

Chapter IV

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Enviro(il)nment

Critical inquiry into the representation of nature in literature forms the basic premise of ecocritical approach, wherein the interdisciplinary view becomes the bridge between humanities and science in understanding the environment and the interlinking relationships that exist within them. The ecocritical approach is enriched by contributions from various professionals like writers, anthropologists, scientists, critics, geologists, conservationists, climate activists, historians, theologians, to name a few.

According to Pippa Marland, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 was a seminal event in the course of ecocriticism which set in motion the arrival of more narratives pertaining to the environment in the literary expanse. The contribution of Arne Naess in the 1970s with his theory of Deep Ecology was important in shaping ecocriticism in the literary discourse. The field of ecocriticism garnered more attention during the 1980s and the 1990s when critics like Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell, Peter Barry, William Rueckert, Jonathan Bate, T. V. Reed, and others entered into the critical discourse combining environment and culture.

Similar to feminism, Buell also adopted the wave theory to trace the development of ecocriticism over the years in his work published in 2005 titled *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Buell did not offer any stringent characteristics for each wave, and the wave metaphor was generally met with contrasting views by the ecocritics. In 1995, Anglophone ecocriticism evolved to move out of non-fiction and included multiple genres. The infusion of culture into the narratives of nature

gave rise to green cultural studies, and importance was given to interconnections existing between nature and culture and the experiences arising out of each culture's interaction with the ecosystem. Focus on these interactions facilitated the beginning of environmental justice ecocriticism which gave voice to the urban and the suburban encounter within their environmental circumstances. This was generally classified as the second wave of ecocriticism. Works like *The Green Studies Reader* (2000) by Laurence Coupe, *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (2001) by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace and *The Environmental Justice Reader* (2002) edited by Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans and Rachel Stein, are quintessence of this phase in ecocriticism.

During the second wave of ecocriticism, the raising awareness towards the environmental crisis endorsed an approach that would be more inclusive and inculcate a trans-cultural view. Commenting on this, Patrick D. Murphy states that ecocriticism must widen its horizon by shifting from British and American perspectives to accommodate for a global view of the nature-culture interactions. The reconsiderations will allow for a more inclusive framework of ecocriticism which will elaborate the field as well as fine tune the awareness, "In order to widen the understanding of readers and critics, it is necessary to reconsider the privileging of certain genres and also the privileging of certain national literatures and certain ethnicities within those national literature." (Murphy 58)

The demand to place their ethnic literature in a global comparative structure became the bedrock for the third wave that began soon after 2000. The third wave of ecocriticism encapsulates the ideas of space in relation with the locale, urban or suburban settings and the local environment and cultural practices embedded in it thereby giving rise to concepts like bioregionalism, eco-cosmopolitanism, rooted cosmopolitanism,

translocality and global soul. It also includes discourses on ethnic experiences in a more comparative tone, material ecofeminism, eco-masculinity, green queer theory, postcolonial ecocritical works as in the collection *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (2005) co-edited by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renee K. Gosson, and George B. Handley and concepts based on animality as explored in the work *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern Africa Narratives* (2008) by Wendy Woodward where topics like vegetarianism and omnivorianism are dealt with to widen the horizon of environmental justice to include non-humans and their lawful rights as well:

While the trope of the noble savage contrasts modern westerners with their Others- natives, tribes and indigenous peoples uncorrupted by modernity — contemporary postcolonial indigenous literatures give multifaceted depictions of how indigenous people engage with the world in an epoch characterized by loss of indigenous cultures and land. (Heith 20)

Scott Slovic identifies that the distinctive trait of the third wave of ecocriticism is its disquisitions are internal and critics like Michael P. Cohen and Dana Philipps have undertaken works to rectify the sparseness in its association with literary theory, a reliable holistic definition of ecocriticism, and make it more representative and inclusive. Thus, the third wave has a “polymorphously activist’ tendency” (Slovic 7), in which the scholars, teachers and other professionals of various disciplines could use their work to involve in transformations that would benefit the society like engaging literature as a medium of surging environmental awareness and activism.

Joni Adamson in her essay published in the year 2010 titled, “Environmental Justice and Third Wave Ecocritical Approaches to Literature and Film” used the film

Babel by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu to show the difference between the wealthy American lifestyle and the plight of indigenous people through the portrayal of Berber family. The Berbers have stayed in North Africa since the seventh century BCE and have met various invaders like the Arabs with fierce resistance. Their portrayal by Inarritu is representative of the global predicament of the indigenous people, where their rights are denied and lands are exploited in the name of capitalism and globalisation. Adamson sees the rifle in the hands of the young Berber boys as the representation of how the first world countries exploit the indigenous people through depletion of their resources by involving in oil extraction, mining, tourism, poaching and such harmful pursuits while at the same time, "... poverty draws the indigenous peoples into participation in the economic and environmental exploitation of their own cultures and resources." (Adamson 11)

Arjun Appadurai who is a pivotal theorist of globalisation states that the potential for equity is hidden within the globalisation. It can be utilised very well especially by the academicians, teachers and students through accessing the available resources to learn and educate about globalisation. Similarly, ecocritics firmly believe that teachers, writers, scholars and critics have access to resources that would aid the conjugation of environmental and social injustice. Hence, it can be categorised that the first wave of ecocriticism concentrates on nature writing and conservation based environmentalism, the second wave focuses on the issues of environmental justice while the third wave according to Slovic and Adamson acknowledges the distinctiveness of ethnic and national culture and also transcends national boundaries to account for a more global view of human experience in relation with their environmental circumstances. A fine example of the ecoglobal perspective is Buell's reading of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Henry David Thoreau's

Walden and George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* in his essay titled, "Ecoglobalist Effects: The Emergence of U.S. Environmental Imagination on a Planetary Scale" in which he mentions that these writers and their works are the "...harbingers of contemporary ecoglobalist imagination..." (242)

The environmental justice framework aims to address the problems of equity and inclusivity in respect to the environment and offers an interconnection that is crucial for achieving justice for people and the planet. The role of literacy and knowledge are important in envisioning a more equitable future. The intersection of environmental equity and social justice has the capability to become a powerful force that would gain momentum because of its representative voice in protecting the planet and maintaining the balance. As a response to the racial discrimination in their environment, the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike was an important event in the genesis of environmental justice. The work environment and labour conditions of the Black employees worsened when Henry Loeb was elected as the mayor in 1968. He refused to replace the damaged rubbish collection trucks and allot payment for overtime. The impoverished condition of the workers because of the poor wages made many of them to rely on food stamps to feed their families.

On February 1, 1968, two garbage collectors in Memphis named Echol Cole and Robert Walker lost their lives because of the malfunctioning of the truck. The City Council did not respond properly to the death of the workers in their work station. They were also frustrated by the neglect and exploitation the Black sanitation workers had undergone and hence 1300 Black men from the Memphis Department of Public Works under the leadership of T.O. Jones and backed up by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), presided by Jerry Wurf, went on a strike demanding better

wages, safety work environment and health care. On February 22, 1968, the strike might have ended because the city council was forced to sit and take a decision regarding the strike. The sanitation workers demanded for their union to be recognised and increase in wages, but Mayor Loeb rejected the vote and declined the entire claim, and it enraged the situation.

A day before his assassination in April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the sanitation workers and stressed on the importance of this protest as it is also the fight towards racial discrimination, social injustice, exploitative labour and economic inequality. The immediate assassination of King after this event initiated vigorous reactions amidst the strikers. On April 8, 1968, around 42,000 people led by Coretta Scott King silently marched through Memphis to honour King and press Loeb to accept the just claims of the union. After several struggles, the union was recognised and the wages were increased by the City Council on April 8, 1968. Thus, the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike and the struggles and the victory it recorded became the evidence of the hard path the marginalised had to face in reclaiming their basic rights. This incident is an important event in marking the beginning of the environmental justice movement, which has today evolved to address social and economic equity in relation with the environment.

In the summer of 1969, Tim Donovan, a high school graduate looking for a well-paid job, joined the Jones and Laughlin Steel Mills. He was appointed as the hatch who stood atop the machines fitted near the Cuyahoga River and assisted in unloading the ore carriers and witnessed how the water was contaminated by oil and corpses of animals floated. It was an evidence of the dangerous and toxic reality of the locality. The river served as an important location of real estate for so many industries in that area, and the

increased pollution denoted the thriving economy and job opportunities. On June 22, 1969, the Cuyahoga River caught fire because of the oil and it lasted for only thirty minutes but led to damages worth fifty-thousand dollars and also affected the railroads. This oil initiated fire did not get much attention from the press, and for people like Donovan the summer came to an uneventful end.

The event garnered wide attention when *Time* magazine published a picture of the fire from 1952. Immediately after that, *National Geographic* in its December 1970 issue published the picture of the river on fire with the title “Our Ecological Crisis” and the issue gained momentum. The Environmental Protection Agency established in January 1970 was assigned the task of overseeing the pollution regulation mission. The ‘First Earth Day’ took place on April 22, 1970, and marked the beginning of the modern environmental movement. It was the first largest conglomeration of people in support of their environment and its protection. The Earth Day saw around twenty-million Americans march and demonstrate their environmental concerns after one hundred and fifty years of industrialisation that has made irreparable damages to the environment.

Individual factions that have been protesting against oil spill, dumping of toxic and hazardous waste, pollution, increased use of pesticides, sewage disposal and so on had united together on Earth Day to raise their voice against the destruction of the ecosystem. Donovan was one among the thousand students who marched down to the Cuyahoga River to stop the contamination by toxic oil. Thus, the first Earth Day witnessed the epiphany of the ecological destruction caused by exploitative industrialisation and the people united to take action to heal the planet. In 1990, the Earth Day went global with support from around two hundred million people across 141 countries who came together

to represent the environmental issues and work on solutions for it. Thus, the modern environmental movement was set into motion and social and environmental justice was stated as its important feature and it opposed the ruthless exploitation of nature and indigenous culture as well.

The select petrofiction chosen for study analysed through the neocolonial lens gives an insight into the hegemonic presence of oil resources in the capitalistic society and its effect on political, social, economic and psychological domains. The environmental destruction and loss of indigenous knowledge is also an important outcome of this neocolonialism. The magnitude of urgency between oil exploration, exploitation and the environmental ramification can be fully understood if only the experience and plight of indigenous people who serve as a primal link between nature and culture are also validated. The third wave of ecocriticism offers a framework that would enable a much better advocacy for environmental and indigenous rights, along with equity and sustainability. UNDRIP drafted on September 13, 2007, by the General Assembly highlights that, “respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.” (United Nations, General Assembly, 4)

Environment plays a major role in the identity formation of Wadi as a place in the desert and for the tribal factions who inhabit it as presented by Abdelrahman Munif in his *Cities of Salt* (COS). It also highlights the interdependence and coexistence of the bedouins with the environment surrounding them and offers a glimpse into the interaction between nature and the indigenous culture. With changing environmental and social situations, the indigenous communities are faced with the challenge of coping up, “...they are confronted

with the dual challenge of maintaining their cultural distinctiveness while engaging with the conventions of the dominant society and modernity.” (Mistry et al. 690)

The people of Wadi lived in colossal affinity with nature. It was believed by its people that the oasis like Wadi al-Uyoun amidst the harsh desert would be negligible without the water resources. Natural phenomena like the rain impacted the life of inhabitants of Wadi by altering their emotions and their response to the outer world, “The rain changed not only the pace of life but the people themselves” (Munif, *COS* 167). Thus, water sustains Wadi and its people who are bedouins or the indigenous people of the desert. Their moods and behaviours also altered with the presence or absence of natural resources. They were very generous during the bountiful harvest as if there is no tomorrow, and became extremely reclusive in times of drought.

