Chapter 1

Introduction

William Henry Hudson in his work *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* expresses the opinion that only books of “general human interest” can be considered literature. This interest must be expressed not only in their subject matter, but also in its treatment. Hudson also stresses that works of literature also should provide pleasure through its predominant focus on form. He continues:

We care for literature primarily on account of its deep and lasting human significance. A great book grows directly out of life; in reading it, we are brought into large, close, and fresh relations with life; and in that fact lies the final explanation of its power. Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language(10).

“Literature”, according to Mathew Arnold’s much discussed- definition, “is a criticism of life; but this can mean only that it is an interpretation of life as life shapes itself in the mind of the interpreter”(14-15). Hudson adds “Literature contains the revelation of many different personalities, and we ourselves had our well-marked leanings and antipathies”(25). Literature is the study of personality, the race, the age (*Zeitegeist*) and also the society (*milieu*). A writer is not only a creature of the age, but also the creator of the age.
The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term ‘Nature’ as ‘the whole universe and every created thing’ or ‘the phenomena of physical world as a whole’. In its commonest meaning, ‘Nature’ refers to the “beauteous form” of the external world. Coleridge called it “Nature in the Groove” (Naheed 1). A love for the beauties of nature as flowers, birds, brooks, breezes, hills and dales, moonlit glades, has been universal in human experience and in literature. It appears to have been implanted in the human race from the earliest time. The primitive man wondered at beauty of the world around him, his heart was filled with ecstasy and the result was poetic outburst of feelings. As his imagination developed, he pictured the forms of nature as human and gave them an intelligence and passion like his own.

Nature has never been completely absent from literature. In fact, it has always been a source of inspiration for poets, dramatists, essayists and novelists in all literatures and English literature is not an exception to it. Even a bird’s eye view of the literary scene of any part of the world from the beginning to the present day will suffice to illustrate one’s love of nature and its importance in his/her literature. In fact, it is Thomson who began in English “the poetry of the poor, the shepherd, the ploughman, the woodman, the farmer statesman. And he recorded their life and work through spring, autumn and winter.”(Stopford 46). The central theme of Richard Jefferies is the influence of natural objects upon human minds. His books are in essence a record of his relations with the forces of Nature. He professed at the end of his life that he had “no desire to make money or excel in anything or fame- all I cared for and desired was the fields, the hills, the sea” (Looker 279). W.Hale White who was deeply immersed in Wordsworth proclaimed: “when I first read Wordsworth I saw God in Natures’” (White 94). Nature in his novels becomes an ethical influence or
process. Like Wordsworth and Jefferies, White seems to have progressed from intuitive delight in nature towards quasi-mystical experience.

Fiction, one of the literary genres, can help energize, rejuvenate, motivate and inspire people with its characteristic qualities. Thanks to its entertainment value, it has a much wider reach than other forms of literary production. The subversively wrapped convictions in fiction will attract, amuse and engage a large audience. Eco-fiction goes a long way in introducing ecological thinking and environmental issues to the common reader. Ecosystem is a branch of literary study that tries to find connections between literature and environment. The present day world faces a number of problems like terrorism, global warming, empowerment of the marginalized, pollution and degradation of the environment which supersedes all other issues. Ecocriticism acts as a very important tool that draws the attention of the whole world to crucial environmental hazards through the medium of literature.

The ancient Tamil literature has considerably contributed to the eco-friendly literary theory in the name of *tinai* poetics. The ancient *Cankam* poets, who belonged to pre-Christian era, termed as *Cankam* poets because of their association with literary academies of those days were remarkably successful in nurturing their creative minds with the elements of landscape, which they belonged to. They drew their creative energy from the space that nature had provided for everyone. They believed that poetry is the means of communication and the images and metaphors in their poems evolve from the natural subjects that may be studied as cultural objects. These objects always locate the poet’s self in his traditional as well as social space.

The concept of *tinai* is a Dravidian literary critical concept. It encompasses landscape, timescape, bioscape and mindscape. Tolkappiyar’s spatio-temporal
dichotomy as a literary concept here gives new insights for studying the novels of Margaret Laurence, Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. With this spatio-temporal concept, other aesthetic principles or other aspects of tinai concept are also helpful. Thus, *The Tinai Concepts in Selected Novels of Margaret Laurence, Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai* forms the title.

