Chapter II

A Place can Mean a State of Mind

The previous chapter has distinguished the science of the environment or ecology from ‘natural history.’ In the same way, the place of the ‘place’ or ‘bioregion’ in deep ecology and ecocriticism or literary ecology has to be discussed in detail. This chapter attempts to explicate terms like ‘bioregionalism,’ ‘ecosystem thinking’ ‘landscape narratives’ and ‘nature writing.’ For the same, the views of deep ecologists like Bill Devall, regionalists like the Chief Seattle and Rhonda Paisley, ecocritics like William Anderson and the writers under study, Heaney and Sreedhara Menon, are analysed. Ecocritical writings are distinguished from pastoral writings. The ancient Indian concepts of ‘Tinai’ and ‘Sahitya’ are explained in the context of deep ecology’s ‘ecosystem thinking.’

Land or place for the native/neo-ecologist/deep ecologist is bioregion. The reputed deep ecologist Bill Devall explicates:

Place is more than landscape--more than descriptions of landforms presented by scientists. Place is the life world of experience. By exploring the place wherein we dwell, we discover paradoxes and questions which draw us inward into an
affirmation of life that are always in process of discovering. ("Bioregion" 2)

As bioregion, land is not simply that gives food, shelter and sight but it feeds and shelters the mind and soul. Heaney also means this when he announces that "a place can mean a state of mind" (Seeing Things 7) and this line forms the title of this chapter.

The application of neoecological awareness/deep ecology for the interpretation of literary works demands the explication of the term 'interdependence.' In deep ecology interdependence is explained in the context of ecosystem study. When it is placed in the context of the interpretation of literary works, it is the region reflected in a work that is studied. The region is used in this study as a complex of landscape, timescape and mindscape. These three 'scapes' are as interdependent as the constituents of an ecosystem. The pre-modern Tamil literary critical term tinai, discussed in detail towards the end of this chapter, is more suitable than any other critical term to divulge the concepts of region, neo-ecological awareness, deep ecology, interdependence and the interpretation of literary works. Here, the region is the main character of the drama of life. The different characters like human beings, animals, plants, landscape and seasons produce the drama exemplifying the thesis of
interdependence. Fritjof Capra explains the concept of interdependence in the context of ecosystem:

All members of an ecological community are interconnected in a vast and intricate network of relationships, the web of life. They derive their essential properties and in fact, their very existence from their relationships to other things. Interdependence—the mutual dependence of all life processes on one another—is the nature of all ecological relationships. The behaviour of every living member of the ecosystem depends on the behaviour of many others. The success of the whole community depends on the success of individual members, while the success of each member depends on the success of the community as a whole (The Web of Life 290).

The study of a region or ecosystem foregrounding its interdependence, harmony or ecological equilibrium or its collapse has to assimilate neo-ecological awareness. It is contrasted with the traditional models of readings on ‘the treatment of Nature’ in literary works. The regionalist paradigm of eco-aesthetics differs from a traditional romantic regional reading. For example, take a traditional reading or literary convention like the ‘pastoral.’
'Pastoral' is "a literary convention which associates the country with innocence and the court or city with corruption; any literary work contrasting rural and urban life" (Coupe 303). Laurence has explicated the contrast between this kind of conventional/traditional reading and the new ecocritical one (65). Coupe, in the context of commenting upon North American critics like Leo Marx—the author of The Machine in the Garden—and Theodore Roszak—the author of Where the Waste Land Ends—observes that Marx's Book is a study of the development of the pastoral genre in North America after the intrusion of technology into the paradisal landscape initially found by the European settlers. Marx's point is that the sentimental, popular 'pastoral ideal' always has to look back to an idyllic past, to Arcadia or Eden, in order to have a framework within which to condemn the present; but, reality, whereby the necessity of returning from the idyllic retreat suggests a critique of escapism as much as the world escaped from...Roszak invokes a radical romantic tradition which both looks back to the 'old gnosis,' the forgotten wisdom of the ancients, and looks forward to green anarchism (65)
Here, the writer/critic considers the pastures and inhabitants as equals, without any tone or tint of patronizing attitude. But, the traditional or conventional onlooker looks down upon the regional drama of life directly or indirectly asserting one's sense of urban superiority. Jonathan Bate has also indicated the contrast between the conventional 'pastoralism' and the new 'greenism:'