When fossil fuel was discovered beneath the sands of Wadi al-Uyoun, tremendous changes happened in and around the place, and it all began with machines destroying the belt of trees that formed the natural barrier around the perimeter. With the consent of the government, the Americans launched the exploration activity by seizing the ancestral lands from the natives of Wadi, forcing them to flee the place, destroying the ecosystem and transforming it into an industrial sector. The natives had to flee, and they became homeless refugees whose lands, culture and livelihood was lost and their rights denied.

The coastal town of Harran which depended mainly on fishing for livelihood also experienced a similar fate like Wadi when oil resources were discovered. The Americans transformed Harran into a full-fledged oil exploration site. In the process, houses were destroyed to clear the land and the natives were made to stay in the tents until further aid or compensation were arranged. The compensations did not materialise, the natives lost

their lands and poverty forced them to take up jobs in the oil companies to earn their livelihood. Similarly, the presence of tents as a temporary arrangement at first and later a permanent condition shows the disparity and poor living conditions and the ethnic people were subjected to environmental injustice because of neocolonialism.

After the oil exploration activities began in full swing, Americans arrived in a big ship to Harran, and it saw the rise in two different settlements. The Arab Harran and American Harran came into existence and the difference in living conditions like availability of proper living space, clean drinking water and air, proper sanitation and healthy environment determined the privileges that the foreigners had over the natives. The lands that were used for agriculture and grazing the cattle by the natives were abducted to build American Harran without offering them any compensation.

The livestock play a key role in the identity formation of the indigenous tribes because their livelihoods are vastly dependent on them; especially the camels are attributed as an important asset by these people and carried a sacred value. When Ibn Rashed is assigned the job of hosting the American geologist during their exploration in Wadi and recruiting Arabs as workers in the oil company, offers to buy all the camels from them, the natives are alarmed. When he purchases all the camels from them, the natives feel void, isolated, and clueless as it is a major loss to them. Thus, the trading of camels to escape poverty is not only limited to loss of an asset but loss of identity for the indigenous tribes, “They were deeply troubled and afraid, and their fears increased when Ibn Rashed bought all the camels.” (Munif, *COS* 191)

The condition of Mooran as portrayed by Munif in *The Trench* (TT) parallels that of Harran in terms of injustice and environmental damages. Mooran has become a bustling

city and a decent residential area after the discovery of oil in the sheikhdom. It is the home to the ruling royal family and other important officials of the ruling class who are syndicates of oil exploration in their lands by the foreign investors. Mooran is filled with talks of acquiring land, property, gold, automobiles and building western technology incorporated palaces.

Caught in the fervour of capitalism and wealth, the environment and all the domesticity associated with the ethnic life becomes the least concern to the government of Mooran and is completely eluded in times of important decisions like shifting the Souq al-Halal market which was the foremost trade centre for the natives of Mooran. Thus, the alterations that are done in Mooran to accommodate the interest of the foreign investors did not include equity or inclusivity in decision-making and the old Mooran becomes an element of nostalgia for the natives, “He said to himself rather sadly, *The Mooran we knew has gone, it's dead, and in its place we have this Mooran — God willing, it will be for the best!*” (Munif, *TT* 336)

Munif also writes about the changes that had happened in Harran after the setting up of oil rigs, pipelines and protests. Muhammad Eid goes back to Harran and becomes the eyewitness of massive changes that the place underwent in three years and Abdallah Shibli has become the Emir. Harran which has been the city of fisherman, travellers and caravan traders is now home to none. The vigorous oil exploration activity has destroyed the natural habitation of Harran, and it has become too harsh to make a peaceful home there. The people of Harran lacked distinctive attributes, and appeared void and plain. They even uttered a greeting with caution and waited tensely between the replies for something to happen. The government also planted trees in order to revive the

environment, but it did not work. Thus, the natives are completely stripped of their rights and identity and are subjected to slavery under dangerous work conditions that made them indifferent and vacant, “Once Harran had been a city of fisherman and travelers coming home, but now it belonged to no one; its people were featureless, of all varieties and yet strangely unvaried.” (Munif, *TT* 162)

When Ibn Naffeh remarks that the foreign land and foreigners are filled with corruption, he alludes to the Americans and the foreign intervention that has disrupted life in Wadi, Harran, Mooran and other places where oil resources were found in commercial quantities. The statement of Ibn Naffeh represents the despairing reality of the indigenous people in the hands of capitalist who are wielding excruciating power through neocolonial means and exploiting both the people and the environment. The native government’s need for more money, power and global domination through oil resources has made them overlook their indigenous culture, which has led to environmental injustice and violation of indigenous rights. The natives who have stronger claim to the land and are the early inhabitants of the planet have always been neglected because of their lack of wealth and power in opposition to the oppressor in a neocolonial stratum, ““Truth is truth, and natives come before strangers”” (Munif, *COS* 274). The seizing of land and disruption of their life leads to loss of ethnic knowledge, which is necessary in the perseveration of the environment. The indigenous lifestyle has the idea of sustainability inherent within their cultural values, and loss of ethnic knowledge only further exacerbates the issues pertaining to the environmental crisis.

Helon Habila’s portrayal of the oil activities and the ecological catastrophe in the Niger Delta in his book *Oil on Water* shows how the indigenous sufferings in the hands

of oil capitalist and corrupt governments are global and needs to be included more in the conversations of equity and sustainability. While describing the story of the coming of the oil company into their village, Chief Ibiram tells Zaq and Rufus about the offer. The oil company offers to buy their whole village and these tribes could use that money to relocate elsewhere and set up a rich life, yet they refuse it as this was their ancestral land, and it was sacred to them. Immediately after their refusal, violence ensued and former chief, Malabo, was falsely convicted of treason and was executed. The government sent military forces to help the oil company evacuate the village.

The incident is an example of how the indigenous lands and their culture are always the primary target of the capitalistic ventures and foreign investors in setting up their business as they lack the power to resist these business firms that are backed up by the native government. The tribes and their attachment to their land and the surrounding ecosystem is ramified because of the presence of oil resources and as a result of exploitation, the rivers are polluted, aquatic life and forest cover destroyed, and ethnic life is endangered, “Communities like this had borne the brunt of the oil wars, caught between the militants and the military, and the only way they could avoid being crushed out of existence was to pretend to be deaf and dumb and blind.” (Habila 33)

The plight of indigenous life in the oil rich places transcends national boundaries. As the stories of exploitation hit the global news today amidst the climate crisis talks, the role of collective indigenous experience in protecting their culture and ecosystem can no longer be treated as a sub-narrative, and it deserves a stream of its own in the fight for the planet and people. Mei Mei Evans’ account of Alaska after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 and the response of the natives to this ecological disaster as presented in *Oil and*

Water, is an example that although being under the superpower government like America, the conditions of the indigenous people is the same in wrestling for their rights and environment.

For the residents of Alaska, the land is an integral part of their identity formation, and this ideology is strongly exhibited by characters like Gregg and Lee. For Lee, Alaska brings to her a sense of belonging and her occupation as a skipper to Gregg makes her understand that fishing is not just a way to earn a livelihood but it who she is: "Fishing isn't just something you do, she realizes; it's who you are" (Evans 87). Thus, the landscape and the ocean play a major role in the identity formation for Lee and her earth-centred approach to life. This profound attachment that Lee formed with Alaska is also one of the reasons for her eco-anxiety as a response to the oil spill.

The oil spill has a great impact on aquatic life and the Alaskan Natives set up rescue and cleaning missions to control the spill damages as the government and Mammoth Oil Company delay the contingency plans and disaster response. The community comes together despite the lack of proper safety gears to clean the spill and rescue the otters that are drenched in crude oil. As the rescue measures take place, a lot of people experience an emotional breakdown watching the destruction of their ecosystem. Fishing is the major occupation of Alaskans and the fishery value in the global market drops after the oil spill because of contamination. Enraged by their condition and violation of the indigenous rights, the aboriginal people of Alaska respond to this disaster and injustice in various ways as portrayed by Evans in the novel, "How must it feel to be among the nth generation to inhabit Alaska continuously for millennia, only to have the same people who overran your land and disposed you of your aboriginal rights now tell you what you can and cannot eat?" (Evans 233)

Gregg and Lee came to know about the oil spill during one of their fishing expeditions. According to Gregg, “ocean is a living entity” (Evans 14) and the oil spill has made it inanimate and dead. There is “... a plastic lifelessness to it that he’s never seen before” (Evans 14). Using terms like death, inanimate, lifelessness, and limp to describe the oil spill through the eyes of Gregg and Lee heightens the sense of loss and destruction that the natives experience during an environmental ramification. Gregg thinks about his native friends named Wassily and Marie, who moved with their children to Pogibshi for a more authentic and traditional lifestyle. He remembers the beach below the settlement where they once fished to prepare dinner, and realises how the area will be buried three feet deep into crude oil. The memories associated with land triggers the eco-anxiety of Gregg. The shorelines bordering the settlements of Pogibshi would be washed with oil which will disrupt the fishing of valuable salmon and herring and toxic fumes will pollute the environment which in turn will result in adverse health effects. Similar to Pogibshi, two Chugachmuit villages situated in Barrier Island which hosts a couple of hundreds of natives and black-and-white seabirds are also drastically affected by the oil spill.

The third principle of, “environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things” (United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice). In consolidating the indigenous experience as represented by Munif, Habila and Evans, it is evident that the native or the indigenous people are victims of environmental injustice because of the exploitative nature of the multinational oil companies. The native lands are an easy target to the oil exploration companies as they did not have to spend many incentives in acquiring the land and utilising it, “As a result, business interests are

often prioritized over indigenous rights, leaving many indigenous communities with little recourse other than protest to protect their communities” (Squires et al.). The indigenous people are silenced under the neocolonial power, and they lack the authority to fight back as powerfully as their oppressor.

The indigenous people amount to only less than five percent of the world population, yet they protect and preserve over eighty percent of the earth’s biodiversity. For centuries, the indigenous people have safeguarded the forests, grasslands, marine life, desert and other ecosystems, and they are considered as “exemplary earth stewards” (Rangarajan 119), yet they have been the ones most affected by environmental ramifications and always disregarded and excluded from major decisions in the climate justice movements. *The Earth Charter* states that the, “The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined” (Preamble). This has led to injustice, poverty, increasing gap between the rich and poor and absence of equity. Within such a scenario, indigenous environmentalism is important in reframing eco-conversations to be more inclusive in redefining the western ideology of colonial conception of the ecosystem and pave way for a more interdependent approach that appreciates the coexistence between people and all other life forms of the planet. It also plays an important role in devising a unified fight against neocolonialism.

The intrinsic connection between ethnic life and the surrounding ecosystem is starkly reflected through their cultural values that have given due importance to the role of nature in their lifestyle. The first principle of environmental justice affirms and recognises the sacredness of the planet as Mother Earth, the importance of interdependence, ecological

unity and the right of all the species to be free of any eco-catastrophe. The environment has become a part of their sentiment and interdependent way of life has made them easily prone to effects of ecological catastrophes that are manmade, although they do not play any role in the destruction of the ecosystem.