The term ‘ecocriticism’ or ‘green studies’ points out a critical approach which is still an emergent movement. It began in the USA in the late 1980s and in the UK in the early 1990s. Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). Cheryll Glotfelty is the acknowledged founder of ecocriticism in the USA. Both Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm edited *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (University of Georgia Press, 1996), a key collection of helpful and definitive essays. Harold Fromm was also the co-founder of ASLE (pronounced ‘Az-lee,’ the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment). ASLE has its own house journal called ISLE (Inter-disciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment), which started in 1993. So, American eco-criticism was already a blossoming academic movement by the early 1990s, beginning to establish its professional infrastructure of designated journals and an official corporate body. Karl Kroebar’s (prominent US eco-critic), article “Home at Grasmere: Ecological Holiness,” which appeared in the journal *PMLA* has a claim for first usage in literary criticism of the related term ‘ecological’. Michael P. Branch in his introduction to a series of brief position papers (all titled “What is Eco-criticism”) traces the word “eco-criticism” back to William Rueckert’s 1978 essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” Both terms (‘eco-criticism’ and ‘ecological’) apparently lay dormant in the critical vocabulary (says Branch) until the 1989 WLA (the Western Literature Association, a
body whose field of interest is the literature of the American West) conference in Coeur d’Alene, USA, when Cheryll Glotfelty not only revived the term ‘eco-criticism,’ but urged its adoption to refer to the diffuse critical field that had previously been known as ‘the study of nature writing’. However, eco-criticism as a concept first emerged in the late 1970s, at the meetings of the WLA. It was Cheryll Glotfelty in the 1989 WLA conference, who urged that “the study of nature writing” be referred to as “ecocriticism”.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau celebrate nature, the life force and the wilderness as manifested in America. Ecocriticism, as it now exists in the USA has its literary leanings on these three major nineteenth century American writers. Emerson’s first short book *Nature* (1836) is a reflective essay, on the impact upon him of the natural world, often voiced in words of powerfully dramatic directness. Fuller’s first book was *Summer on the Lakes During 1843* (1994) which is a powerfully written journal of her encounter with the American landscape at large, after a period as the first woman student at Harvard. Thoreau’s *Walden* (1999) is an account of his two-year stay, from 1845, in a hut he had built on the shore of Walden Pond. It is perhaps, the ‘classic’ account of dropping out of modern life and seeking to renew the self by a ‘return to nature.’ These three books can be marked as the basic works of American ‘eco-centred’ writing.

The UK version of eco-criticism or green studies, by contrast takes its literary bearings from the British Romanticism of the 1790s rather than the American transcendentalism of the 1840s. The British critic, Jonathan Bate, author of *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Routledge, 1991) is the founder on the British side. British eco-criticism also points out that many of their concerns are evident (before the term ‘eco-criticism existed) in Raymond William’s...
book *The Country and the City* (1973). The infrastructure of eco-criticism in the USA is more developed than in the UK. Green Studies is the UK counterpart of eco-criticism. The definitive UK collection of essays (having equivalent status in the UK to that of Glotfelty and Fromm in the USA) is Laurence Coupe’s *The Green Studies Reader From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (2000).

Two distinct national variants of the ecological approach exist; but they are clearly connected in their views and aims, but differ in emphasis and ‘ancestry.’ Generally the preferred American term is ‘eco-criticism’ whereas ‘green studies’ is frequently used in the UK, and there is perhaps a tendency for the American writing to be ‘celebratory’ in tone, whereas the British variant tends to be more ‘minatory’, that is, it seeks to warn the people of potential environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial, and neo-colonial forces. For instance, Bate’s more recent book, *The Song of the Earth* (2000), argues that colonialism and deforestation have frequently gone together. The unwarranted exploitation and degradation of the land and its immense resources will have to be curtailed for the sustenance of the human race. The eco-critical lenses are focused to magnify the need and relevance of a sustainable environment, which is being overlooked and ignored.