For Clare [John], himself a farm-labourer, not a 'gentleman, like Wordsworth, 'pastoral poesy' is the life and the beauty in nature. It is available to give joy unto all, to elevate) even the 'simplest hearts'; when the shepherd's heart lifts with joy at the sight of a wild flower, that is poetry. Pastoral poetry has a permanent, enduring power—it is an evergreen language. (169-70)

Bate continues:

For modern criticism, however, pastoral poetry is historically and socially specific. Pace Clare, it is not really written by shepherds, it is a comforting aristocratic fantasy that covers up the real conditions of oppression and exploitation in feudal and neo-feudal agrarian economies. Raymond Williams writes with honest indignation: 'It is not easy to forget that Sydney's Arcadia, which gives a continuing title to English
neo-pastoral, was written in a park which had been made by
an enclosing a whole village and evicting the tenants.' (170)

Bate adds that the relationship between an ethnic group, a
particular rustic people or a tribe and a geographical region or
bioregion can be fully and comprehensively wrought only at the site
of ecological criticism:

For a poet, pastoral is the traditional mode in which that
relationship is explored. Pastoral has not done well in recent
neo-Marxist criticism, but is there is to be an ecological
criticism the 'language that is ever green' must be reclaimed
... An 'ideology' based on a harmonious relationship with
nature goes beyond in many ways goes deeper than, the
political model we have become used to thinking with. (170)

The attitude sometimes may be that of an imperial colonizer who
searches for undiscovered lands to be trampled upon or to be
exploited later. Analyzing the folklore in Malayalam, Raghava
Warriar observes:

Regarding ecology, in our folklores there are two
perspectives: One, man appears as only one strand of the
universe consisting plants, animals and birds. There man
has no privileges. No ownership. Man-Nature relationship is
based on friendliness and co-operation. In a changed perspective everything is seen as based upon ownership. Not only the environment, but also a division of humanity is viewed upon from the attitude of ownership woman has existence only under the ownership and protection of man--this is the message of such tales. (64)

From this observation it is clear that though Kerala has never been a colonizer, the perspectives of the Western modernity--imperialist, anthropocentred and phallocentred--have dawned and gradually developed, to an extent, on the same lines, notwithstanding the still existing primitive, pagan, pantheistic and goddess-centred cultures and worships. The influences of colonial modernity and post-Renaissance humanism have made the male-ownership-perspective more dominant.

Regionalist readings from the dominant male-ownership perspective cannot be deeply ecological and are unable to reflect the new ecological awareness. K.C. Narayanan remarks that ecoaesthetics is the discussion of how far a literary work extends to the modern life by the metaphorical presence of ecological images like land, water and plants (33). If works are viewed through the perspective of ecoaesthetics, three major fields of experience--
Nature, civilization and ecology--can be seen. In other words, ecoaesthetic works or ecological literary compositions serve as a site at which the literariness of the works--the aesthetic aspect--as well as their ecological awareness is discussed. Apart from their emotional or imaginative effect, the works should serve as a milieu where environmental exploitation, sustainability, survival of the biosphere and such ecological problems can be contemplated. When such ecological questions are considered the two perspectives in folktales of Kerala, as pointed out by Raghava Warriar, quoted earlier, will crop up. K.C. Narayanan also indicates two similar perspectives, as seen in world literature. Literary works can be broadly/mainly classified into two divisions --those that welcome the advent and advancement of modernity, civilization or modern culture and those that foreground the irreparable loss and unhealable wounds inflicted on environment and biosphere by the so called industrial development and progress ("Paristhiti Soundarya Sastram" [Ecoaesthetics] 31-40). The environmental perspective in modern civilization--as developed in the west about four centuries ago and later spread throughout the world--is for controlling and exploiting Nature. The concept metaphor of such ecological literature presents ‘man as the lord of the world.’ Any
kind of the analysis of the metaphorical presence of ecological images in such works will ultimately lead to a basic faith in the vast power and possibilities of man. A counter perspective, which shouts the action plan like "return to Nature" and the concepts like the "noble savage" emerged even at the very inception of the dominant main stream of modernity. The champions of this counter consciousness have been on the defensive side and they have tried to resist the over explorative and exploitative trends of modernity. Modernity is recognized as colonial, Eurocentric and male-centric. The champions of environmentalism and ecofeminism often join hands with the leading thinkers and writers who want to uplift the regionalist/natives/the down-trodden of the third world countries in a way to protect/preserve their region-bound identities. In this age of decolonization and new ecological awareness, regionalism in literature has got better status. Ecology is no longer the body of knowledge designed for European dominance of the world. Ecology has to do research upon region/bound traditional methods of conservation. Regionalism is not a synonym of parochialism or narrow mindedness. The legitimization of regionalism due to the change in word view has resulted in the accommodation of diversity of non-European cultures. If a common perspective from the
multi/cultural and non/modern ecological concepts as related to ecoaesthetics has to be found out it is the second point of view indicated by K.C. Narayanan --that is a non-hierarchical interrelationship between man and Nature. Environment is not merely for human consumption, but for conservation also. The relationship between man and Nature is not a fight for domination but one of creative co-operation or symbiosis. Man stands before the environment not as a master or the monarch of all he surveys but as a humble partner of the drama of life. Ideas and ideals of intellectual decolonization alter/native and counter proposals of development, an awareness of the dehumanizing effect of modernity’s modes of knowledge, all have contributed their share into the change effected in world view. The approval from environmental sciences and the accreditation by environmental politics go hand in hand with poet's nostalgic longing, pagan/pantheistic philosopher's logic and the provincial/primitive communities' inseparability from or innate relationship with their sacred earth, air, water, plants and animals. More than any other writing, Chief Seattle's Letter to American President Franklin Pierce in 1954 powerfully expresses any eco-friendly traditional
communities’ attitude (Illustrated Weekly 16-17). The Red Indian tribal leader writes:

