Chapter VII

Burning is the Cityscape

The analysis of the works of Heaney and Sreedhara Menon, on the motif/theme of deep ecology, with the approach of literary ecology and tinai-taxonomy, requires the compounding of the concept of Paalai tinai. A. K. Ramanujan explicates Paalai tinai as the landscape of desert waste, overseen by a demonic goddess of war ("On Ancient Tamil Poetics" 348). It has no specific location as any mountain or forest may be parched to a wasteland in the heat of summer. Paalai tinai is associated with the season of summer and the division of day, midday. This timescape is, in terms of ecology, conducive to depletion and desertification. The mindscape is the feeling/sentiment of separation. Paalai is also associated with waterless wells, stagnant water, clandestine love, elopement, fatigued elephant/tiger/wolf/lizard, wayfarers and bandits. The discussion/retrieval of this tinai is very relevant in literary ecological studies as most of the factors of Paalai are similar to those that ecosophists and environmentalists detest and fight against. For example, the predatory city people, in one sense, are bandits. The occupation with which people of Paalai tinai are associated is robbery and their measuring vessel is kollappara, a kind of
deceptive vessel used by robbers. Madhav Gadgil, environmental scientist, has indicated that from human ecological perspective three categories of people can be recognized ("Reckoning with Life" (58).

[They are] ecosystem people, biosphere people and ecological refugees. The ecosystem people are those living close to the earth in their traditional habitats, meeting most of their needs by gathering natural resources, or producing them through subsistence agriculture or animal husbandry from their own environments. Tribals, artisans, fisher folk, subsistence agriculturists and herders have lived in this fashion for generations, in the process evolving cultural traditions of prudent resource use. But most ecosystem people of India today have lost control over their resource base, which has been overexploited and depleted to meet commercial demands. This has turned them into ecological refugees. (58)

The city people or modern citizens, inhabitants of Paalai tinai are biosphere people, or in other words, bandits. They are predators, producing nothing, polluting land, air and water. City people consume the lion share of world’s non-renewable fossil energy.
The uripporul or mindscape of works analyzed in this chapter is the feelings of environmental exiles/ecological refugees. In a recent collection of critical essays on urban experiences, studies on Malayalam poems composed by poets who live in cities and towns, Cementukattile Kavita-Padanangal [Studies on the Poetry of Cement Jungle], almost all the thirty critics in Malayalam speak about the restlessness or rootlessness felt by villagers who migrate into cities in search of jobs and modern life. This has been a familiar theme in Malayalam poetry, since 1950s. But, it is N. N. Kakkad [1927-1987], the Malayalam poet, who has voiced fully the hazards of urbanization. Malayalam poet and critic P. Narayana Kurup in "Manushya Durandathinte Naagarika Vykrutam" [Urban Malformation of Human Crisis] (Cementukattile Kavita-Padanangal 1-10) remarks that Kakkad has attempted to create an awareness of the cruelty/crisis of modern man and urban life by portraying images of dragons and ghosts and that the malformation of modern towns and the consequent degradation/marginalisation of villages manifest as a nightmarish undercurrent/obsession in Kakkad’s poems (4-5). A Malayalam literary critic P. Renjithkumar has analyzed the poems of Kakkad on the basis of tinai concept, in his study, “Kakkadum Tinasankalpanavum” (Haritaniroopanam 194-
198). He calls the cityscape as nagaratinai (195). Renjithkumar observes:

In tinai concept a literary work is included in a particular tinai mainly on the basis of its uripporul [mindscape]. In most of Kakkad’s urban poems, the main theme is the sufferings of a rustic, destined to lead a sacrificial life at a cruel city, dependent of the city. His mindscape is the feeling of alienation/separation from his love or his dear village. Though this feeling is similar to that of Paalai tinai, other factors of urban poems undergo much transformation. This change is the change from the timescape of the simple tribal life of agriculture and animal husbandry to that of the highly complex urban life at government offices and factories. (195)

Renjithkumar goes on to indicate "the demonic encroachment of urban civilization" (195) and "the resistance/defence" (195) by those who want/wish to maintain/preserve the traditional rural culture. Summing up the Paalai tinai or the nagaratinai in Kakkad’s city poems, this critic comments:

The undercurrent of the majority of city poems is the feeling of estrangement of one who has to migrate into the town from his dear countryside for livelihood. The countryside
exists only in the broken memories and dreams of this town-dependent protagonist, destined to live in the terrible loneliness of the fire-flashing desert. From the town, where there is not even a single tree, he dreams to the realms of soothing, dark shades of purity and luxuriance of plants.