The minimalist life that does not revolve so much around making money amidst the capitalist power structure has made these indigenous people powerless, easy targets of injustice and the suppressed. Environmental justice affirms and guards the fundamental right to actively participate in the cultural, economic, political, and environmental dimensions without any discrimination based on class, gender, race and region. Yet, the scenario based on the petrofiction chosen for study highlights how the indigenous people are always marginalised, and they are restricted from exercising their fundamental right to protect their people and ecosystem. The importance of traditional knowledge must be accepted worldwide, and the indigenous people are reinstating it as a means to secure their rights, “Indigenous knowledge comes from our relationship with Creation. In an Indigenous context, IK is by nature also environmental knowledge.” (McGregor 389)

The coexistence between the human and natural world is wonderfully portrayed in Wadi by showing how the indigenous people like the Atoum and the bedouins take pride in their ecosystem which was their only wealth:

They would say that this wadi, with its palm trees and plentiful water, which soothed and supplied travelers on their way to better places, was indispensable; without it there would have been no life or movement, no tribes would have come; there would never have been Miteb al-Hathal and his tribe, the Atoum.
(Munif, *COS* 3)

The Atoum were the poorest tribe in Wadi but they were an important part of the tribal confederation, and it vested on them a self-confidence that cannot be obstructed. Miteb exhibited a rare intensity and passion with his land and the bountiful green wealth it holds, and it resulted in him being the most affected during the westerners' exploration of the desert lands for oil and the destruction of Wadi to create the oil mining.

The fourteenth and fifteenth principle of environmental justice vehemently opposes the exploitative activities by the multinational companies and the usage of military or other forces to suppress the people, culture, environment and occupation of the lands. The indigenous tribes are victims of such exploitation after the discovery of oil in the Middle East, Nigeria, Alaska and places around the globe where the oil resources are found in abundance. The discovery of oil meant that the people of Wadi had to be forcibly evacuated out of their lands for the rigs to be set up. The Arab government with the help of a military supported by the Americans cleared Wadi, destroyed the trees using machines and did not provide any compensation to the indigenous tribe who have lost their sacred lands and livestock and have been reduced to the status of refugees. After the destruction of their natural habitat, the government promises the people of Wadi for an arrangement to live elsewhere, and it is unfulfilled. The interruption of the ethnic life and knowledge by the coloniser has an adverse effect on the environment as well.

Wadi, known for its freshwater oasis and lush green surroundings amidst the harsh desert, has become toxic after the oil discovery. The slippery grounds are replete with muddy and stagnant water and fill the air with a foul smell. This unclean water surrounded the tents of the workers and was also used for drinking and washing. Thus, the confiscation of the land and violation of their ethnic values leads not only to cultural

ramification but to environmental loss and injustice. The eighth principle of environmental justice asserts the importance of a safe environment for workers and the absence of it is identified as an injustice, "...affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards." (United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice)

Conferred with the status of internally displaced refugees with no lands and livelihoods made the people of Wadi feel lonely, void, and they lack the power to fight back the insensitive decisions of their government and the oil barons. Hence, with the coming of oil, the indigenous rights are initially violated through excavation in their premises without prior information or permission, the seizing of the indigenous lands immediately after the oil discovery without any compensation and invalidation of their existence by destroying their culture and ecosystem. "For those four days all of the refugees felt the departure from Wadi al-Uyoun like a hard, unexpected punch." (Munif, *COS* 121)

Dabbasi informed the Emir that the foreigners who arrived in big ships to Harran had threatened the locals to sell their lands to them and the Harranis were left with nothing. Although the arrival of new ships stirred the curiosity of the Harran which had been under the cultural shock after the encounter with the West, low spirits prevailed because of the disparity in the living conditions. The American Harran fitted with all the technology has access to clean water, proper sanitation and healthy food, while the labour class of Arab Harran had to live in tents and barracks with unclean surroundings, "...the Americans to their swimming pool, where their racket could be heard in the nearby barracks behind the barbed wire" (Munif, *COS* 391).

The poverty instigated the native Arabs to take up jobs in the oil company despite the dangerous working conditions without the provision of any safety gears, virulent environment, and minimal wages. The labourers are exploited inhumanly. The Arab workers are made to carry lumber and steel which results in them bumping into crates and falling down, and they become the laughing stock and mockery of Americans. The yellow drilling machine would have killed Mizban if not for the help of the Black American man. Thus, there are no proper safety measures for the Arab workers in their own lands. They are angered by the disparity in the basic rights, and that is the beginning of environmental injustice in Harran. Munif shows the diverseness through analogy between meat and bones, and how meat is always preferred over bones. The meat correlates with the freedom experienced by the Americans in foreign desert land, while the bone that is not preferred by the majority parallels the experience of the indigenous community in their own lands, ““They’ll get the meat and we’ll get whatever bones they care to throw us.”” (Munif, *COS* 219)

The summer heat intensified during July and August and the Americans left the desert for holidays while the Harranis still worked and lived in the place infested with snakes, scorpions and rats. When the heat intensified, and it became unbearable inside the barracks, the workers were shifted to the tents. The metal roofs of the barracks radiated heat and toxic melted lead made the living conditions lethal for the Arab Harran. They were denied proper housing and were not able to do anything to improve their life, ““These roofs had become their worst enemy, for they not only radiated heat but shed melted leaden death constantly from the earliest hours of daylight until late at night”” (Munif, *COS* 293-4)

The disparity confused the labour class of Arab Harran and put them in a state of fearful anger and small acts of resistance like hunger strike or fleeing from the place

alerted the oil company and immediately Ibn Rashed was instructed to take a minor preventive measures like setting up grocery shops that could benefit the Arab workers and consequently persuade them to stay. The personnel office promises that the workers will be built proper houses by the company so that they could reside with their family because with each passing day, the barracks became sultry and filthy. The hazardous work environment is also a big problem to the Arab workers, and the unfortunate death of Mizban infuriated the situation. After a series of protests, the company accepted the distribution of new work clothes instead of the filthy rags that offered no protection.

The tension between the labour and the ruling classes make the pipelines the prime target of destruction as it is the source of all evil for the indigenous tribes of the desert. When the oil company started building pipelines to transport the extracted oil to other places, it employs a few Americans along with the Arab workers to stay in the desert to finish the construction. The fire incident in the pipeline and the rumours that Miteb is the mastermind behind it made the oil company take immediate action. A guard unit consisting of six men from Ujra was posted for security in the American camps, and the Arab camps were under strict surveillance. The immediate enforcement of the protection for the Americans while denying all the rights for the natives of Harran displays the depth to which injustice has rooted into the desert land that bore the stories of ethnicity lost in the hands of oil.

The temporary life in the tents forces the Americans experience the everyday reality of the Arab workers. Once the work is over, the Americans returned to their tents and were unable to sleep due to lack of air conditioners, beds, ventilation and security. Unlike the Arab workers, they have holidays every month and go back to Harran to their

comfortable abode. The return to the pipeline was perceived as a “murderous ill will” (Munif, *COS* 506). This is the Americans reaction to the interim living conditions amidst the harsh desert, yet they did not take any heed to rectify or improve the worse living conditions of the Arab workers. Along with the suppression of the indigenous identity, the environment also slowly withered as Harran and Wadi lost their originality and become an industrial sector devoid of any natural pleasantness.

The workers are employed in various stations and particularly station four was so far away that they could only return home once in three days. Along with the distance, the work there was unscrupulous and noxious without any safety measures and they refused to be employed there. The workers of station four had a different story to tell compared to others. They were taken in a boat to work, and they used explosives that, “...shook the sea and made gigantic waves collide” (Munif, *COS* 298). The activities of station four is a good example of the dangerous work environment without any safety gears, hard labour, unethical extraction of oil using explosives and the harmful effects it has on marine life. When Abdullah al-Zamel refuses to take up the work in station four, he is threatened by the Emir and is forced to accept the offer. Thus, along with the toxic work environment, the government is also into forced and exploitative labour practices of which the indigenous people are the victims.

Ghazi al-Sultan is an old man who demanded the Americans to pay for his labour and set him free. The Americans refused to pay and told him that he would only be paid if he stayed until the end, which was unacceptable. Twenty-seven months of hard and dangerous labour yet these workers were not paid and had to experience poor living conditions amidst the harsh weather in order to secure their pay. When the workers rise in resistance

in Harran they are given a pay rise, yet it all happened after a lot of struggle and unfortunate irreplaceable losses. Apart from the polluted living surroundings, these workers are also denied compensation. Initially, when the lands are stripped away from the natives, they are not given any compensation to resettle and begin anew.

Similarly, after the coming of the oil company, the workers are not given any consideration with regards to their living conditions. Ibn Rashed replied to the old man seeking justice and compensation for the death of his nephews Hajem and Mizban that the company will do everything within its means. Three years passed by and no reparation has been paid by the company. This is the condition of the workers in Arab Harran who are denied rights on all fronts, their ecosystem ramified and suppressed in the hands of oil and neocolonialism. Dr. Subhi refuses to admit the three injured men in his hospital because the oil company did not offer medical care for the workers and neither could the workers afford to pay for their treatment. Thus, the workers turned to Muffadi al-Jeddan who is the traditional healer of Harran.

The refusal of treatment and the absence of medical care in case of a dangerous work environment are seminal in understanding environmental injustice and violation of indigenous rights that exist in Wadi and Harran. The ninth principle of environmental justice aims at protecting the rights of the victims of injustice and states that they must receive full compensation along with quality health care. Thus, the refusal of health care and compensation of any sort is also identified as an environmental injustice. While the workers have been struggling for their basic rights, the Emir goes on a hunting trip and returns excited about the prospect of a new Emirate building and his residence. The

ignorance of the native government regarding the plight of its ethnic culture and the ecosystem is the rudimentary component of injustice to the nature and culture in *Cities of Salt*.

The social and political life of Mooran as portrayed in *The Trench* also provides a glimpse into the conditions of Harran and Wadi. The resistance led by the natives of Harran makes a great impact on the surrounding areas, including Mooran. The rise of the proletarians against their oppressors gives them the confidence to reclaim their cultural identity and rights. Three plotters captured by the security agency who try to assassinate the sultan are from a tribe whose chief has not received his grants for that year. Thus, the native lands that have been robbed by the oil companies have never been properly compensated.

The exploitation of the indigenous people by the oil company is compared with sheep and the shepherd. The native people are like the sheep that make bleating noises and are led around by the shepherd. After the grazing is done, the sheep are housed in their fold and when the time comes they are reared for wool or meat. The native tribes are compared to the sheep and the Americans and the ruling class of Arab are the shepherds who decide the destiny of the indigenous life without asking for consent, ““But people are like sheep, they make noises and are led around and in the end a few bastards come and put them to sleep and do what they want.”” (Munif, *TT* 182)

The feeling of alienation in the homeland is one of the important consequences of nature-culture ramification felt by the indigenous people. The alienation is viewed as a result of colonial racism, which is an inherent source for invalidation of indigenous rights and traditional knowledge. The rigid boundaries of racialism with, “...indestructible

meanings has, after all, underpinned a range of colonial practices from the systematic alienation of Indigenous land and resources to child abduction” (Harris et al. 1). When their ecosystem, livestock and way of life which constitutes their identity are disrupted, they are left with nothing and the homeland becomes a hostile place. Shamran shoes horses for living and he is one of the many who found it very hard to adapt to the rapid changes that Mooran was experiencing after the discovery of oil. His horses were consumed by fire and his land was stolen. The shifting of Souq al-Halal market is a major change in the environment to which Shamran and his people have adopted, and it made them feel more isolated and hostile. Thus, when the livestock, land, ecosystem and cultural practices associated with the market that enhanced the indigenous way of life is annihilated, the natives feel estranged and invalidated.