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man...The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family. (16)

Towards the end of the letter, Chief Seattle makes a prophecy or gives a warning to the White: "This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The white too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed, and you will once night suffocate in your own waste" (Illustrated Weekly 17).
Here there are two passages from Rhonda Paisley, an activist of Irish regionalism, as quoted by Richard Kirkland in Literature and Culture in Northern Ireland Since 1965:

Often I have sat alone on a hillside close to the beach which I love to walk along and tried to take in to absorb into my being the beauty of this land ... It permeates my blood and the bond created can never be broken (26) ... To be a part of Ulster is not to be a geographical term nor a subtitle. It is an inheritance. It pulses through the landscape and the veins; we are born to it (27).

The bond between certain communities and their habitats has been a reality. Champions of counter-culture like S. Kappen may call the bond as 'ecotic.' He remarks, "For the vast majority of people especially in rural India, the earth and the heavens are an existential--religious need" ("Towards an Alternative" 51).

Going through these passages--Chief Seattle's Letter, of Irish regionalism, and the attitude of Indian rustic people--what is meant by the pre-industrial bioregionalism or the attachment to landscape and biotic environment can be understood.

The exemplifications of the Irish attitude and the Indian can be perceived in the works of Seamus Heaney and Vyloppillil Sreedhara
Menon respectively. Heaney's selected prose *Preoccupations* contains many passages that relate landscape and ecoaesthetic experience. "The Sense of Place" (131-149) connects landscape and mindscape: "There are two ways in which place is known and cherished ... One is lived, illiterate and unconscious, the other learned, literate and conscious. In the literary sensibility, both are likely to co-exist in as conscious and unconscious tension" (130). Sometimes, the sense of place rises to the level of religious experience. Speaking about Augrin Hill, Heaney remarks "Much of the flora of the place had a religious force, especially if we think of the root of the word in *religare* to bind fast. The single thorn-tree bound us to a notion of the potent world of fairies" (133). The attachment to a bioregion, which acts as the source of aesthetic, and even religious experience has already been discussed in this chapter. Heaney observes that it is not an Irish obsession, but a universal one:

This nourishment which springs from knowing and belonging to a certain mode of life is not just an Irish obsession, nor is the relationship between a literature and a locale with its common language, a particularly Irish phenomenon. (136)
It is this universality that makes eco-aesthetic appreciation a permanent mode of approaching literary works, or even all fields of knowledge and all walks of life. But, the analytical study of writers like Seamus Heaney reveals a strong preponderance of Irish regionalism. And this Irish question can be placed in the context of developing or devolving a counter consciousness or alter/native culture to that of the mainland or England and at a broader level to the west. Speaking in such a context, analyzing Irish ancestral voices, Richard Kirkland observes that "threatened by over/centralization, already subdued by a century, of increasing standardization...western man gropes instinctively for the security of sheltering rock" (Literature and Culture in Northern Ireland since 1965, 28). Some seek "once valid religions for that shelter" (28) and some try to achieve "a proper relationship with organic nature that can be saved" (28). All such approaches can be contained in a comprehensive term, which is regionalism.

