Introduction

As the new century, the twenty first century, has commenced to bloom, the environmental concerns have become of supreme significance. The globe is facing problems, which harm the biosphere and human life in alarming proportions that may soon become unsolvable. Kate Soper remarks in What is Nature that only the enhancing of the survival and flourishing of the rest of nature best serve human interests.

'Deep' ecologists invite us to view the matter in this light. Arne Naess, who is usually credited with laying the foundations of a 'deep ecology' perspective, defends his eco-centric and bio-centric argument by reference to a philosophy of human self-realization. Naess's 'ecosophy' [the term he has coined for a philosophical world-view inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere] justifies its call for the development of a deep identification of individuals with all life forms. (256)

Even the use of the term 'nature' has become highly complex or problematic. Soper explicates the possible implications of that term:

Nature refers to the object of study of the natural and the biological sciences; to issues in metaphysics concerning the
differing modes of being the natural and the human; and to the environment and its various non-human forms of life. The natural is both distinguished from the human and the cultural, but also the concept through which we pose questions about the more or less natural or artificial quality of our own behaviour and cultural formations; about the existence and quality of human nature; and about the respective roles of nature and culture in the formation of individuals and their social milieu...In recent times, it has come to occupy a central place on the political agenda as a result of ecological crisis, where it figures as a general concept through which we are asked to re-think our current use of resources, our relations to other forms of life, and our place within, and responsibilities towards the eco-system. (2)

The complex dimensions of ‘nature’ as explicated by Kate Soper in her *What is Nature?*—a basic classic of ecocriticism/green studies/literary ecology—can be placed with the usual definition/description of the term ‘nature’: ‘Nature is “the physical, non-human environment, including wildlife and wilderness, flora and fauna, and so on; but also the ‘essence’ of anything, including humanity, in which case it is often spelt with a capital N”’ (Coupe
303). Deep ecological studies take for granted the complex dimensions and diverse implications of 'nature.' Deep ecology, propounded by the renowned environmentalist Norwegian professor Arne Naess, is a major attempt for arriving at a solution of the baleful global situation. "Deep ecology is a radical form of ecology which challenges anthropocentrism and which insists that human beings must subordinate their interests to those of the planets" (Coupe 302). Describing deep ecology as a paradigm, Fritjof Capra in his *The Web of Life* observes:

The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, which mean they are interconnected and interdependent. For example, stabilizing world population will only be possible when poverty is reduced worldwide. The extinction of animal and plant species on a massive scale will continue as long as the Southern Hemisphere is burdened by massive debts. Scarcities of resources and environmental degradation combine with rapidly expanding populations to lead the breakdown of local communities, and to the ethnic and tribal
violence that has become the main characteristic of the post-
Cold-War era.

Ultimately, these problems must be seen as just
different facets of one single crisis, which is largely a crisis of
perception. It derives from the fact that most of us, and
especially our large social institutions, subscribe to the
concepts of an outdated worldview, a perception of reality
inadequate for dealing with our overpopulated, globally
interconnected world. (3-4)

Environmental activists and philosophers all over the world like
Fritjof Capra, Vandana Shiva, Charlene Spretnak, Claude Alvares,
Bill Devall and Arne Naess are optimistic regarding the solutions to
the major problems of the globe. They require a radical shift in
mankind’s perceptions, perspectives and value systems. Capra
opines that there are the symptoms of “the beginning of such a
fundamental change of world view in science and society, a change
of paradigms as radical as the Copernican Revolution” (The Web 4).
The recognition that a profound change of perception and thinking
is needed if humankind have to survive has not yet reached most of
the political leaders and the professors of large universities. Capra
calls the new worldview “the systemic point of view (4):”
From the systemic point of view, the only viable solutions are those that are 'sustainable.' The concept of sustainability has become a key concept in the ecology movement ... ‘A sustainable society is one that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations.’ This ... is the great challenge of our time: to create sustainable communities, i.e. social and cultural environments in which we can satisfy our needs and aspirations without diminishing the chances of future generations. (4)

The systemic view is a basic axiom of deep ecology. The definition of social paradigm/world view by Capra—he uses the two terms interchangeably—runs as an undercurrent of the present study. Capra defines paradigm: “a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself” (5-6). Social and cultural environmentalists belonging to the groups of deep ecology and ecofeminism share Capra’s observations upon the details of the existing paradigm or worldview, which will be dethroned from the centre of domination. Capra summarizes the important assumptions of the outdated and outgoing paradigm:
The paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of entrenched ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building-blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and...the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows a basic law of nature. (6)

Placing Capra's suggestions and aspirations in India's national context in this age of globalization and decolonization—though diametrically opposite trends, these two have come to stay and grow—one can arrive at the observations of Professor Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri, Malayalam poet and Conservation activist. In "Prakruti, Janaadhipathyam, Aatmeeyata" [Nature, Democracy, Spirituality] he speaks about the intellectual slavery of Indians (5). In spite of the attainment of political liberty, Indians
are inclined more and more towards imitating the European culture and internalizing the Western concepts of development.