Eco-critical works of recent times have outgrown the range of nature writing and Romanticism. An eco-critical reading of Sylvia Plath’s poetry has been made by Tracy Brain. Jhan Hochman reads *The Silence of the Lambs* from an animal rights perspective. Television wildlife documentaries are analyzed by Karla Armbruster. Barbara Adam discusses cultural aspects of the BSE crisis in Britain. The denigration of desert landscapes is condemned by Cheryll Glotfelty. Greg Garrard sees the Eden project in Cornwall as a new version of Georgic. All these works try to solve the problem of cultural blockages that thwart effective action against environmental crisis.
Environmentalism gradually emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in response to perceptions of how tremendous and dangerous environmental damage had become. Traditions of enthusiasm for wild nature paved way for the growth of this movement partly because it is distinct from those traditions. The threats that preoccupy environmentalists are not only to wildlife and wilderness but also to human health, food and shelter and they are global as well as local. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), widely credited because of the international response it received with the first rallying of environmentalism as a public movement, is a study of the toxic effects of residues of industrial and agricultural chemicals in animal and human bodies.

Environmentalism is not against modern culture and technology. Its modernity is to be reiterated in order to purge itself from the frequent accusation of nostalgia. Environmentalism is a critique of industrial modernity and another product of it, a distinctively modern movement in which an indispensable role is played by science: by the methods and technologies for example, that can identify chemical traces or analyze atmospheric data.

Environmental themes feature abundantly in culture: in thrillers, adverts, literary novels, poems, tourism from country weekends to safaris, television wildlife documentaries food scares, horror movies, drama or rural retreat, books and films for children. Yet real change is elusive. In *Timescapes of Modernity* (1998), the social theorist Barbara Adam suggests a reason for this. Environmental problems are frequently invisible, deferred, gradual, too small, too large, and subject to radical uncertainty. As such, they are unrepresentable by our customary forms of narrative, verbal and visual. Often we are not confronted with the environmental harm we do because it occurs later and elsewhere. Adam argues that culture, lacking the complex
multiple perspectives of time and space these hazards call for, cannot find symbols, visual images, or stories of individual lives to give them adequate representation.

Another difficulty is that environmentalism seems to be all about things we should stop doing. Other radical movements have been able to appeal simultaneously to collective good and personal liberation. Environmental problems, by contrast, require a curbing of economic growth, at least, in its most destructive forms. Environmentalists have to warn against popular objects of desire – cars especially that symbolize success and good life. Environmentalism can thus be seen as hostile to pleasure: a movement of the wealthy middle classes, resistant to the economic growth that would bring middle – class living standards to poorer people.

Al Gore, when he was US Vice – President, said to the environmentalist writer Bill McKibben, “We are in an unusual predicament as a global civilization. The maximum that is politically feasible, even the maximum that is politically imaginable right now, still falls short of the maximum that is scientifically and ecologically necessary”.(1) This is the impasse confronting environmentalism. The changes required are so great as to appear to be dreams with no purchase on the ordinary business of life. Yet to the environmentalist it is the familiar assumptions that are dangerously unrealistic: the normalized desires that enmesh us in increasing car use, energy consumption, deforestation, factory farming, and over fishing. If the gap between what is necessary and what is possible is to close, and if environmentalism is in future to be seen as more than a doomed rearguard action or spasm of regret, there will have to be a cultural shift strong enough to induce democratic politicians to make eco-friendly practices advantageous for the mass of the world’s population. This is the considerable challenge facing eco- critics. Their more modest task is to analyze and evaluate environmentalism in culture. In order to understand how they have begun to
do this, one must be aware of some concepts starting with the word that gives the ‘eco’ to eco-criticism.

Ecology is the scientific study of natural interdependencies of life forms as they relate to each other and their shared environment. Creatures produce and shape their environment, as their environment produces and shapes them. Ecology developed in reaction against the practice of isolating creatures for study in laboratories, is based in field-work, and draws on a range of specialist disciplines including zoology, botany, geology, and geography.