In *The Trench*, Munif also gives a glimpse of Harran and how the industrialisation has changed the coastal town into a polluted junk filled with discarded cars, tires and barrels. Harran had nothing left except the refineries, cargo port and the smoke. The toxic fumes rising out nearby refineries have polluted the environment and many workers died of asphyxiation. Then the workers were moved far away to a place between Harran and the new city built by Americans twelve miles to the East called Ras al-Tawashi. The new city housed the Emir, Americans, merchants, wealthy citizens and other employees of high stature. Thus, it can be inferred that even after the resistance, the condition of the working class and the indigenous people in Harran did not improve and neither did the environmental circumstances. The disparity still existed and Harran has become a belligerent place for living and the violation of ethnic knowledge made irrevocable damages to the environment:

Muhammad had been able to endure several summers in Harran, but this time he began to suffocate almost on arrival, not only from the heat or the humidity, but from the heavy, malodorous air: a mixture of petroleum, cooking spices, sulfur, dust, the desert, left over food, dead fish, burning tires — not to mention the smell of people. (Munif, *TT* 164)

The account of Wadi, Harran and Mooran through the fictional sheikhdom of Munif delineates the struggles that the ethnic community around the world is facing in the hands of the oil investors. The altercations brought to their life through natural and cultural annihilation makes them diminutive in the capitalistic set-up despite being the preservers of earth and its wealth. The problem of the tribal people in Niger Delta is that their immediate environment is destroyed by a multinational oil company and results in extinction to such a point that their language, culture, environment and other traditional practices disappear. “By working with the national government, oil companies are able to appropriate land from the Ogoni without compensation, bypass environmental regulations, and, as a result, cut down operating expenses” (Walonen 71). According to the United Nations Convention on Genocide and Universal Declaration on Human Rights, such exploitative and threatening activities that are supported by the government according to the tenth principle of environmental justice are considered as a violation of the international law. While Munif’s account largely concentrates on the social picture, Habila’s invocation of the oil slicked Niger Delta adds more domesticity to its narration and shows how oil has invaded the living spaces. After the coming of oil, the pipelines and fire accidents have easily become a natural part of lifestyle in Nigeria, like the weather or the climate.

The house of Rufus was burnt down by the explosion because of the oil drums stored in the barn. Boma, sister of Rufus, gets trapped in the fire and is inflicted with burns on her face. The fire quickly spread and within a few minutes half the town was ablaze. Rufus acknowledges that what happened in his household was not a pipeline accident but it had all the potential to be one that resembles the exacerbating reality of many villages surrounding them. This fire accident is the threshold of the book and sets the tone for the rest of the story, which portrays the domesticity of life amidst oil wells and pipelines.

The indigenous tribes who have inhabited the Niger Delta for centuries are fleeing from the oil wars. The civil war in the country is mainly a response to environmental and indigenous destruction that the oil exploration activities and corruption have resulted in. The meeting of Zaq and Rufus with Chief Ibiram gives an insight into the nature oriented life of the tribes. The tribal people lived in houses made of weeping willow bamboo, raffia palms, bits of zinc, plywood, cloth and everything else the builders were able to lay hands on, “scarecrow settlement” (Habla 15) and the houses belonged more to nature rather than people. Fishing is the main activity for these people, and it has been disrupted by the oil and gas activities. The natives abandoned the settlement because of dwindling fish stock and increase in the water toxicity.

All the islands in the Niger Delta are home to bats and they are on the brink of extinction because of the oil fields and gas flares. Not only bats, but all sorts of flying creatures native to the delta have also been eliminated. The coastal community life is ramified by the absence of fishes, crabs and other aquatic life that are a part of the staple diet and livelihood for the native life. Rufus recalls the childhood incident with his sister

where they could not find any crabs because of the contaminated water. This glimpse into the childhood incident also denotes the reality of several villages down the river that are dependent on the marine life for their livelihood and share close proximity to toxicity such that it enters the domestic space, food chain and becomes life-threatening, “Bugs and the water, you know, and if that combination doesn’t kill you, the violence does” (Habila 90). Amidst all the hullabaloo of the oil exploration, Irikefe Island was still untouched by industrial activities. It had shrines that were taken care of by the people who practised life in ordinance with minimalism and nature.

The existence of disparity in living conditions is also exhibited through the housing of the Floodes in contrast with the plight of the natives. The Floodes lived in a colonial style building in Port Harcourt waterfront, where most of the rich oil expatriates lived. The place was clean with proper sanitation, water facilities and was completely secure. This was in contrast to the native tribes of Niger Delta who are fleeing from war, losing their lands, survive amidst contaminated water bodies, and are refugees in their own lands. Thus, the result of environmental injustice and violation of the indigenous rights in the Niger Delta is the crumbling economy, ecological catastrophe, cultural repercussions, civil war and refugee crisis.

Evans’ account of the oil spill in Alaska and the adverse effect it has on the nature and culture embedded in that landscape further embellishes the presence of oil in the domestic space and its consequences on a tight-knit community. Prince William Sound Island is completely inundated by crude oil and the spill is rapidly spreading to all the nearby places as well. Gregg and Lee experience the oil spill during their fishing expedition.

The surrounding ocean was black and suffocating toxic fumes filled the air. The crude oil washing ashore was three feet deep and the thought of it made Lee anxious, while Gregg was reclusive and hostile.

As Gregg and Lee make their way out of the oil spill to reach the shore, the urgency of the situation dawns on them because a state emergency was declared, and the spill was spreading faster than predicted. Since oil and water do not mix, the spilled oil must be manually cleaned to stop the spreading in order to avoid the loss of aquatic life and prevent the toxic fumes that will have adverse effects on the people. The ocean resembles a “kind of hellish cesspool.” (Evans 27)

Stoddard Maritime escorts supertankers like Kuparuk till Muir Inlet to reach the pipelines. Aaron Anderson, son of Gregg, worked as a deckhand for Stoddard Maritime and was there during the collision of Kuparuk with the reef and the oil spill. He describes how the crude oil soaked the entire area and it made him nauseous for several days. The helpless and infuriated Alaskan Natives decided to volunteer and clean the spill in order to protect their ecosystem despite the lack of safety gears and other resources. This is the reality of the oil spill in Alaska with failed contingency plans and no proper support from the government nor the oil company.

Mammoth Petroleum, which was responsible for the oil spill, had always implemented ineffective safety measures or contingency plans. Their workers were always exposed to crude oil without any face masks, respirators or other health precautions. Similarly, after one of the largest oil spills which would leave an indelible mark for over a decade, the oil company was very lethargic in employing safety measures or cleaning up activities to

reduce the collateral damages. They were only engaged in using this spill situation and the ignorance of the government to campaign their capitalist manifesto.

The protective boom, a temporary floating barricade used to contain the oil spill, that the Mammoth Petroleum promised to offer as per the contract signed with the State of Alaska during the oil spill contingency agreement states that twelve miles of boom would be permanently warehoused at the pipeline terminal, but the media revealed that the delay was because there was never twelve miles but only two miles all of which was deployed around the tanker on the third day since the oil spill.

The petroleum company also has two SRV's (Spill Response Vessels) which managed to recover approximately a hundred gallons each of the spilled oil and still eleven million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand and eight hundred more of the spill was left to be cleaned, and the boom shortage delayed it. The fishermen of Selby decided to use the gears and nets at their own expenses to clean and contain the spill as much as possible. ““Most of the protection we do have so far is due to the handwork of local citizens using their own money, their own boats and their own equipment,’ Willy continues. ‘Not to mention their own time and initiative’” (Evans 102)

Animal rescue station was also set up in the high school gym, and the locals volunteered to rescue otters and other marine animals that were oil slicked. The ignorance infuriates the natives, and they join hands in cleanup activities and protest against the oil company for its failed and deceitful disaster management plans, exploitation of their environment and the toxicity, ““They’re accusing the company of double cleaning, carrying signs with blown-up photos of oiled birds and otters that say ‘Right to Life!’ Posters with skulls and crossbones.”” (Evans 88)

Apart from the lack of contingency plans, the natives were also devoid of any medical assistance. After Lee reaches the shores of Selby, she tries to get medical attention after being exposed to the hydrocarbons for a prolonged period of time. The woman to whom she asks for assistance displays her inability to help due to lack of knowledge. Lee stops her pursuit of getting help and instead decides to volunteer in the gym for cleanup activities. The inadequacy of knowledge on how to tackle the disaster puts the Alaskan Natives in a hapless situation as the fumes that fill their environment could be life-threatening and fatal. During the otter rescue mission, former high school gymnast Camille tells about growing up in Kalifornsky, which is an inland settlement situated in Selby. The nearby oil field has contaminated their groundwater on which the natives of the settlement depend on for their daily needs.

Susie, sister of Camille, suffered several miscarriages, and later it was discovered that oil contaminated water was the reason behind it all. Kalifornsky also had several other cases of miscarriages and cancer, and Camille's family was involved in a legal battle against the oil company. Thus, the native lands are infiltrated by the toxicity of crude oil and has paved the way for food chain contamination which has adverse effects on the ecological balance. When a journalist enquires about this disaster in Pogibshi, a native earnestly replies that, “‘‘We’re hurting,’ the Native man says, so simply that the journalist chides himself for asking such a thoughtless question’’ (Evans 165). It was crystal clear that the oil spill contamination will have a lasting effect on the ecosystem and indigenous life of Alaska.

Environmental justice advocates for inclusivity and representation as a means for equity and sustainability. The seventh principle of environmental justice demands the

presence and right to participation of all people as equal partners at every stratum of the decision making regarding the policies and action impacting the environment: “Environmental Justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.”

(United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice)

When the meeting was set up by the company to address the Alaskans regarding the oil spill and the cleanup plans, the representative panel lacked inclusivity and it made Lee question the authenticity of it. The White supremacy and gender bias of the panel is reflected through lack of representation, as there was no Alaskan native representative. This is an act of environmental injustice because indigenous people are excluded or underrepresented while making important decisions regarding their own environmental circumstances, livelihoods and their rights, “Probably in this age of affirmative action even the petroleum company employs a few dark-skinned and/or female managers, so how come there isn’t a single Alaska Native up there?” (Evans 99)

The oil spill initiates a community response from the natives of Alaska in order to protect their environment. While Gregg and Lee are anxious and plunge themselves into rescue and clean-up missions, others like Tess, Daniel, Nick and Kurt respond to the catastrophe in distinctive ways. The oil spill strains the marriage of Daniel and Tess. Daniel works as a radio jockey for Rugged Bay Broadcasting and began overworking in order to cover the full perimeter of the oil spill and keep the people informed. Tess sends her children Elias and Minke to her parents in Anchorage and involves herself in the otter rescuing mission. Although the plane tickets to Anchorage are pricey, Tess feels that rescuing otters is more important to her than the cost of the air tickets, and it is the

collective representation of the mentality of Alaska in response to the oil spill. The residents of Alaska put their environment before family in tackling the disaster.

One of the important community responses to the oil spill is exhibited through the volunteering by the natives, and it involves protecting the salmon streams, otter rescue and clean-up, rescuing other oiled birds, and measures to contain the spill to avoid further damages. “Collective engagement on environmental issues is related to hope and wellbeing, perhaps because feelings of efficacy increase when a community is involved” (Ojala 12). Thus, the natives of Alaska unite under the toxic condition to wage a war against the oil spill in order to save their ecosystem and it projects the nature oriented cultural life and the great impact on it after a catastrophe.

Instead of employing proper disaster management techniques, Mammoth petroleum is involved in business by putting all the volunteers of the otter washing into their payroll and allocating grants for the radio while doing the minimum for containing the spill or facing the damages. Around two hundred native vessels, fed up by Mammoth’s cleaning measures, volunteer to reduce the damages by venturing into the ocean. A wildlife retrieval crew was set up, and it aimed at removing the toxicity from the food chain and also helped to build a legal case against the petroleum company. Gregg’s crew consisting of Daniel, Lee, Aaron and Wassily was contracted by Mammoth Petroleum for a cleanup mission. Lee refuses to take any money from the company, but later she decides to donate it to Independent Cleanup Effort (ICE) which was funded by disaster response all over the world. Gregg warns her to save some money to face the harsh Alaskan winter, and she pays no attention to it. The crew was instructed to only bring back the carcasses of wildlife without any tampering.