(197)

In fact, “Mullai and Marutam tinais brighten in the mind of the protagonist” (107). So, *virital/verpiriyal* [separation/departure], the mindscape, can be viewed from the farm/ruralscape. In Sreedhara Menon’s poem “Aa Kannukal” [Those Eyes] (*VKI* 249), urbanity is viewed as a smoky vehicle:

> When the smoky vehicle of urbanity seeks departure,
> My generous homeland comes green to memory:
> Circled by small, lovely hills that rock my mind,
> Farm fields like waterways along valleys,
> The land that proffers yellow cucumbers
> In burning summer. (*VKI* 249)

It is the village that is the norm, not the town or city. When the bus from the town announces that it is moving to the town, the poet stands where he is, that is, in the village and even the smoky bus, bids farewell to the speaker/poet. Burning summer and fire-flashing
sand desert are the signs of Paalai/Nagara Tinai. This forms the title of this chapter.

Sreedhara Menon’s poem “Museum Paarkkil” [In the Museum Park] (484) has city as land. But, the thoughts of the poem are those of a lover of nature and deep ecologist. The poet’s own note runs as follows:

Man is full of vanity and egoism. He thinks that he is the paragon of animals. Even the poets view nature only as the background of man’s life. Man loves but only upon the backdrop formed by birds with fondling beaks and blossomed trees. Man is not that much significant, but only a strand in nature. This attitude may not slacken the joy of life. The museum park is not the wedding bower of humans only, but of plenty of plants and animals. Will this confluence be more delightful? (484)

Thoughts regarding healthy habits and aesthetic experiences of agricultural village life have been neglected by those who lead a modern life in towns. Suburbs and the outskirts of cities and towns are considered to be the “other” which can be used as areas to be filled in by the dirt and waste of cities and towns. Ponds, once the centre of refreshing bathing, vivacious get-together and other
ecologically harmonious experiences, have become synonymous with pollution, immoral traffic and perdition. Sreedhara Menon’s “Thrissoorile Vadakkechira” [North Pond at Thrissoor] (VKI 853-855) presents the contrast between the plights of the pond in the past and the present. The contrast is also between the eco-friendly habits of the epochs of traditional agriculture and the utter negligence of natural water pools after the craze for urbanization.

Once, the pond was so clean and full of pristine water that, if somebody had seen it, he/she would crave for taking a bath in it. Now, the pond is so dirty and disgusting that, owing to the irresponsibility of civil authorities and the lack of social, civic or ecological sense of people, the very sight of the ‘sacred pool’ of the past evokes an inter se desire to have a bath elsewhere. This water-mine has become so much nauseating. The poet ruminates over a time when even celestial beings wished to have a dip or plunge in the pond’s pure crystalline water. The water store appeared to be as wide as the blue sky above it. This water-mirror was available for all, even for the celestials. Morning, evening and such divisions of the day, even in extreme summer, enjoyed the sight. Children entertained themselves and the onlookers upon the shore by plunging and swimming, above and under the water level. The
regional residents washed their clothes by beating them on the granite steps of the pond. The sound of beating clothes echoed. Female devotees after having a full bath, wearing wet clothes, went to the nearest temple. On the way, the water drops from their clothes moistened the granite steps.

People could enjoy summer nights of excruciating heat because of the blissful pond. They sought this inexhaustible water source for their lengthy and luxurious baths, after smearing their complete body with oil. The pond was a meeting site of friends and they hovered around this centre. The poet imagines that the evening wind also took bath in the pond. The leaves of the banyan trees expressed rapture when they were kissed by the cool wind. When the people stopped their walk and talk, from the window of the sky, the smiling moon bloomed in the water pool as a dreaming lotus. On certain auspicious moon-lit nights, celestial women or deities came and took bath in the pond. They returned to their celestial abode only after offering their oblations to the presiding deity of the nearby temple. People recognize their visitations from the fragrance left by the flowers, which might have embellished their tresses. Even the stars in the sky disappeared only after listening to the early-morning hymns sung by the devotees after taking their holy
plunge in the beloved and divine pond. So, in many ways, the pond functioned as the re/source of the happiness, purity, health and devotion of the region.