Sreedhara Menon also expresses the connection between eco-aesthetic experience and landscape in his prose work on his memories of his poetic world, titled Kavyaloka Smaranakal:

Even if a whole city is described, no aesthetic feeling will be evoked in the listener. Let a slice of the experience of a
grasslet be culled and displayed, it will be enough to make any sensitive listener rouse with rapture. Our ancestors have lived in forests and, then, led an agricultural life before progressing into cities. The strings of our aesthetic sense vibrate with rate reverberations when pictures or imaginative ideas that have dissolved in our blood as racial memories from forest village lives come through poetry. The taproot of our aesthetic sense lies deep in forest or countryside. (14)

Sreedhara Menon prescribes the limits of aesthetic experience. In other words, all aesthetic feelings are ecological and as primordial images or archetypes they are evoked by poetry. As ancestors lived in forests and countryside they might have felt kinship with plants and animals. The racial memory of such kinship buried deep in the unconscious is stimulated by poets by cutting out a piece of experience from Nature and foregrounding it. Sreedhara Menon's remarks are neo-ecological, and archetypal.

Poet, art-critic and eco-spiritualist, William Anderson has conducted a full length study relating the revival of eco-awareness and the reappearance of ‘Green Man’ as the archetype of human kind’s oneness with the earth. He opines that Wagner, the famous German music composer, has
revealed new resources of sound through which the emotions of Nature and the intertwining of man's fate could be expressed. He gave his successors all over Europe and North America a fresh orchestral palette with which they could paint the spirit of country and landscape in sound... Green man, the country world of our image, was recorded and set down at the very time when for the most part its culture was to be destroyed by urbanization, war and mechanisation of farming. (Green Man 154)

Anderson finds connection among revival of folk music and dance, reestablishment of the identity of suppressed nationalities and also the rebirth of landscape through music. About Vaughan Williams, the famous European music composer, Anderson says that in his Pastoral Symphony composed during and after his experiences in the First World War:

He painted in sound the lost world of the Great Goddess, first in resounding and repeated phrases that make her ancient hills rise in the heaven's mind, then as her landscapes in spring and summer, and finally simply as a woman's voice that goes on singing after the orchestra is silent. (154-55)
Anderson also finds the Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky's introduction of the concept of biosphere and James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis as related to the ecological revival. Deep ecologists, eco-feminists and many other environmental groups favour Gaia hypothesis. It is a testament of faith to the eco-spiritualists "Earth's a living matter, air, oceans and land surface form a complex system which can be seen as a single organism and which has the capacity to keep our planet a fit place for life" (Anderson 155). The faith exhibited and exuded by those who follow Gaia, the Greek for Mother Earth, is a reaffirmation of the faith in the survival of the universe. In the words of Ted Hughes "Nature's obsession, after all, is to survive." (Winter Pollen 135).

The change in attitude in the west that relates science, art, politics, development and philosophy to ecological awareness has made Anderson think in terms of the archetype of the Green Man, the son of Earth Goddess. This ecological view as against the reductionist or analytical approach has changed the thought process of even scientists who usually are reductionists and analyzers. Anderson remarks:

The rise of ecology brought about a major change in the thinking of many scientists: it turned them away from
seeking truth through analysis, fragmentation, and the study of individual organisms isolated from their environments to looking for the whole systems within which an ecological balance is maintained. (155)

Though Anderson starts with the revival of regional landscapes in twentieth century art, he arrives at the site where art and science join for a deep ecological vision. It is a site where Ted Hughes's "The Environmental Revolution" Charlene Spretnak's "The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics" and such other passages already quoted in the previous chapter meet.

The study of Anderson's findings on the return of the archetype of 'Green Man' in twentieth century Western art conjoins eco-aesthetic approach and deep ecology. Anderson's attempt has been to inquire into the essence of the new ecological awareness through the analysis of western art. The discussion of the revival of rural landscapes in art, ecology, and archetype and art criticism on the basis of Anderson's Green Man shows that ecocriticism has been established.

The American anthology, Ecocriticism Reader, discussed in the previous chapter, concerns only with environmental literature and does not raise deeper/archetypal/spiritual issues as Anderson's
Green Man does. Anderson’s observations are necessary for relating ecocriticism, deep ecology, ecosystem thinking and landscape narrative.

