre as a major narrative of the twenty-first century. Tracing the history by plotting the events of the past and present on the energy timeline has opened up an idiosyncratic view of the world, where energy resources have occupied the centre around which all the significant historical, political, social, cultural and economic evolution have ensued. The transference in usage of energy resources from renewable to the non-renewable altered the fate of many nations, revalued the geography, influenced the economy, witnessed the rise of power politics, ramified the living communities and has consequential impact on the environment. This is the basic framework over which the research is built to expound the role of oil resources in the major realms of life.

This investigative study that works to comprehend the hidden presence of oil in everyday life manoeuvres based on the following hypothesis that petrofiction functions as an efficient literary medium for reinterpretation of history from energy perspectives, by initiating the re-reading of literature from energy standpoints which will unearth the oil motifs and impact the due course of interpretations in past and current times. The following thesis statement endorses the central point of the research: The pivotal role played by oil in mechanisation, movement and quality of life makes it a significant part of our social history, the one that needs to be addressed and claimed. Thus, the research authorises that oil is not just a source of energy; oil is history, the one that has defined our past, commands the present and would shape our future by their presence or absence.

The critical inquiry of oil narratives as carried out in this research work aims to study the representation of fossil fuels in literature, consolidate its presence in the environmental, economic, social, cultural and psychological spaces to highlight the oil centric modern and contemporary times. The fossil fuels embedded in social order in the current Anthropocene epoch has put the sustainability of life on the planet at risk along with the ramification of the indigenous rights, and knowledge. The study of the oil risks and catastrophes and their repercussions on geopolitical, environmental and cultural spaces are accounted to assert the magnitude of the importance of immediate energy descent, interdependence and intersection for a sustainable future.

The aim of the research study is effectively interpreted and achieved through the following objectives:

1. To trace the political history of black gold rush and create an energy timeline.

2. To plot the primary sources chosen for study on the created energy timeline to understand the historical significance of their premises and prove them as petrofictions.

3. To infer and understand the various ways in which oil resources and their aesthetics are represented in literary imagination.

4. To analyse the autocratic and hegemonic presence of oil in the current social apparatus.

5. To critically view the chosen petrofictions from the lens of neocolonialism and environmental justice to account for the centrality of oil as the coloniser, the civilisation as colonised, the indigenous oppression and the perilous outcome of this power structure.

6. To study the impact of unethical extraction of oil on the environment and the cultural ramification and invalidation of indigenous people and their rights with the ideological support of environmental intersectionality.

7. To represent the post-petro future through the speculative leg of petrofiction.

8. To assert the importance of immediate and inclusive energy shift to avoid major societal collapse and achieve sustainable goals through the support of the primary and secondary sources.

The curiosity, thirst for power, the spirit of exploration and the discovery set in motion great expeditions around the world. Oil exploration transformed and industrialised the society with machines and powerfully controlled dynamics. The upcoming chapter

revisits the history from energy perspectives to document the black gold rush, and its representation in literature to lay down a comprehensive base for the historical centrality of oil and how it exists in literary imagination as petrofiction and the multitudes of the genre in elucidating oil aesthetics.