Gregg's crew ventures into the ocean to retrieve the residues of wildlife without any protective gear. The toxic fumes affect Aaron's respiratory system. Without the breathing masks, Lee and her shipmates use a bandana as their facemask to protect themselves against the toxic fumes and engage in the retrieval. The venture into the spill by Gregg and crew becomes the montage of destruction and entry of oil into the food chain in Alaska. The Alaskan ecosystem is wrecked by the oil spill through the death of otters, seals, deer, bear, eagle and so many other marine lives. The crew was able to collect almost two thousand carcasses at Gory Point and carrying it offshore was a major risk: "A pod of glistening black -and-white orcas breaching in its toxic shadow. A pride of sea lions surging through the crude, their stiff whiskers blackened, faces filmed with grease. A siege of herring floating dead atop petroleum-laden seas." (Evans 39)

Ron from another retrieval crew also agreed with Gregg that they could not carry these oiled carcasses offshore and leaving it there might expose the other animals feeding on them to the toxic crude oil. So they decided to burn the carcasses and film it so that everyone would know that they have not gone against the law. Although Gregg's boat Pegasus is seized for this action, the crew's parade of dead carcasses stuns and silences the crowd and shifts the attention towards the wildlife. Also, the nauseating air prevailing in Alaska because of the spill has adverse effects on the health of the locals.

The eight-hundred-mile pipeline transports the North slope's crude oil and the royalties are used for the developmental activities like building public infrastructure by the State and every resident receives an annual dividend as well. Apart from this, many Alaskan locals also hold positions in the oil company and depend on them for their livelihood. Although the oil company stands economically beneficial, when an ecological catastrophe

hits, the dividends and payroll take a back seat and protecting their ecosystem becomes important for the Alaskan Natives because their landscape is a vital part of their identity and a reservoir of their ethnic knowledge and culture. Evans' account of the oil spill in Alaska portrays how the natives respond to the oil spill, the toxicity of the living spaces, deceitful contingency agreements, lack of proper spill response and protection against the toxic fumes and fatalities.

The fourth principle of environmental justice supports the universal protection of all people from hazardous and toxic activities like nuclear testing, dumping of toxic waste, landfills and other activities that endanger the access to clean air, water, food and land. The sixth principle of environmental justice condemns the toxicity and calls for ceasing in production of toxic or hazardous waste and radioactive materials, and all the producers past and present must be held accountable and involved in detoxification and revival of the environment. Despite this, the oil industries as represented in the petro-narratives of Munif, Habila and Evans contaminate the environment beyond the safety limit and do not take responsibility for their actions.

The select petrofiction provide a sagacious insight into diverse ways in which indigenous people are ruthless victims of environmental injustice and violation of their rights on a global scale will have a ripple effect on sustainable development goals and climate change conversations. The toxicity of oil that has invaded their domestic spaces and the disparity in access to fundamental rights of existence have threatened the indigenous life and their traditional knowledge. The traditional knowledge that arises from centuries of nature-culture interaction defines the indigenous people, and it is important in maintaining the ecological balance:

This knowledge is often embedded in a cosmology that reveres the *one-ness* of life, considers nature as sacred and acknowledges humanity as a part of it. And it encompasses practical ways to ensure the balance of the environment in which they live, so it may continue to provide services such as water, fertile soil, food, shelter and medicines. (Drissi)

The loss of traditional knowledge is one of the important consequences of environmental injustice. The indigenous rights are violated in the neocolonial apparatus and their knowledge is disregarded, but the current Anthropocene epoch and the era of climate crisis seeks sustainable solutions that bear approximation to traditional knowledge and lifestyle. These tribal groups also experience a loss of their local ecosystem and on a global level they have a humongous effect on the ecological balance that is crucial in preserving the planet for life to thrive. The distinctive ways in which oil induced environmental injustice and the decimation of the indigenous people impacts the coexistence of nature and culture as exhibited in the petrofictions chosen for study is a perspective that needs to be understood in preventing the ecological catastrophes.

The primal aspect of Munif's *Cities of Salt* is to detail the metamorphosis that the desert lands like Wadi and Harran attained after the foreign intervention and the discovery of oil. These changes did not pertain only to the societal or economic aspects, but also affected the cultural way of life in the desert that for centuries have been preserved and celebrated. The colonisation of the ecosystem resulted in the disappearance of local vegetation and the indigenous life embedded on it and they were “gone like salt in water.” (Munif, *COS* 38)

Mufaddi al-Jedan, the traditional healer of Harran who was castigated by Dr. Subhi, a western practitioner, is an example of the fight between the traditional or ethnic knowledge and the western influence. Dr. Subhi cancels Mufaddi by calling him a quack doctor, and it represents how the ethnic knowledge is crushed by the power structure. The traditional knowledge of Muffadi is disregarded, and he predicts a future that is very accurate and appropriate for the present reality around the globe, “I swear to you, people of Harran, the day will come when they try to sell water!” he muttered, shaking his head in distress and looking at the ground” (Munif, *COS* 547). The magnitude of truth in the words of Muffadi is an example of the resourcefulness of indigenous knowledge and how the annihilation of it affects the ecosystem as well.

The desert people who have inherited their way of life and perfected it in tune with the climate and vegetation around them found it easy to adapt to the extremities. Despite the heat or the cold, they have adapted to the desert and knew how to survive with minimal resources while their American counterparts suffered when the air conditioners broke amidst the heat rush. The survival skills and adaptability are a part of their indigenous lifestyle that allows the local culture of the particular area to thrive. They procure this knowledge in interaction with their ecosystem, form an intrinsic connection and synchronises their life in accordance with it. This knowledge of survival gave the Arab Harran the thrill of being superior over the American Harran, “The workers knew how to adjust to the ocean of desert around them, and knew even better how to infuriate Americans and make them lose tempers.” (Munif, *COS* 506)

When the natives of Wadi waited with curiosity to know what was being searched in their lands and asked the Emir about the foreigners, they were told not to interfere, and

any information was denied. The native people were not included in the decision-making process after the discovery of oil beneath their lands, and instead were forced to flee without any compensation. Once these people fled their homelands, the nature of Wadi and Harran irrevocably changed as the natural vegetation was cleared to make way for oil rigs. The lack of potable water in Arab Harran and the desperate need for it is expressed by Suweyleh when he says, ““My friends, I’d trade this whole sea for the well in our town”” (Munif, *COS* 298). The pristine oasis that was for centuries preserved by the people of Wadi and a paradise to the tired travellers disappeared, and the environment soon became hostile for living. Although the government tried to plant trees to make it bearable, Wadi and Harran became a polluted purgatory as a result of environmental destruction and extinguishing of indigenous life.

Oil exploration resulted in fragmentation of these tribal factions who were the earliest inhabitants of the particular geographical space. When their lands and livelihoods were lost and the once tight-knit community was disbanded, it resulted in environmental destruction, migration and cultural ramification. For the members of the tribe, their peaceful past became a thing of nostalgia and lament because along with their lands they were also lost. Suleiman al-Hadib looked at the members of his lost tribe and felt content by the resemblance between his tribes, although they were then scattered in all the directions and “lost in all places” (Munif, *COS* 130). He credits the kinship, unity and resemblance to the waters of Atoum that once supplied all the brooks in the desert on the banks of which all the indigenous life thrived with unity.

In *The Trench*, Munif continues to show the transformation of the landscape and society after the coming of oil in Mooran which is the capital of the fictional oil kingdom.

The oil riches have made Mooran into a commercial hub and the indigenous way of life has been compromised to get more accommodated with the surrounding. Livestock like camels and horses which are important for the bedouins are replaced by pickup trucks as their idols. These trucks that operated on fossil fuels have attained the status of god for the bedouins, and it affected the business for people like Saleh and Shamran who depended on the horses for their livelihood. The natives of Mooran believed that foreigners have robbed them of all their wealth including their religion and have left them with nothing. In the hullabaloo of industrialisation as depicted in Wadi, Harran and Mooran, the progressive developments lacked inclusivity, the indigenous rights were robbed, and their traditional knowledge obliterated, ““These people have come and robbed us — they’ve eaten the egg and the shell, leaving us nothing!”” (Munif, *TT* 419)

The impact of unethical extraction of oil and resulting toxic environment on the life system which depended on it for survival in the Niger Delta is portrayed by Habila in *Oil on Water*. The ramification of the indigenous life only disrupted the sustainable lifestyle that depended on and preserved the surrounding nature without any exploitation. Once their space in the ecosystem was violated by the oil companies and the corrupt government, the nature and culture withered and Niger Delta turned into an oil pool covered with “stench of dead matter” (Habila 9). The fleeing tribal groups became the testimony of the ecological destruction. The river grew narrower each time the tribes moved further and soon they entered the thick mangrove swamp with murky and foul smelling water which was an abode of insects and bugs, “Soon we were in a dense mangrove swamp; the water underneath us had turned foul and sulphurous; insects rose from the surface in swarms to settle in mobile cloud above us, biting our arms and face and ears.” (Habila 9)

As these indigenous people followed a bend in the river, they witnessed dead birds whose wings were slicked with oil and fishes, indicating an oil spill that has claimed the life of these animals. Rufus and Zaq land in an abandoned village during their search for kidnapped Isabel Floode, and witnesses the destruction that oil exploration has brought into the Niger Delta and its impact on indigenous life. Signs of oil entering the food chain are found through plants growing amidst these oil polluted areas, with modifications in their appearances.

A patch of grass found near the water was smothered with oil and each blade had oil on it resembling the liver spots. It seemed as if the whole village had disappeared in the hands of oil. The presence of oil in a close proximity to the indigenous settlement and its contamination of water and air around them represent the severity of ecological destruction brought in by selfish oil extraction in Nigeria without any concern for the nature or the ethnic culture bound by it. With excessive oil activities, the livestock in the area began to die, plants withered or dried up, sampling of drinking water exhibited toxicity and many people fell sick and died. The ethnic or the native people have been the first-hand victims of oil disaster and the power vested in the capitalist to ruthlessly exploit the environment for wealth. It has stripped the indigenous people of their identity and made them hostile in their homeland, “Over the black, expressionless water there were no birds or fishes or other sea creatures — we were alone.” (Habla 10)

Intensity of Habla’s portrayal of ecological and indigenous ramification due to unscrupulous oil activity that affects the ecological balance and indigenous culture is further enhanced when Evans similarly brings out the destruction caused by the oil spill on the ecosystem of Alaska to show the interdependence between nature and culture and

how it is affected because of the greed for power and wealth in the hands of oil. The oil spill in Alaska was considered huge because it had a great impact on the food chain. Every animal life associated with the Alaskan ecosystem was either coming out of hibernation, being birthed, or migrating, and hungry. Naturally there is a plentiful supply of food available and the only issue is that they are all covered with oil and poisoned.

Fishing is the main occupation for the natives of Alaska, and the tender named American Eagle collects the catches and takes it to the cannery named Alaska Pride. This company believes that the cod is contaminated and did not want to purchase it. Moreover, the oil spill wiped out all the spawners and salmon herring and everything else would take several years before the stock becomes healthy and free of crude oil contamination. More than half of Selby's population is connected with the seafood industry, and they are all affected by the spill because of the loss of livelihood. Thus, no one in the market was ready to buy the Alaskan fishes and that has intensively hit the natives whose livelihoods depend on it.