The renowned Malayalam novelist and thinker Anand in “Saahithyathil Sahitamaayittullatum mattum” (Charitrpadangal 115-126) has placed the polysemy of the Sanskrit term Sahitya, generally used as an equivalent of the English term literature, in the context of ecological vision in Indian myths and epics:

For the Western readers/critics who have, by inheritance, an anthropocentric worldview and literary sensibility, Indian myths are unpalatable. To them Indian myths and epics, which field biotic and abiotic things as characters with more or less egalitarian status, are very strange or perplexing. The primitive man had not considered himself to be a privileged animal above other animals in Nature. In Indian mythology and literature, in human-Nature relationship the primitive man’s natural awareness was not merely preserved but it was refined and utilized more meaningfully. Such a concept of literature inherited through mythologies and epics encompassed not merely mankind but, beyond it, the entire world of nature.
Anand's analysis of *Sahitya* in *Charitrapadangal* (117,121-122) is similar to 'systems thinking' and deep ecology, discussed by Capra in *Web of Life*. The Malayalam critic M. Leelavathy's analysis of ancient South Indian literary critical method, namely *tinai* "Niroopanathile Disabodham" refers to 'systems thinking' advocated by Capra. Interconnection and interdependence are two major factors in the existence of all cosmic phenomena. Every being is functionally an integrated whole. As life activates each and every living atom, molecule, cell and others in an animal, the Creative Power of the cosmos coordinates all functions or activities. Each animal's life has an endless and unfathomable biotic arrangement. As all beings including human beings are integrated wholes in themselves and as parts of the cosmic drama of life, for their existence abiotic materials are necessary. Actions and counteraction are a never ending and cyclic chain and such a network is Nature's characteristic feature. An unknowing and unknowable order is behind it. External interferences in it like deforestation, dam-building, atomic-power stations, global wars, heavy industrial plants and the like break the rhythm or order in Nature. Such disruptions affect a part of the world or even the whole world resulting in global warming, ozone holes, floods,
draughts and earthquakes. Abiotic disharmony causes vivid forms of biotic disharmony. Awareness and active life are impossible without sleep and rest. Ecosystems last, as there are mutual and healthy exchanges between the sentient and the non-sentient. Applying this principle of interdependence in literary interpretation, one reaches tinai. Cæpra in Web of Life comes to deep ecology from systems thinking. Leelavathy connects systems thinking and tinai.

In South India, two thousand years ago, in the Dravidian language Tamil, an eco-poetics developed the first known eco-poetic theoretical text in the whole world. Tolkkappiyar's Tolkkappiyam is the text and a whole chapter deals with a bioregional aesthetic system by which poems can be classified and interpreted. The chapter is designated as "Porulatikaaram"--"Porul" can be translated as "essence" and "atikaaram" as chapter. It is a treatise inquiring into the essence or essential elements of literature. Recently, the growing discussion on decolonization, eco-aesthetics and the discovery of novel directions for critical approach have made researches into and attempts for retrieving, redefining or expanding the frontiers of "Porulatikaaram." M. Leelavathy's "Niroopanathile Cisabodham: Sahitya Niroopanathinte Dravidamukham" and the three chapters--namely, "Tina
Sankalpam," "Akapporulum Purapporulum" and "Tina Vyavasthayum Roopamanjariyum"—in Ayyappa Paniker’s Indian Sahitya Siddhantam (93-121) are such attempts for interpreting and making "Porulatikaaram," a significant chapter of Tolkkappiyar’s Tolkappiyam. In it a holistic vision that relates human life and geography and climate, which act as the background and motive force behind the drama of life can be seen. "Porulatikaaram" can be considered to be an authentic text of ancient Dravidian or South Indian poetics. In many aspects, its approach is similar to that of the eco-aesthetics or eco-poetics that has been coming to serious attention today. Ayyappa Paniker remarks that this ancient Tamil text answers fundamentally the questions posed by anybody who takes the appreciation of literature seriously (Indian 98). The morphology of classifying poetic works, which is genre study, is based upon the combination of Mutal Porul [principal essence], Karu Porul [instruments or poetic devices] and Uripporul [inner essence]. Mutal Porul answers the two primary questions: when and where. The two axes, time and place constitute Mutal Porul. Time and geography act as the base, background and inspiration behind the events and experiences presented or implied by the poet through the poem. Mutal Porul is the first or primary factor, which decides
the genre or tinai. For example, if a poem has villagescape or countryside as background, last part of the night/day as time, amorous quarrel as the major sentiment, it belongs to Marutam tinai. Here, amorous quarrel or similar theme or sentiment is the *Uripporul*. The poet becomes successful when appropriate poetic devices or *Karu Porul* are found out and applied which connect the *Mutal Porul* and *Uripporul*. In short *tinai* is a complex concept which combines place-time condition, outerscape or *Mutal Porul*, mind condition, inner/interior/mindscape or interior landscape/*Uripporul* and the poetic tools, devices or *Karu Porul*. "Porulatikaaram" supplies the fundamental suggestions for forming a theoretical framework for classifying and interpreting literary works.