So far the analysis has been upon the first eleven stanzas of the poem, “Thrissoorile Vadakkechira” (853-4). The next ten stanzas (854-5) present the present condition, the pathetic plight of the pond. Nobody in the past would have imagined such a fall of the pond. All the former glories have gone. Sources of water have depleted. The tragic downfall of the pond is presented through the myth of two deities—the goddess of glory and that of perdition. The Elder Sister is the evil one. It seems that Her Younger Sister, the goddess of glory, has given the Elder the throne. The Elder now rules the premise of the pond or the entire area surrounding the central pond. The surrounding stonewall of the pond is still there; but, the sandy pond has become a grassy and thorny abode of cobras. If someone is very particular to take a bath in the pond—because for many, this water pool has special sanctity—one will be attacked by mosquitoes.

The authorities are least bothered about the pond’s fallen condition. From the Peechi dam chlorinated water comes through pipe lines. The authorities find the distribution of water through pipe
lines remunerative as the water is sold for money. Let the wretched insist upon a full plunge in ponds! Political leaders shout in public platforms about the sufferings and scarcities of the needy and the poor. The leaders can appease the common people. But, only the rich can fetch water for a full or complete bath. Formal letters are exchanged between the temple authorities and the municipal officers regarding the retrieval of the pond. The people have started urination in the pond. The number of devotees who come to the temple situated south to the pond decreased. Numberless sacred water pools have disappeared in course of time. But, this one in this way degraded because of the civil and moral degeneration arouses sorrow in the poet. A symbol of glory once, the pond is now a symbol of ethical lapses.

The last stanza is a prayer to blue-dark rain clouds to come and shower choice blessings. The pond’s appearance is as that of a lady declathed before an assembly. Her shame can be covered/revoked only by supplying clothes. A good rain can fill the pond with sufficient water store. The comparison/allusion the poet makes is the episode of declathing Paanchaali by devilish princes, in the presence of her five husbands at the royal assembly. She prayed to Lord Krishna, who is described to be blue-dark-rain-cloud-coloured.
Krishna supplied never-ending clothes to Paanchaali. The princes became tired of declothing this *bhoomikanyaka* [daughter of Earth or earth maiden]. A literal meaning of the word ‘paanchaali’ is the woman who has five clothes. Any piece of land has more than one cloth or covering because of the supply of diverse seasons like rain, winter, spring and so on.

The first stanza, if one reads in the original, is actually a criticism of the modernity’s democratic rule:

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Panda vadakkechirayonnu chennu
Kandal kulicheedanamennonu thonnum
Pandaramam vaazchayiinnatonnu
Kandal kulicheedanamennonu thonnum (VKI 853)
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‘Pandaramam vaazcha’ means the modern democratic/bureaucratic rule. This meaning becomes clear when the reference to Saktan Thampuran in the twentieth stanza is placed here. It was Saktan, a former royal ruler of Thrissoor, who made ponds like Vadakkechira.

The paradigms of modernity like urbanization and the supply of chlorinated water —supposed to be medicated; the poet uses the phrase *marunnu vellam* [medicated water] (VKI 854)—are against traditional ecological balance and a new class of subalterns, ecological refugees emerge. People who cannot adjust or adopt with
the so-called ‘medicated’ water or those who develop allergy or some kind of sickness are forced to leave their home region.

The deep faith of former royal rulers in nature is a recurring theme of Sreedhara Menon. The poem “Valarthu Makal,” discussed in a previous chapter, “Restorative is Mother Forest,” of this study, has shown that the Kochi king sending an ailing elephant to Mother Forest. In “Vellilavalli,” discussed in “Mysterious is the Mother’s Providence,” Mother Nature rescues the Mosanda vine. Here, the poet implicates that only rainy clouds can save the pond.

Another aspect of the poem “Vadakkechira” is the identification of the pond/land with the feminine. Any kind of conquest, even urbanization, is seen as a kind of rape. The comparison/allusion to Paanchaali—declothing of the daughter of the Earth—in this poem can be placed in the context of Heaney’s description of the British conquest of Ireland in “Ocean’s Love to Ireland,” analyzed in the previous chapter “Mysterious is the Mother’s Providence.” One of the central assumptions of deep ecology is female centrism. What Elmer Andrews observes, quoted below, about Heaney is also applicable to Sreedhara Menon:

Dominated by a sense of nature’s powers, he sees history, language and myth as bound up with nature, with territory
and landscape. The landscape is sacramental. He is peculiarly responsive to the emblematic character of natural objects and processes. They evoke in him a deep sense of the numinous. He is open to intuitions that relate human female psychology and sexuality to the landscape. Landscape becomes a memory, continuity, and a piety a fecund mother.