Rosemary mentions to Tessa about the economic hit they are experiencing because of the oil spill and she is moved into tears. Humans are not the only species who depend on the herring for the nourishment after a long and lean Alaskan winter. Humpback whales return to the Alaskan waters on time for refueling and prepares for the journey of a thousand miles. The interdependency which keeps the ecosystem stable and thriving is disrupted by the crude oil and all the species are equally affected by it. Hence, Evans highlights the interdependent lifestyle of the natives and how one manmade disaster could deeply impact their life in multifarious ways including social, economical, environmental and psychological reverberations.

Otters are the keystone species of Alaska, and they are greatly affected by the spill. Unlike seals and other cetaceans, the otters do not have blubbers which are a thick layer of fat that keeps these mammals warm, and they solely rely on their fur to fight the cold. The oil slicked furs are failing the body mechanism of the otters, and they suffer from hypothermia. In order to protect and clean their fur, the otters started eating the oil matted on them. Hence, they are captured, mildly sedated and cleaned before they could eat too much of toxic crude oil, “There’s a world of difference between those healthy, playful sprites and these sickly, fur-matted creatures.” (Evans 77)

One of the main victims of the oil spill is the otters, and already hundreds of them were dead even before Lee and Gregg could get offshore. When the otters are removed from the food chain, everything else crumbles down. The kelp beds that show humongous growth during the summer act as an underwater forest and nurseries for species like sea lions, porpoises and all kinds of fishes. The kelps also act as a hideout for these animals from their predators, and the urchins grow on the sea floor with kelp as their main food source. The sea otters keep the sea urchins in check, and they live their entire life near the kelp beds. The otters are the only marine mammals that do not come offshore for giving birth. As their entire existence is onshore, they are more deeply affected by the oil spill than any other species. Without the otters to regulate the urchin population, the kelp beds could be easily killed and “ecosystem will actually implode” (Evans 175). Thus, all the organisms big or small play a significant role in maintaining the ecosystem and disruption at any one level could bring the entire system crashing down.

Apart from the otters, countless other organisms were also affected by this oil spill. Birds coated with crude oil were struggling to hold their head upright and steer

through the surface of the ocean with their heavy wings. Lee was able to sight puffins floating dead, and the ruthless sight of death triggered her anxiety. The otter rescue mission in the gym also accelerated anxiety for various people including the youngsters who have thrown themselves into volunteering as a coping mechanism. It also shows how the people of Alaska consider nature as sacred and holds it with reverence to an extent that any damage to it affects them personally, “‘It’s so unfair,’ the youngster continues, wiping her nose on the tissues Camille hands her. ‘What did they ever do to deserve this?’” (Evans 80)

The salmon herring, cod and the oysters are other organisms that have been affected by the oil spill. They are also commercial to the natives who depend on rearing them for their livelihood. Alaska’s oystercatchers account for half the world’s population and there were about five thousand of them until the oil spill happened, and now most of them have been wiped away. Oil has also wiped out the planktons and because of that large number of fry and smolts will either starve or die of the toxicity of oil thereby disrupting the food chain and creating an imbalance. Alaska is also the home to several migratory birds, and their habitat is destroyed by the oil spill. For birds like Arctic terns who circumnavigate around the globe, Alaska serves as the major source for food and nesting. Around fifty-million birds nest in Alaska every year and because their food and habitat is slicked with crude oil, the toxicity enters the food chain and has a ripple effect on all the organisms.

The damages of the oil spill in Alaska did not contain itself with the flora and fauna. The catastrophe also affected the natives of Alaska, whose life has always been interlinked with their ecosystem. The spill cleanup and the wildlife retrieval activities

without any safety gears only resulted in the toxicity causing health damages. Aaron who volunteered for the wildlife retrieval along with his father was already feeling suffocated because of the excess of hydrocarbons filling the air and later lost his life because the toxicity had affected his lungs.

The death of Aaron spins Gregg's life out of proportion, and he feels totally lost. Aaron was determined to find the glass float during his volunteering activities and was able to spot one while beachcombing. The glass float stands as a symbol of his determination and hope and after his death, the float was also buried along with him just like his hopes and dreams for life. Thus, the oil spill claimed the life and dreams of Aaron and Gregg has lost his boy, boat and felt empty. "He's lost his boat. Lost his boy. He himself is lost. 'At sea.' He pictures the hole in his heart as an actual suppurating wound." (Evans 250)

After the clean-up mission, lots of stories emerged of people exhibiting symptoms similar to Aaron like cough, fever and lethargy, and it was because of the prolonged exposure to the hydrocarbons that has surrounded Alaska. Amidst all this, Lee was pumped by the fact that the entire world responded to the oil spill by issuing condemnation for the oil company responsible for it and stood with the natives in fighting for their environment, rights and justice. This unified global response and support was one of the good things to come out of the spill because the support was important for the indigenous community to rise against their oil oppressor. Lee's thoughts on damage that oil spill exerts on nature and humans is a remarkable rendition of the interdependency that keeps the ecosystem intact and maintain the ecological balance, "“Damage to the environment exacts a price on human beings too,' she says with feelings. 'We can't afford the kinds of

psychic wounds something like an oil spill inflicts, so unless and until that changes, we have no business taking those risks.’” (Evans 265)

From the accounts of oil activities and related disasters as documented in the petrofictions of Munif, Habila and Evans, it can be inferred that the exploitation and negligent attitude towards crude oil extraction is destructive to the environment and the indigenous life. It also results in psychological impact on these ethnic people, for whom the ecosystem is sacred and a colossal part of their sustenance. The oil’s invasion of the domestic spaces accounts for the environmental injustice and the sequential effect it has on the indigenous life. It denotes the violation of their basic rights. A significant response to any kind of ecological catastrophe, disruption of their local ecosystem and ramification of their cultural belief in relation to the environment in the current Anthropocene epoch is termed as solastalgia. Any individual or a community experiencing solastalgia exhibits symptoms that are similar to eco-anxiety. The terms eco-anxiety and solastalgia were coined by Glenn Albrecht, an Australian environmental philosopher.

Solastalgia is the combination of two English words ‘solace’ and ‘nostalgia’, and it refers to the deep distress invoked by the destruction of an individual or community’s environment, the one they are sentimentally and culturally attached to. The distress caused to the ecosystem is linked with human distress syndrome and results in symptoms related to eco-anxiety. It is the kind of homesickness that one experiences even when one is at home, and resembles the sensation of alienation in the homeland. “No longer is the ‘wisdom of the elders’ relevant to how we should live in the here and now, and this loss of historically informed knowledge has implications for social cohesion” (Albrecht). The fear that is invoked by the destruction of the once familiar environment and the sense of detachment

that builds up with the pressures of climate change and other environmental crisis for the natives as presented in the select petrofiction express the condition of solastalgia and reflects an anxiety in relation with the destruction of their environment.

Eco-anxiety is the onset of the chronic fear regarding the environmental catastrophe, irreversible impact of climate change and the fear regarding the future of the planet and its generation. The internalisation of the environmental problems triggers eco-anxiety, and the characters in the petrofictions chosen for study exhibit an anxiety pertaining not only to the immediate destruction of the local environment but also includes the concern about the plight of their future generation. Hence, eco-anxiety is closely associated with solastalgia and people affected by it show symptoms of stress, nervousness, sleep deprivation, suffocation and guilt regarding the environmental destruction happening around them. Few characters indigenous to the particular geographical location in the novels of this critical study exhibit the conditions of solastalgia and symptoms of eco-anxiety as an initial response to the destruction of their local environment and culture and employ various coping mechanisms which redefines their identity, ambitions and goals.

In *Cities of Salt* by Munif, Miteb is gripped by solastalgia and exhibits anxious behaviour right from the moment the Americans arrive to explore the desert lands for oil. As a leader and representative of the Atoum tribe, the curious Miteb patiently waits in front of Ibn Rashed's camp to gain knowledge about the mission of the foreign crew supported by the Emir and his men. The sudden foreign intervention kept the entire Wadi in a state of anxiety and fear as a response to the intuition that something bad is about to befall on them. Thus, the behavioural changes of Miteb and his tribe in response to their environment being interfered by the foreign body are the onset of eco-anxiety in that

geopolitical space, "...perhaps something would happen that day to relieve the anxiety that enshrouded the wadi." (Munif, *COS* 79)

After the discovery of oil, the environment of Wadi was destroyed and the native tribes were forced to flee the place for the oil rig construction to begin, which would facilitate oil extraction and exportation. Miteb was one of the first indigenous people to respond to this sudden rush of activities and destruction with resistance. He viewed the Americans as the threat to his land, people and environment. Thus, any mention of the Americans only made him more anxious, "Miteb al-Hathal, still anxious and expectant, found that any mention of them only redoubled his anxieties... notions and questions" (Munif, *COS* 46). His fear of losing the land, tribes and the bleak future triggered the eco-anxiety in him that made him respond violently to the situation. When the intensity of the situation dawned upon him, and he realised that he is in no power to save his land, environment and his people, Miteb became reclusive and disappeared into the wilderness, appearing now and then like a phantom and then vanishing into the thin air. The anxiety possessed Miteb, and it made him behave in overpowering ways that were all fuelled by the destruction of his environment and culture.

Apart from Miteb, the Arab workers were also shrouded in a certain kind of depression that was initiated by the difference in the living conditions between Arab and American Harran. The American Harran filled with the extravagance, budding vegetation, swimming pools and laughter contrasted with the Arab Harran which was filled with murky filth, lack of potable water, improper accommodations and edgy emotions. People of Arab Harran found themselves depressed, sorrowful and sometimes were moved to tears looking at their land and culture being exploited in the hands of the capitalist. They

lacked the power to oppose these powerful people and were gripped with eco-anxiety because of the destruction and changes to the environment and circumstances around them: “The depression was never deeper than when the workers looked around them to see, in the east, American Harran: lit up, shining and noisy, covered with budding vegetation; from afar they could hear voice of the Americans splashing in the swimming pools, rising in song or laughter.” (Munif, *COS* 295)

In *Oil on Water*, Habila asserts that the civil war in Nigeria between the government and the militants is a response to the ecological destruction and the impact of it on the indigenous life because of the excessive oil activities that has triggered exploitation. This in turn has aggravated the eco-anxiety of the ethnic people, and the lack of contingency plans or governmental support in restoring their withering environment has only further worsened it. Thus, the civil war and the violence ensuing it that has disrupted the indigenous life and their environment can be viewed as a response or coping mechanism to their eco-anxiety, “But I don’t blame them for wanting to vandalise the pipelines that have brought nothing but suffering to their lives, leaking into rivers and wells, killing the fish and poisoning the farmlands... They are just hungry, and tired” (Habila 107-8). The unkept promises, resource curse, loss of environment and livelihood has brought in eco-anxiety for the indigenous people of Niger Delta, and they have sometimes responded violently to it by vandalism and kidnapping to demand justice and restore their environment.