The fundamental suggestions in this ancient South Indian text should be explicated, expanded and extended by complementing and supplementing relevant and appropriate pieces of knowledge and thoughts that have been generated since the production of "Porulatikaaram." For example, Porulatikaaram classifies literary works into five *tinais* or five major landscapes. They are *Mullai* [forest], *Kurinji* [mountain valley], *Paalai* [sand desert], *Marutam* [agricultural village] and *Neytal* [sea shore]. Such a classification
might have been sufficient to accommodate the diverse geographies and climates, life styles, mindscapes or eco-psycho systems of the South India two thousand years ago. The tinai concept should be divulged and developed to meet the exigencies of today.

_Tinai_ is a vantage ground from where the discussion for evolving systematic ecoaesthetic approaches to literary works can be attempted. Leelavathy observes that the tinai concept is very near to the systems approach of the new scientific thought, which views life as an ecosystem ("Niroopanathile"). States of mind and regions are conceived as metaphorically interrelated. People, bird, beast, flower, food and occupation, as related to regions, and even styles in music and melody popular in different regions, are considered as the deciding factors for classifying the five major _tinais_ ("Niroopanathile" 22).

The five major tinais, namely, Mullai, Kurinji, Paalai, Marutam and Neytal are relevant to the works of Heaney and Sreedhara Menon. Tinais were named after plants in South India and they are still present in Kerala, a region of South India. Moreover, the tinai analysis in _Tolkkappiyam_ is based on the South Indian poets of the Sangam epoch—roughly about "150 BC to 250 AD" (Ramanujan, _Poems_ 241). These Sangam poets belong to the regions, which at
present constitute *Keralam*, though at that time, a part of Tamil kingdom and the people spoke Tamil. Of the five major tinais, *aivar tinais* [five tinais], the four, namely, Mullai, Kurinji, Marutam and Neytal can be used to classify *Keralam* geographically from east to west. For instance, *Malayaazhi, Malabar* and *Malayalam* [Mountain and Sea], synonyms of Kerala, signify the east frontier [the mountain] and the west frontier [the sea], or in the tain classification, Mullai and Neytal respectively.

The one exception is the tainai, Paalai [sand desert]. But, in its place there is cityscape or *nagaratinai*. The city dwellers are not producers but fully predators, hence robbers. Robbing is the occupation of the dwellers of desert as per Tolkkappiyar’s Paalai tainai convention. To use the term by the world--renowned environmental scientist Madhav Gadgil, they are "biosphere people" [the term is discussed in detail in chapter VII “Burning is the Cityscape.”]

Different/diverse tinais may be present in a single work and sometimes certain tinais may be dormant. However for the taxonomy of eco-poetic/deeply ecological works the framework/outline of tainai is convenient. Here, in this study, after the chapter titled "Mysterious is the Mother’s Providence," the
subsequent chapters follow tinai-taxonomy, Mullai/forest land, Marutam/agricultural village, Neytal/seashore and Paalai/cityscape respectively.

The discussion of terms like tinai, landscape narrative and concepts like deep ecology, literary ecology, biocentrism, human centrisms, attempted so far, can be summed by a bird’s eye view of Leslie Silko’s analysis of the oral narratives of Pueblo people of the American Southwest, in her “Landscape, History, and Pueblo Imagination” (Glotfelty, ed. Ecocriticism 264-275). The faith in Earth as Mother is the structural center of Pueblo tales. The tale shows that the human beings depend upon the coordination and cooperation of animals, plants and land:

Only through interdependence could the human beings survive. Families belonged to clans, and it was by clan that the human being joined with the animal and plant world. Life on the high arid plateau became viable when the human beings were able to imagine themselves as sisters and brothers to the badger, antelope, clay, yucca, and sun. Not until they could find a viable relationship to the terrain, the landscape they found themselves in, could they emerge. (273)