(3)

Another aspect that urges to place Heaney with Sreedhara Menon—especially Heaney’s “Personal Helicon” (NSP 9), analysed in the earlier chapter “Bountiful is the Field of Threshing,” and Sreedhara Menon’s “Thrissoorile Vadakkechira”—is the ecoaesthetic experience resulting from the congress and collaboration of the memories of undefiled water pools in countryside, sky reflected in the pristine water, the surroundings/backdrop of green plants and weeds and humans partaking in the panorama.

Sreedhara Menon’s poetic drama “Mrutasanjeevani” [The Elixir of Life] (VKII 165-190) was composed during the Silent Valley Movement [1978-82]. The drama was included in the anthology of ecological literary works published by Prakruti Samrakshana Samiti in 1982, under the title Vanaparvam.
The poetic drama contains characters that are representatives of their classes. They have not been given personal names. The Kuravan and the Kurathi belong to the traditional forest tribe, but for a very long time they have been acclimatized to farming villages. When the drama commences they are the first to enter.

Forest is the background. There is the Contractor who is ready to give them menial jobs on daily wages. At first they hesitate to assist the Contractor, as they have to share the sin of felling trees. The Kuravan says that they are the children of forest and as such they do not cooperate in any business that cut down trees. As per their traditional belief, told them by their venerable aged of yore, the sin of felling trees equals the killing of bearded maharshis [sages/saints]. The Contractor reminds them that the time of sages has already gone, and the modern age has been established. The government has ordered to construct a dam in the forest area. The wild trees have to be removed. The Kuravan tells his wife, the Kurathi to leave the spot, as they cannot resist against the Contractor and his party. They have money, people and guns. That forest has many stories of their atrocities. At this juncture, the Kurathi recollects/recites a song sung by the Mother Forest, broadcast by the weeping wind. The song contains the details of the
tragic condition of Her children. The trees have been cut down. Bald-headed hills, withered lakes, haunted birds, weeping animals and the like force the Mother of all these to curse humans.

But, though the Kuravan and the Kurathi do not obey the Contractor in felling trees, the dam builders tempt them. They become modern laborers. But, their happiness lasted only for four years. The non-sustainable developmental activities like the destruction forests to build dams and produce electrical current and expand irrigation have their own repercussions. When the Kuravan and the Kurathi saddle their child in the cradle, the song of the dam comes to his mind. Even after four years, the construction has not been completed.

The promises of the champions of progress remain unfulfilled. Many poor laborers have perished. And, moreover; the laborers lose jobs when the dam is completed, though the leaders had promised otherwise. The couples decide to go to the town to fetch some job. They get employment in an industrial firm but their child becomes sick. After the child's death, they go to a city. There, the city goondas and police rape the woman. They return to the forest.

This time the forest tribe resists the felling of trees. They stand hugging trees and the contractors find that even the police do not
remove the tribes. It seems that the Sanyasi and his daughter Giribaala are with the Tribals. The contractors and his men leave the spot. The Journalist approaches the Sanyasi. The Sanyasi divulges his plans and lines of action. That area, the Sanyasi says, is reserved for the forest people. There are about a hundred families. The Sanyasi runs a school for the residents. A firm is there for artisans who can weave many things, using the locally available forest resources. A nursery, garden, olery orchard, cow farm, beehives and the like are there. The people start work early morning and there are no compulsions. The voluntary work is pleasure to them. When the evening comes, they bathe in river and have dances and songs. As they do daily physical work, no separate, fashionable and expensive exercises are needed to maintain health. Thus, the whole residents belong to a single family. The essence of the Sanyasi’s philosophy—which is followed by the forest tribe—contains three basic points, namely will power, the father, nature, the mother, and conscience, the underlining morality. All these are vivacious in maharshis. The Sanyasi, in the forms of tales, teaches all these values.