The word ecology is derived from the Greek word *oikos* meaning a house, a dwelling place, a habitation with other species. Ecology may be defined as the scientific study of natural interdependencies of life forms as they relate to each other and their shared environment. It is the study of interactions between organisms and environment. In recent times, the word ecology is frequently used in connection with the green or environmental movements, including deep ecology, social ecology, Earth First, Greenpeace etc. These philosophies used the word “ecology” in a much looser sense than the scientific. This practice looks at culture as a manifestation of ecology and uses ecology as a metaphor for culture. This practice is something that is common in eco-criticism:

Ecocriticism is literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint. Eco-critics analyse the history of concepts such as ‘nature’ in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to the present global ecological crisis. (Kerridge 20)

There is no doubt that in recent times the burning issue that confronts mankind today is the issue of ecological or environmental crises. It has become a broad cultural issue, not the property of a single discipline. It is true that science,
engineering and public policy are the bases on which university environmental programs are built. Environmental humanities like history, philosophy, religion, cultural geography are equally important for environmental transformation to take place changes need to occur in values, perception and will. Eco-criticism is the awareness that very soon there will be nothing left in nature. The world continues to witness threats to the environment triggered by warfare, oil leaks, global warning, population explosion, and pollution. Humans, often from positions of power, are unaware of the effects of their actions on nature. They are part of the ecological circle, and therefore are equally responsible for creating a sustainable planet. The power of story, image, artistic performance and the resources of aesthetics, ethics, and cultural theory are crucial.

In simple terms, eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Eco-criticism first arose in the late 1970’s at meetings of the Western Literary Association (WLA). The term eco-criticism was first coined by William Reukert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism”. By eco-criticism, Reukert meant the application of ecology to the study of literature:

Eco-criticism depends upon our willingness as readers to marginalize, if not completely overlook, precisely those aspects and meanings to texts that are traditionally privileged or valorized… what eco-criticism calls for, then is a fundamental shift from one context of reading to another more specifically, a movement from the human to the environment… a humanism informed by an awareness of the more than human. (Reukert 17).
Modern Environmentalism began with “A Fable for Tomorrow”, in Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962). In the ancient pastoral tradition the author paints a picture of prompt farms, green fields, and countless birds, all emphasizing the harmony of nature and humanity. This picture of pastoral peace soon gives way to catastrophic destruction particularly emphasizing the collapse in the bird population. The “silent spring” alludes to the loss of bird songs, while at the same time signifying a general environmental apocalypse. Thus the text begins with significant poetic parables, and relies on the pastoral and apocalyptic, pre-existing ways of imagining the place of humans in nature. *Silent Spring* goes on to prove, with scientific evidence, that people themselves were responsible for the destruction. Carson shapes her argument with use of rhetorical strategies, astorial and apocalyptic imagery and literary allusions. These literary or ‘cultural’ analyses are termed Eco-criticism.

Amidst the growing concern about the ill-effects of mindless developments affecting the ecological balance writers too have been shifting from an anthropocentric tradition to one that addresses the concept of econometrics. Writers with ecological orientations employ the trope of natural to assert its centrality and to counteract the linguistic agency of human beings.

Ecology can be defined in three ways. The scientific study of the relation between the organism and the environment is the Haeckelian definition. The second is the deep ecological definition which adopts a philosophical/metaphysical approach in the study of the relation between the organism and the environment. The third defines ecology as the study of the *oikos*, *oikology*. A few new disciplines like Social Ecology and Human Ecology have also emerged. If the former is an attempt to associate human society and natural phenomena, the latter is an attempt to bring together humans and environment. Social ecology examines such social categories
like culture, polity, social structure, and economy in their relation to natural categories like soil, water and forest (Guha 4-7). Human ecology is understood as the study of the relation between humans and their environment (Bresler 1). A closer look at the nature of these disciplines shows that these are attempts to modify existing disciplines like Sociology and other human sciences with an admixture of natural categories. Though traditional ecology does engage the humans and nature, humans do not occupy its centre stage. The new disciplines seek to keep humans in the centre and then see how they stand in relation to nature. This approach is questionable for, the significance of ecology lies in its leveling influence. An ecological approach to human sciences may challenge our very definitions of these sciences if we treat humans like any other organism on earth. When the categories of human sciences and social institutions are taken for granted for a study in relation to natural phenomena, the possibility of the ecological perspective is undermined.

Ruekertain eco-criticism adopts the first definition of ecology, which to Arne Naess, is “Shallow ecology”. Eco-critics use concepts of deep ecology also to read texts (Janik 104-112, Allen 241-263, Silko 264-281). The kind of eco-criticism called “oiko-criticism” or “oiko-poetics” employs oikological concepts to read texts. The Greek term “oikos”, which means “household”, is a nexus of humans, nature and the spirit being. The early Tamil counterpart of oikos is “tinai”. Though early Greek life was based on the oikos, no known theory of the oikos had emerged in Greece, whereas the early Tamils had formulated a theory of tinai, which may be the earliest known “ecocritical” theory. The earliest source of this theory is the most ancient Tamil Text extant, Tolkappiyam.