The European mind believes that nature, the biotic and the abiotic things, is for humans and by exploiting them a paradise of progress can be created for man on earth and by planning that paradise can be maintained forever. (5)

All disciplines like history, religion, social behavior, technology and political justice have been devised and executed accordingly by the Western powers. They have succeeded in propagating and imposing their way of looking at life and declaring this globally dominant worldview as the only one worth discussing and pursuing. This view has been questioned and resisted by apostles of non-violence, environmentalism and such counter cultural/alternative movements. A reputed environmentalist Claude Alvares remarks, “the dominant, domineering images of our world are of Science and Violence” (68-69) and that “the more science, the more the violence.” (69)

The global growth of science and technology signifies the deepening of newer and more excruciating forms of torture. Alvares marks out the activities of modern economic development as “indirect war and violence (69).” “The construction of a dam in the
midst of a natural river course, the destruction of the catchment-area forests, the uprooting of thousands of living organisms and beings” (69) are war against nature and non-modern people. The claims of the Western scientific tradition is distinguished from other structures of thinking like the Chinese, Indian, Red Indian and all others what the West describe ‘the tribal’/ ‘the primitive.’ Alvares indicates that the structures of thinking of non-Europeans have no ambition of monopolizing the whole globe (72).

Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri indicates that India and China have maintained for thousands of years a culture and style of life different from that of the Western. The ancient Indian poet Kalidasa uses the phrase vinayaadhaanam [the inculcation of humility] as the synonym of education. (“Prakruti” 5-6) The ancient Indian ecological wisdom is not basically different from the educational wisdom and it has permeated into each and every atom of India (6). The structure of thinking is moulded by education. The awareness of this is experiential, rather than experimental or rational epistemological process of the West. Such an Indian, as disciplined by ‘vinayaadhaanam,’ stands with humility before nature.
According to Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri, the retrieval of humility before nature has dawned in Europe. This can be recognized in the enthusiasm exhibited by the European thinkers in studying diligently the sayings of the ancient Greek Sage Heraclites.

(9)

The long-range deep ecology, expostulated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, is such an attempt. Bill Devall, Charlene Spretnak and many reputed environmental thinkers have explicated and expanded the probing and possibility of deep ecology. This has constituted the fundamental perspective and framework of the present study.

This study purports to interpret the works of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney [b. 1939] and the Malayalam poet Vyloppillil Sreedhara Menon [1911-85]. These two are regional writers – Heaney of Ireland and Sreedhara Menon of Kerala. They are nature poets as well. These poets are called 'regional writers' by resorting to the concept of 'bioregion' or 'bioregionalism.' "Bioregion is a natural region, exhibiting both stability and diversity, which is defined by its ecological coherence" (Coupe 302). Hence one guiding assumption adopted by this study is Glen Love’s stance quoted below:
While critical interpretation tends to regard ego-consciousness as the supreme evidence of literary and critical achievement, it is eco-consciousness which is a particular contribution of most regional literature, of nature writing; and of among other ignored forms and works, passed over because they do not seem to respond to anthropocentric assumptions and methodologies. ("Revaluing Nature: Towards an Ecological Criticism" 230)

As the writers under study belong to “under-developed” regions, ideas, ideals and ideologies embedded in their works do not get sufficient recognition from the postmodern critics. The so-called “postmodernism” is the cultural product of post industrialism and globalization/re-colonization. Long-range deep ecology, or its counter part in literary study, that is, literary ecology or ecocriticism, is a counter movement and hence it is a “post modernism of resistance” (Madhusoodanan, Katha 395-415). Kate Soper remarks:

Postmodernist forms of scepticism about nature and ecological critiques of Enlightenment...have put in question Western models of progress and have sought to expose the oppressive dimensions of the faith in scientific rationality and
its associated 'humanist' commitments. Many in the Green movement have denounced the technocratic Prometheanism of the Enlightenment project, and have argued that the 'anthropocentric' privileging of our own species encouraged by its 'humanism' has been distorting of the truth of our relations with nature and resulted in cruel and destructive forms of dominion over it. They have criticized Western 'instrumental rationality' as responsible for abusive and alienating exploitations of the environment and its other life forms, and have argued that its scientistic approach must yield to a more proper sense of our actual dependency on the eco-system and of our organic ties and affinities with the earth and its various species. In these and similar critiques, ecological politics clearly subscribes to key themes of postmodernist argument, which has equally cast doubt on the emancipatory claims of Enlightenment thinking, and regards its universalist 'humanist' commitments as the vehicle of an ethnocentric and 'imperialising' suppression of cultural difference. (5)

The following findings of Vandana Shiva regarding the Euro-centered and male-centered modernity and its violence of
reductionism are relevant for this study. Vandana Shiva describes the violence as violence against women, nature, the beneficiaries of knowledge and knowledge (26). The modernity’s reductionist science excludes other traditions of knowledge in three ways: ontological, as it does not take care of other properties, epistemological as other ways of perceiving and knowing are not recognized and sociological, as the non-specialist/ non-expert is deprived of the right to access knowledge and a claim on it (30). The views of Vandana Shiva have formulated the frontiers of this study.