Giribaala, the Sanyasi’s daughter, enlightens the people with the sacred story of Kacha and Devayaani. Sage Sukra, Devayani’s
father, had to teach Kacha the secret mantra of Mrutasanjeevani [the elixir of life]. Mrutasanjeevani can even call back the dead to life. Kacha was sent by the Devas to the sage Sukra. Kacha propitiated Devayaani. Devayaani fell in love with Kacha. Asuras, of whom Sukra was the mentor/aachaarya, killed Kacha twice. Devayaani compelled Sukra to call back to life by resorting to Mrutasanjeevani mantra. Once Kacha was inside the belly of Sukraacharya. The Asuras had killed Kacha, grinded, powdered and mixed the parts and powder of Kacha’s body in the liquor, which unknowingly Sukraacharya took in. At this juncture, Sukra had no option but to teach Kacha Mrutasanjeevani mantra, so that Kacha would revive Sukra. Coming out of the belly of Sukra—in the process killing the sage—Kacha applied the Mrutasanjeevani mantra. Here, the Sanyasi interprets the importance/relevance of teaching and learning and propagating the resuscitational vitality of Mrutasanjeevani. People, all over the world, are wallowing in rampant sensualism. The revival of compassionate nature—nature in both the denotations, nature of humankind inclined towards sharing, symbiosis and austerity, and fecund and generous Mother Nature—in other words, conscience, is the need of the hour. Scholars like Kacha have thirst for knowledge; but the knowledge
they seek is the knowledge of violence and destruction. What the world now wants is the sacred pieces of knowledge like Mrutasanjeevani mantra to revitalize nature.

Then the Sanyasi invites the couple, the Kuravan and the Kurathi, to join the forest family. The Kuravan tells that the Sanyasi has saved them from total damnation and emancipated from confusion. But, they do not join the forest family. They cannot fully share or assimilate what the venerable sage suggests. The Kurathi, out of desperation and shame, unable to forget the deep pollution of rape, ends her wretched life. The Kuravan leaves the Sanyasi and goes in search of those who polluted her. The Sanyasi cannot completely console or pacify him. The Kuravan says to the Sanyasi that it is the way/method of the jungle. “If someone among us is caught by a tiger, we go in search of the tiger.” (190)

Like “Vadakkechira,” this work also portrays the evil effects of urbanization. The subalternity of the Kuravan and the Kurathi as ecological refugees vindicate the inclusion of it in nagaratnai, cityscape or Paalai. There is nobody to desilence/voice the water pool except the sensitive poet. Only rainy clouds can retrieve the polluted water source. For discovering that idea, he has to allude to the Paanchaali-Krishna myth. Here, the Sukraacharya-Devayaani-
Kacha legend is resorted to. There is a journalist in the poetic drama, “Mrutasanjeevani” to take down the Sanyasi’s remarks and report to the entire world regarding the modernity’s encroachment upon the territory of forest. The depletion, dehydration or desertification of the North Pond has been indirectly compared to the declothing of the earth’s daughter—declothing is the metonym for rape—and here, the physical rape—the Kurathi was molested by the police—happens. The couples are sacrificial victims at the altar formed by modernity.

The allusion to the puranic /ancient Indian legend needs much explication. ‘Giribaala’ literally means ‘mountain girl.’ It is she who sings the legend of life-giving Mrutasanjeevani. Devayaani is the benign girl in the legend. Devayaani has the literal meaning of ‘a girl who travels towards the good.’ She was able to stop the bad habit of her father that is taking drinks every night. There is only malice in the minds of men of her clan Asuras. Devas, the opposite clan, extolled by everybody as the good, have also deceptive practices. Kacha lives in the monastery/school of Sage Sukraacharya as per the directions of the Deva clan. By love Devayaani revives him and reforms the sage. The elixir or
Mrutasanjeevani is nothing but love and the springs of love have not been dried up in the minds of the two girls Devayaani and Giribaala. The major woman character, the Kurathi is a silent sufferer and does not assert. The three kinds of subalternity, of race, class and gender, together squash her. The woman's voice is absent.