In *Oil and Water* by Evans, the eco-anxiety is exhibited by the Alaskans in a variety of ways that have impacted their personal life, interpersonal relationships and their social interactions. One of the most common responses to the disaster in Alaska after the oil spill was that everyone plunged themselves into volunteering that would relieve them of

their anxieties. The sudden rush for volunteering is powered by anxiety and the desperateness to save their environment, "...their passion is that of anxiety, not pleasure" (Evans 94). Volunteering can be seen as a coping mechanism to the anxiety that is triggered by the oil spill which destroys their ecosystem, "People not only want but need involvement at a time like this, Tess realizes, to relieve their anxiety and help them regain a sense of control." (Evans 45)

Despite the widespread efforts taken to set up counselling and wellness meetings, trying to readjust and lead a normal life after the oil spill was impossible for many. Majority of people in Selby suffer from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder after watching the ecological catastrophe the oil spill has caused and the death of innumerable animals and irrevocable loss felt by the natives of Alaska. The damage that the oil spill has on the personal life of the residents of Selby can be viewed as the actions of eco-anxiety, and their response to it is the various ways in which they cope with the tragedy. Tamara postpones her marriage because of the oil spill and opines that, "Something like this kind of blows your personal life out of the water, you know?" (Evans 72)

Gregg was a recovering alcoholic, and the oil spill and ecological tribulation caused his relapse. Immediately after the oil spill, Gregg becomes quiet, reclusive and sullen. Once he and Lee reach offshore, Gregg resumes drinking to cope up with the present. After the wildlife retrieval mission, Aaron stays with Gregg. Gregg gets drunk after the retrieval mission and loses track of time. He was unable to help Aaron who was struggling to breathe and it led to his death. After his son's death, Gregg quits consuming alcohol and puts himself on a mission to holistic recovery, while at the same time grieving. Thus, the eco-anxiety deranges Gregg, and he tries to gain control by putting himself on a

path to recovery and redemption. Nick Calhoun, the wildlife biologist of Alaska, becomes emotional as he explains to Lee how the toxic effects of oil have entered the food chain, and it would affect all the animals. Kurt starts smoking again after years as a response to the eco-anxiety triggered by his maimed environment.

For Tessa and Daniel, the oil spill strains their marriage. While Tessa is of double mind and engaged in a moral battle in choosing between volunteering or looking after the children, Daniel overworks at the radio station without giving time and attention to his family. Tessa remembers how the photographs on Anchorage's *Tribune* of the oil slicked Alaska in black and white had made her anxious. After that, she decides to send the children to her parents in Anchorage and volunteer in the otter rescue. She also accepts the money from Mammoth petroleum and that affects her relationship with her friend Lee, who opposes it. Meanwhile, Tessa finds out that she is pregnant, and it also becomes the motivation for the couple to make their marriage work. She also understands that by overworking himself in radio broadcasting and being the authentic source of information in times of disaster is the coping mechanism employed by Daniel to overcome his eco-anxiety, "By helping others, he helps himself" (Evans 86). Thus, the oil spill affects the personal life of Tessa, and she understands that either her marriage and friendship will withstand the tensions caused by the oil spill, or it will be torn apart.

The otter rescue shelter at the school gym becomes an arena of emotions as each crew desperately tries to protect and save the animals that have been intoxicated by the oil. Lee watches how Sally Ann Fraser's body slumps and she dissolves into tears when the otter they tried so hard to rescue dies. The meltdown initiated by the catastrophe further affects Lee and she exhibits severe eco-anxiety after the oil spill. Lee has a deep

connection with the land. This connection is pivotal in the identity formation of Lee because for her Alaska gives meaning to her existence. This profound connection with her landscape and importance she gives to her relationship with land rather humans can be viewed as the reason behind eco-anxiety in Lee, “After all, the Northland is Lee’s first love: she’s most alive when wandering the tundra, exploring the rainforest, or fishing on the ocean. Wild Alaska is what gives her life meaning, not the struggle to maintain some tired relationship.” (Evans 11)

Lee lives a life far away from civilisation in a cabin with no running water or a telephone line. She denotes the importance of biocentrism as a way of life and condemns any manmade destruction of the environment, despite being engaged in fishing for her livelihood. The accounts of destruction and the opinions on it as gathered by Lee in interaction with her environment pushes her into eco-anxiety, and she involves herself in volunteering activities. Lee refuses and reprimands the others for accepting the money given by Mammoth to all the volunteers and stands polar opposite to the opinions of Tessa and others and that strains her relationship with them. She had previously worked in the salmon hatchery and heard the news about them being affected in the spill. It causes her to emotionally breakdown. On the whole, Lee appears shell shocked and emotionally fragile over the whole oil spill affair and employs volunteering without any profits as a means of coping up with her anxiety.

Escapism is also used by Lee to cope up when she unrealistically wishes for a time travel where things could be avoided and everything would be normal. After the oil spill and the death of Aaron, Lee, as a means to serve a purposeful life, graduates from University of Anchorage and plans to get a master degree in Marine Biology and carry

out research on pelagic birds. Thus, the eco-anxiety of Lee triggered by the oil spill and the ecological loss and the several measures to positively cope up with it puts her on a new path that redefines her goals and becomes the start of a new journey. She moves forward with a sense of urgency in protecting the environment and becomes an example of immediate change to avoid irrevocable damages in the current era of increased environmental crisis, “Since the oil spill, she sometimes has trouble sleeping, awakening in the middle of the night with the incapacitating smell of crude oil in her nostrils and throat, stomach tense... human beings have already run out of time to make things right.” (Evans 265-66)

The effect of the oil spill on the family, individuals, and how each character navigates through the pool of emotions is an example of Alaska’s psychological and emotional response to the destruction of their ecosystem. They all stand united in fighting for their nature and culture, ““We can’t let the oil spill break us”” (Evans 226). The emotional turmoil exhibited by the characters are an example of the sacred bond the natives have with the environment around them, and it dictates a way of life that is spiritual, sustainable and harmless. Within these bonds stem the ethnic knowledge that could be the solution to several of the ecological catastrophes that ensue in the current Anthropocene epoch and forecasts a perilous future.

Omar El Akkad’s *American War* is an exposition of the future where the energy shift has not happened, climate change has hit the new peak, fossil fuels are outlawed because of their near extinction and tables have turned as America is in ruins because they did not understand the urgency of peak oil and the importance of ethnic knowledge. Hence, this futuristic vision becomes an example of the extension of the exploitation and negligence in the present as portrayed in the other petrofictions as deliberated in the

current study. Thus, the dystopian setting of Akkad is broadly shaped based on the extremities of the present.

The civil war and the environmental degradation has become two important burdens that America must face as a result of exploitation. The Bouazizi Empire comprised mostly of all the Third World countries with Cairo as their capital. The empire has shifted to greener ways of energy and has become one of the youngest and steadily growing empires that did not experience any economic crash, societal collapse or catastrophic environmental damages. The aids and relief packages sent by the eastern companies became the major source of resources for America.

Charting the events from 2074 to 2095, *American War* shows how the once fossil fuel dominated society has been fragmented because of its absence. The adverse effects of climate change are also an important part of the setting on which this speculative fiction is rendered. The rising sea levels and melting of glaciers led to coastal refugees who were moving to the Midwest regions to escape the storms and other natural disasters. The landscape of Alaska is completely altered by climate change, and it has not snowed for many years.

Sarat studies the book named *The Changing Earth* and examines the cover page with huge mountains surrounded by floating ice. The book has documented the transformation in the landscape by portraying the old and new maps of several places. In the new maps, the edges were trimmed, reduced in perimeter and in the old maps America was a bigger continent, “The new maps looked like the old ones, but with edges of the land shaved off— whole islands gone, coastlines retreating into their continents.” (Akkad 19)

Apart from that, America has also experienced severe storms like Anna in 2043 and Michael in 2051 which had devastating effects on the society. The presence of Silicone Bubble, although the usage of it is not mentioned, would also be a new development in the lifestyle of the future. Global warming and the earth's temperature has soared high to an extent that it was not cold even during the harshest winters, "Even in the deadest of winter there was no need for blankets..." (Akkad 80). Instead, the refugees in the camp fashioned these blankets that came through aid packages as room dividers, tablecloths, drawer-linings, foot mats and so on.

Benjamin Jr., son of Simon and Karina who was smuggled by his aunt Sarat to the neutral country, New Anchorage before the plague, reminisces his life decades after the civil war and documents the past as a series of memories. Through his postcard collections, Benjamin says that his favourites are from the 2030s and 2040s, which is referred to as the last decade of environmental stability and peace. After that, "...the planet turned on the country and the country turned on itself" (Akkad 3). It led to a series of changes to the landscapes as the rivers dried up, forests disappeared and resulted in barren trees, failed vegetation, and extinction of species, infertile soil and rising temperature. The degraded environment and abandoned architecture becomes the facet of the planet that was crumbling because of ignorance, colonialism and exploitation, "Thin trees lined the highway. They carried no leaves, only barren branches." (Akkad 55)

The Mississippi River has almost dried up and looked filthy and lifeless. The picture of a gushing river filled with life only existed in the memory of the Chestnuts. Benjamin and Martina reminisced to their children about the lively rivers, snow, the fishes with whiskers and the West surrounded by deserts that was the home to many species including

ancient lizards. None of these existed now because of climate change and all these sounded like a fairy tale to Sarat while her twin sister Dana did not believe in any of it. Similarly, Lake Sinclair has dried up because of continuous firebombing.

The major landscape alterations are also portrayed through the changed outlook of Atlanta. Once Atlanta was once the richest and busiest place with tall skyscrapers, hospitals, residential areas, university campuses and other commercial buildings and it was reduced to rubbles because of the violence. California has become a parched land and Dakota was ruined by war after prohibition of fossil fuels. The leftover buildings have become the home of refugees who fled from the southern coast to escape the storms, heat and violence. The sweatshops and factories were housed in buildings made of red brick, and the farms were encased in thick and opaque glass. The cool nights have become rare, green houses had foreign soil because the one in America has mostly turned infertile and lands shifted underwater resulting in places that were deep at one particular time and shallow during the next season.

The altercations to the landscape and the climatic conditions also have an invariable impact on the flora and fauna associated with the geography. The dystopian setting of America shows the failed vegetation and the effect of it on the people. In Augusta, a man named Captain owned the Hotel D' Grub which is set up in an old Baptist Church and had an old Chevy truck that ran on fossil fuels repurposed into a barbecue grill. The Captain was fond of things that have become extinct long ago like caribou, musk oxen, sea lions and white face foxes. Once, these animals thrived on earth but could not survive the rising temperature. The collection is a glimpse into the past as well as the pathetic condition of the present, as global warming, climate change and exploitation has pushed many species

to extinction. The squalid living conditions in the refugee camps without proper access to basic rights like food, shelter and clothing is indicative of the poverty that accompanies war in any country.

Sarat meets Marcus in Camp Patience, and they form a great friendship. During their exploration of the areas surrounding the camp, they discover a turtle and were surprised to see it. They rescued the turtle, sheltered it and took turns to feed and care for it. Thus, these rare appearances indicate the plight of the wildlife that are on the brink of extinction because of environmental ramification. Other species that have disappeared include lizards, crickets and foxes. They have become extinct because of the inability to survive the drastic climatic change brought in by exploitative human activities

Similar to the wildlife, the vegetation has also undergone a significant change that has deeply impacted the food habits of the civilisation. The yuccas are one of the few resilient plants that still grew in the parched southern lands of America. As the Chestnuts waited for the bus that would take them to the refugee camps, Sarat was exploring the plants surrounding them. It led her to the spotting of cactus, and her mother Martina helped in identifying it. Thus, similar to animals, the plants like cactus and strawberry have also become rare due to the calamities of climate change.

In the dystopian and war torn America, even the presence of a natural food resource like honey is an element of rarity. Honey is made in the lab through the mush grown by scientists in Pearl River. Natural honey is a luxury that cannot be afforded by everyone in America, and when Albert Gaines gives Sarat the real honey for the very first time, the mere naturalness of the taste makes her emotional and reminds her of home. The hint of earthiness and dampness reminded her of the place she was born,

“Somewhere in the caverns of her mind awoke memories of the place where she was born: the mud banks, the hot tin box, the mouth of the Mississippi. Like a stranger to herself, she was surprised to discover she’d started softly crying” (Akkad 119). Thus, the natural resources with all its purity and earthiness made Sarat emotional and had the ability to make her associate it with a place that had felt home and safe.

Similar to honey, other items like oranges and meat were also grown in the lab and have become a thing of luxury and rarity that cannot be acquired all the time. The farming practice has also undergone a huge change because of infertile soil, land degradation and rising temperatures. The green houses became an important aspect of farming, and soil from the East was used to grow vegetables and other plants that were once a normal part of everyone’s diet. When Karina tried to grow vegetables like beets, radishes, rhubarbs, lettuces and southern peas in the black eastern soil, they did not sprout roots because of the heat.