Of the two writers, Sreedhara Menon gets more attention as his works, throughout his literary career, exhibit a deep concern for environmental topics and ecological aesthetics, or in other words, ‘environmentalism’ and ‘literary ecology.’ Only two anthologies of Heaney, namely *Death of a Naturalist* [1966] and *Door into the Dark* [1969]—works that belong to the early part of Heaney’s literary career—show such a profound consideration of related topics. As such, this study extends relatively more prominence to Sreedhara Menon. Moreover; he contributed to Conservation movements as an activist during the Silent Valley Movement in Kerala during the years 1978-1983.
The first chapter “Ecology, Deep Ecology and Literary Ecology” traces the historical evolution of different concepts of ecology and their explanations. Deep ecology is distinguished from other major concepts. The next chapter “A Place can Mean a State of Mind” is about literary ecology. The primary material for the study being literary works, deep ecology has to be discussed in the context of its application for the interpretation of such works. The concept of tinai is taken from the ancient Tamil poetics Tolkappiyam. The legendary author/compiler of Tolkappiyam, Tolkkaappiyar has connected place, time and mind for evolving a method for classifying literary works without prejudice to ecological considerations. Hence the chapter title relates place and mind and it is taken from Heaney (Seeing Things 7). The significance of Heaney and Sreedhara Menon as writers of ‘bioregionalism’ and ‘ecologism’ is also dealt with in this chapter.

The third chapter “Mysterious is the Mother’s Providence” starts the analysis of individual poems. The key metaphor of deep ecology, the Earth as the Great Mother, is embedded in Sreedhara Menon’s poems like “Vellilavalli” and “Karkkidakathile Kaakkakal” and Heaney’s “Ocean’s Love to Ireland.” The title is from Sreedhara Menon (VKI 859). The notes of regionalism and the Earth-Mother
motif in this chapter lead to the discussion of the term ‘bioregion.’ The Earth-Mother motif manifests in the next chapter “Restorative is the Mother Forest.” The title is from Sreedhara Menon (VKI 922). The problem of desilencing living beings other than the modern dominant humans also crops up in this chapter. Sreedhara Menon’s “Pennum Puliyum,” “Valarthu Makal” and “Sahyante Makan” are analyzed. Heaney’s Sweeney-poems are discussed along with the deep ecological topic of proworldly asceticism. Sreedhara Menon’s “Narthaki” “Rsyasringan” and “Ujjvila Muhoortam” are also interpreted.

The next chapter “Bountiful is the Field of Threshing” begins with the analysis of Heaney’s “Wife’s Tale” and “Blackberry Picking” along with Sreedhara Menon’s “Kaakka,” “Kadalkaakkakal” and “Kariyilaampeechikal.” Harvesting and propitiating the Mother Earth by rites form the theme of the next set of poems--Sreedhara Menon’s “Kannikkoythu” and Heaney’s “At Potato Digging”--analyzed in this chapter. The third part deals with poems on waterfall and floodscape like Heaney’s “Water Fall” and Sreedhara Menon’s “Varshaagamam.” Heaney and Sreedhara Menon are poets of farmland; and, as such, rich and diverse experiences abound in this chapter; and that uphold the title, “Bountiful is the Field of
Threshing." The Mother-Earth motif continues to the subsequent chapter "Sacrificing is the Naval of Bog Land." Heaney’s "The Tollund Man," "Kinship" and "The Song of the Bullets" are discussed. The immolatory fertility ritual of ancient bog land people is alluded in the title. The final chapter "Burning is the Cityscape" analyses the topics like post natural tinai, ecological refugees and marginalisation effected by urbanization in the poems like Sreedhara Menon’s "Mrutasanjeevani" and "Thrissoorile Vadakkechira." The title indicates a farmer poet’s view of the city. Sreedhara Menon describes the "smoky and speedy bus of civilization" that bids farewell to the poet, who stands firm-footed in his farm village (VKI 209).

As all the chapters discuss various aspects of long-range deep ecology, the title of this dissertation contains the term "motif." Collins Standard Dictionary defines motif as "the main element, idea etc., especially a theme, or subject that is repeated with various changes." Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary explicates motif as a usually recurring salient thematic element in a work of art. It is a dominant figure or central idea. This comparative study takes deep ecology as the central theme of Heaney and Sreedhara Menon.