Heaney and Sreedhara Menon portray 'cityscape' from the perspectives of the rustic and the wild peoples. They are basically farmer poets. Even the term 'cityscape' can be misleading as they have seldom described the landscape of cities or towns to a large extent. The term is used in this chapter only because of the convenience of tinai taxonomy—as it is the translation of the Malayalam term 'nagaratinai.' The construction of nagaratinai as a deep ecological version of Tolkappiyar's Paalai tinai is vindicated, as this tinai has no specific geographical location unlike all the other four prominent tinais, namely Mullai, Kurinchi, Marutam and Neytal. In the Kerala context, The five major landscapes, Mullai, Kurinji, Marutam, Neytal and Paalai-- Forestscape, Mountain valleyscape, Agrifield/villagescape, Sea/lakeshorescape and desertscape respectively—are, in fact, the geographical divisions of Malayalanadu/Kerala, from east to west, from Sahya Mountains to
the Arabian Sea. The only exception is the Paalai/desertscape, which exists only during extreme summer. During the Sangam Epoch, Kerala or Malabar was part of Tamil kingdoms and the Sangam poets, who wrote in Tamil, belonged to the geographical area, which, at present, is called Kerala. One prominent geographical/ecological classification of Keralam is Malanaadu, Edanaadu and Teerapradesam—mountainous region, middle region and seashore respectively. These, in tinai, are Mullai and Kurinji, Marutam and Neytai. There is no desert in Kerala unlike Rajasthan, Deccan or Arabia. But, temporary sand-deserts are formed during extreme summer—during the months from January to April—especially, in two districts Paalakkadu and Alappuzha. For the tropical tree Paala [Paalai in Tamil], which starts flowering during winter season, just before the summer, extreme summer and the waterless sand are favorable. It is this tree that gives the nomenclature to this tinai. So unlike other four major tinais, as there is no fixed/permanent landscape associated with Paalai, it can be applied as a literary critical tool only by intermingling it with Mullai and Marutam. This is the method adopted by Renjithkumar (195), as discussed earlier in this chapter, in his construction of nagaratina/ cityscape/ Paalai tinai and the analysis of Kakkad’s
poetry. Such a feature in tinai analysis is termed tinayinakkam or tinamayakkam.

Marutam is the dominant tinai in Sreedhara Menon's poetry, not only in his poems analysed in the chapter titled "Bountiful is the Field of Threshing," but also in the poem "Aa Kannukal" included in this chapter. "Aa Kannukal" contains cityscape only in the sense that it is combined with marutam tinai. But, "Mrutasanjeevani" combines cityscape with Mullai, as there is abundant forestscape. Yet, the uripporul/mindscape of Kuravan and Kurathi is that of environmental exiles/ecological refugees, forcefully separated from their homeland/bioregion and the work comes under Paalai tinai. Their migration to town in search of employment is a recurring motif of Malayalam literary works that can be classified under those of cityscape. Their marginalisation/subalternity, a prominent topic of social/cultural ecology, relates Gadgil's observations, quoted earlier, with cityscape. Likewise, the marginalisation and vulgarization of the water pool, that is the North Pond at Thrissoor makes "Thrissoorile Vadakkechira" a cityscape poem. The facts or factors like 'stagnant water' [pollution] and 'clandestine love' [immoral traffic] described in the poem connects it with Tolkkappiyar's concept of Paalai tinai.
Yet, both these poets, Sreedhara Menon and Heaney, never move much outside the Mutal Porul—landscape and timescape—of marutam tinai. P.R. King remarks:

The rural landscape of Heaney’s childhood forms the background to many of his poems and is frequently the central subject of the best. His work often reminds us that until recently Ireland has been the only country in Europe to retain something approaching a genuinely peasant culture, and the traditions and rituals of that culture, together with the spirit of Ireland’s rural history, emerge in many of Heaney’s poems. (190)

King’s remarks, as a rule, suit Sreedhara Menon also, of course, with the difference that Sreedhara Menon speaks about the Edanaadu/ midland region of Kerala. In the Kerala context, the midland region is marutam tinai. Sarah Caldwell observes:

The most visible landscape in Kerala...is the landscape connected with food: coconut trees and fields full of rice paddy, in an endless panorama of green. Almost all of the lowland area between the seashore and the mountains is heavily planted with small terraces of rice paddy bordered by strands of coconut trees...the majority of Kerala’s landscape
is typified by the green web of villages and fields. This is marutam, the fertile plains, where life thrives. (106-107)

Regarding the 'Keralaness' in Sreedhara Menon’s poetry, Ayyappa Paniker observes:

Landscape and humanscape combine to form a sensibility that animates it [Sreedhara Menon’s poetry]. A poet gets a poetic personality because his poetry has the foundation of a local habitation and name—in terms of Tolkkaappiyar; [it] has a Tinai and Porul. The Kerala village—the midland village, river, field and dry land—is Vyloppilly’s [Sreedhara Menon’s] tinai. The natural simplicity of the everyday life of those who live there is the basic Porul [essence]. ("Vyloppillikkavitayile Keraaleeyata" 72)

Deep ecologists and similar schools of ecosophists can recognize, retrieve or revivify only the two tinais, namely Mullai and Marutam. Sreedhara Menon has Marutam as the major tinai. The cityscape poems discussed in this chapter resist the expansion of modern industrial civilization and in this sense they are an extension of his marutam poems.