The changes in environment were felt throughout America yet the circumstances that arose out of it differed between the North and the South. The North had accepted the decision of prohibition of fossil fuels, while the South did not come to terms with such a ban and waged a civil war because of divergent opinions. Thus, the conditions in Southern states of America were much worse than everything the Northern Blue Country had to undergo because of climate change.

The Northern states have accepted the energy shift, and they were powered by solar and wind energy for everyday fuel, locomotion, commercial and domestic purposes. People using fossil fuel powered boats were arrested because it was considered illegal. Instead, solar-powered vehicles like Sea-Toks were used to navigate the waters and

despite being slow, they served as an acceptable replacement for fossil fuel powered cars. Similarly, solar-powered ships moved slowly in water and carried grains. The household had solar panels fitted on the rooftop for power sources and without regular chlorination of the rain water stored in tanks, it started to emit an egg-like odour. Refugees were transported to the camps in pre-war yellow colour school buses that were repurposed by fitting solar panels. Tik-Toks have replaced fossil fuel powered cars. Anyone still owning a fossil fuel car was looked down with disgust because of all the trauma and destruction associated with it.

The place named New Fourth Ward offers a glimpse into the shift in energy usage at the domestic level. The cramped streets were filled with shops selling goods from the vertical farms, Tik-Tok mechanics and had power lines that ran overhead from the solar panels, “Power lines ran down from the solar panels that covered all the roofs and from one building to another, creating a latticework overhead” (Akkad 236). The North also had access to better medical care and had employment opportunities with decent pay as compared to the South.

The difference in living conditions between the blue and the red country is an outcome of the energy shift. The South was knee-deep into violence, poverty, environmental degradation and squalid living conditions while the North was not in ruins and rubbles. Electric bulbs have become an element of the pre-war era for the South, while the cities in the North were still powered by bulbs and lights. Green energy balanced the society, and they had access to nutritious food. Steak was considered as a symbol of luxury in the South, while in the North it is very common and available at all times. There were no refugee camps in the North, while in the South these camps dominated the landscape. The

North had the luxury of peace amidst the civil war while in the South, violence, vigilance and bloodshed were an integral part of everyday survival: “Perhaps beyond the brown and scrubby ridge there lay bustling Northern towns brilliant with electric light. Or vast fragrant rows of farmland full of oranges and mandarins and exotic Blue-grown fruit of which she’d never even heard.” (Akkad 153)

After the attack on Camp Patience, the Chestnuts along with severely injured Simon were shifted to the Charity Houses. The house had a solar-powered desalination box for purifying water and a lot of other facilities, but the rebellious Sarat ordered that the house must run only on fossil fuels. The decision and mindset of Sarat is representative of the Southern people and their motive behind the war, which had less consideration for the environment. After the civil war, even the aeroplanes were operated on solar energy and the shift was widely necessary because of climate change and exhaustion of fossil fuels. Thus, Akkad through his futuristic vision shows the civil war ridden America and also the importance of energy shift by highlighting the stark difference between the living conditions of the Northern and Southern American States and the rise of Bouazizi Empire as the most powerful in the world because of their timely energy shift to protect their economy, environment and society.

After the civil war, America experiences a deadly plague because of the virus released by Sarat along with severe changes brought in by climate change. One of the consequential outcomes of the war was that the South was ruined by postwar poverty. Benjamin Jr., lives in New Anchorage and holds a degree in history. His profession as a historian involved studying the civil war, and he recalls his trip down South long after the war. The trip is the witness of lasting destructions that the war and fossil fuels have left on the environment and civilisation:

Even with the car's air conditioner on high, the heat was overpowering.

I drove past dust farms and shack-towns, places riddled with postwar poverty and the occasional three-star flag hanging limp from trailer-side posts—reminders that in so much of the Red, the war stopped but the war never ended. (Akkad 329)

Akkad's speculative portrayal of the Second American Civil War in many ways is an envisioning of the consequences of exploitation of the natural resources and the disunity in opinions that arises when a change is proposed for the better future. The split opinions are a result of disparity in availability of resources, privilege, wealth, power and the thirst to exercise it for their personal comfort. When the needs of the civilisation are put above the environment, exploitation overtakes preservation, equity and sustainability. When the interdependency between nature and culture fails, the centre loses its hold and all the structures of the society spirals down into nothingness.

The dangers of extinction that stems from colonialism and exploitation is a major threat to the current Anthropocene epoch and its repercussions can be felt on environment, economy, politics, international relations, availability of resources and the status of the indigenous people and their traditional knowledge. An inclusive and immediate energy shift decision that proceeds with unity in thought must be the cardinal base for the changes to happen.

The dire need for finer inclusivity in any panels that require assessment, evaluation, data collection and decision-making which would have impact on any order of the world has given rise to the concept called intersectionality. This concept aims at redefining representation and making it more accessible, and is inclusive of all the underprivileged

sects by providing them an opportunity to make their voices be heard. The intersectionality theory looks at the overlapping identities formed by an individual's interaction with various factions of societal life like race, gender, religion, sex, ability, ethnicity, occupation and so forth, which in turn defines the position of the individual in the society and determines their status as either the dominant or the oppressed in the particular space at the given time. Governed by historical congruence of events, the status of the oppressor and the oppressed are defined by the events of past and present and a certain level of rigidity exists in terms of defining these roles.

Intersectional environmentalism has the potential to strengthen the environmental justice movement and implement it more strictly. It views colonisation and capitalism as the root cause of suppression that has made impactful damages to the people and planet, and claims responsibility for the climate crisis as well. In that sense, it is important to validate the indigenous wisdom and intersectional environmentalism could not exist without the environmental and climate justice movement. The social constructs are the birthplace of stereotypes, and there exists various factors associated with privilege that paves way for inequality. The powerful decide the availability and quality of the resources and discrimination begins there and extends to matters like housing, employment, health care, safe environment and access to quality education. Thus, the integration of the environment and identities determine the quality and opportunities of an individual's life.

Any natural or manmade environmental calamities are the events that greatly expose the underlying power structure, social disparities, inequality and corruption. Intersectional environmentalism addresses all these underlying oppressions and works towards a more equitable and sustainable way of life. Being able to lead a sustainable life is also a matter

of privilege because not all people have the ability to shift to a greener lifestyle while even struggling for basic requirements like clean air, water or proper household facilities. Thus, undoing the network of oppressions in the environmental movement also means understanding and acknowledging the privilege of any individual and intersection of identities.

The marginalised communities are the least responsible for all the climate crisis, yet they are the ones most affected and oppressed by it. The marginalised which includes the indigenous people are also considered as the vulnerable communities, and they are the most affected by White supremacy, colonisation and capitalism and this greatly contributes to environmental injustice. The study of select petrofiction reveal how these oppressive institutions till date finance the fossil fuel activities in all the indigenous lands and exploit the people and planet for wealth and power. The environmentalists going against these oil companies are usually suppressed or worse, killed and their activism is buried while the companies continue to exploit the resources and culture. Abigail Abhor Adekunbi Thomas who is an environmentalist and environmental advocate opines that many African countries still experience colonialism, "...majority of the political, economic and cultural challenges they face today have been fueled by colonialism. In fact, in many ways, colonialism still exists within the continent; it's just not as overt as it was a hundred years ago." (qtd. in Thomas, ch. 4)

Intersectional environmentalism addresses the feeling of inferiority and the act of invalidating the knowledge of the indigenous people. It represents how important the ethnic knowledge is in creating a more inclusive approach for setting up sustainable goals. It also takes into account the commodification and exploitation, of which the indigenous people

are the prominent victims. Hence, it is time for environmentalism to be made more inclusive to include the underrepresented, underprivileged and the oppressed voices in breaking the system and creating the change because, "... the fundamental truth is that we cannot save the planet without uplifting the voices of those most marginalized." (Walton, Foreword)

Education is an important aspect of the environmental movement, Literacy is the powerful tool against oppression and injustice. Education is considered as the maiden step towards taking action, and intersectional environmentalism vouches for equal access to quality education as a means of fighting oppression. This coincides with the sixteenth principle of environmental justice which affirms the importance of education. A quality education must include the issues pertaining to social and environmental matters based on experiences and should facilitate the appreciation of diverse cultures and their ideologies, sentiments and practices.

The second principle of environmental justice asserts how public policymaking must be "... be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias" (United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice). The case is not true with oil exploration activities and the impact it has on the local ecosystem of each indigenous community, and together the magnitude of destruction on a global scale is alarmingly high. Yet, the policies of oil extractions are made on the basis of economic profits and revenue generating aspects and the ecological impediments and the plight of the native life associated with it are not taken into consideration. This has led to injustice and disparity. In contemporary times, the indigenous people are waging a legal battle against several oil companies to protect their land and ecosystem. These fights are

important testimonials of the indigenous people reclaiming their rights despite the capitalistic political game. Manari Ushigua, a tribal leader of the Sápara people, says, “Oil sustains the earth’s equilibrium. Below the oil, spirits live. The land has life.” (qtd. in Long)

On the global level, environmental intersectionality along with environmental justice has encouraged the indigenous people to put up a legal battle for their environment and culture. It coincides with the interest of the seventeenth principle of environmental justice, which states that every individual has an important role to play in protecting the planet. Conscious consumer choices must be made that depend sustainably on earth’s resources and result in minimum wastage. Every individual must re-evaluate and prioritise their lifestyle to ensure sustainability to recuperate the planet and persevere it for the present and future generations because, “The future is intersectional” (Thomas, ch. 5). The legal battles by the indigenous people against the oil companies and various other multinational corporations are an advocacy for sustainability and justice that would stop the exploitation and heal the damaged planet.

The lack of inclusion in the decisions and violence that the marginalised are subjected to had also made them the victims of green energy transition. The question of how clean is green energy extends to include the rights of the marginalised as well. Green energy transitions must include the consent of the indigenous community as well. Environmental justice principles also work to make consent an important part of any decision-making, and the thirteenth principle stands by it. It condemns any testing activities which include sampling any indigenous group for medicinal purposes like implementing particular procedures or vaccinations. The setting up of various green energy plants like solar cells or the wind turbines must get the consent of the communities

surrounding the areas that have been opted for construction. Thus, although a shift to green energy and sustainability can be the solution to the peak oil crisis, the rights of the indigenous and other marginalised communities must also be taken into account along with the environment so that the transition does not affect or exploit any of them.

The twelfth principle of environmental justice proclaims the need for urban and rural clean up and rebuilding of the cities and rural areas in such a way that they maintain balanced and harmonious relationship with the environment, celebrate cultural integrity and provide all the people with equal access to all the resources without any discrimination while at the same time preventing over exploitation. The eleventh principle of environmental justice advocates for a legal and natural relationship of the native people with the United States government and protects their sovereignty and self-affirmation. The drawback of this framework is the national barrier that it possesses but since the drafting of the seventeen principles, there have been certain reevaluations that have transformed the environmental movements into an international phenomenon with several grassroots struggles that have changed the course of history. As an individual one does not need to choose between the planet and people because real development and sustainable lifestyle can only be achieved if the green economy can coexist with social justice.

As an upcoming and evolving field of research and critical discourse, petrofiction as a literary genre vests literature with the prerogative to be the influential voice of change. The successive chapter provides a cynosure on the role of literature in envisioning a sustainable future, the importance of immediate energy shift, the critical enquiry of the petrofiction as the clarion call for immediate action to avoid an oil armageddon and includes the summation of the findings of this comprehensive critical exercise.