Apart from the three definitions of ecocriticism mentioned above, a fourth one may be found in The EcocriticismReader, which takes eco-criticism as “the study
of the relation between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). It must be pointed out that this is the most widely prevalent and popular definition. Following the Reader’s lead, Lawrence Buell defines it as “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (138). He identifies two phases of eco-criticism, the “first wave eco-criticism” and the “second wave eco-criticism” or “revisionist eco-criticism.” To those of the first wave, “Environment effectively meant ‘natural environment in practice if not in principle...’” (21).

The first wave eco-critics focused on such genres as “nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction” (Buell138). While first-wave eco-critics upheld the philosophy of organism, the second wave eco-critics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a “social eco-criticism” that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as ‘natural’ landscapes” (Buell 22). Evidently, Buell acknowledges the fact that the western academy looks upon eco-criticism only as “environmental criticism” (Buell 28).

Veering towards an understanding of eco-criticism in terms of environment, Greg Garrard quotes not only Glotfelty and Fromm but also Robert Kerridge. To Kerridge, “eco-criticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” (Garrard4). But Garrard considers its affinity to ecology also and attempts to circumvent the problem by drawing a distinction between the nominal and adjectival relation. If the relation between ecology and literature is nominal to Ruekert, it is only adjectival to Garrard. By a sleight of hand, he distinguishes between “problems in ecology” and “ecological problems.” If the scientist is concerned with the former, the eco-critic is with the latter. Garrard cites “weed” and “pollution” to illustrate his point. He argues, “A
weed’ is not a kind of plant, only the wrong kind in the wrong place. Eliminating weeds is obviously a ‘problem in gardening’, but defining weeds in the first place requires a cultural, not horticultural analysis” (6). We may say “weed” is not the name of a kind of plant species, but it is still a name for certain plants meant to be used not only by non scientists but also by scientists themselves. When a horticulturist finds a plant he does not want in his garden (or wherever it may be), that plant is a weed to her/him. To be able to say what the wrong plant is one needs to know what the right one is. For example, in a patch of millet in the Kolli hills, if one found tapioca among them, tapioca need not be dubbed, “weed”. This may be a practice called, “inter cropping”. In other words, a certain amount of “scientific knowledge” of plants is necessary to be able to decide the matter of appropriateness or inappropriateness. This brings us to the question of ethics, for appropriateness is, in fact an ethical principle rather than a scientific or horticultural one. Sure enough, the horticulturist is very often making ethical choices when (s) he is engaged in the horticultural praxis. This shows that horticulture (science) cannot stand alone without ethics (culture).

As far as Garrard is concerned eco-critics could develop only ecological literary”, not “ecology literacy”. He seems to situate the scientist in a fixed centre towards which he wants the cultural critic to move as far as possible. Rueckert’s definition of eco-criticism presupposes ecology literacy and not merely ecological literacy; it presumes that a non-specialist can also learn ecology and use that knowledge sensibly. In fact, cultural critics could even challenge the method of the science even as Arne Naess did and engage with the content of that discipline adopting a method different from the one the scientist is trained to adopt. Recent studies show that we have not just one science, that is western science, but several
sciences from different parts of the world. Often, these sciences go by the name of “ethnoscience”. This is unfortunate because here again the western paradigm is privileged.

Operating within the western scientific paradigm, Rueckert showed how the concept of the energy cycle could be adopted for textual criticism. The concept of energy cycle is not merely an “ecological” one; it is a concept in ecology. In fact, in the eco-literature paper taught in Madras Christian College, ecology is introduced by an ecologist himself. With a fair amount of understanding of ecology an eco-critic should be “qualified to contribute” to debate about problems in ecology” (Garrard 56). Similarly ecologists have to have mere “cultural literacy”, but “culture literacy”, not mere understanding of “cultural problems”, but “problems in culture”. If our academic system does not allow for mutual equipping (Science for culture experts and culture for scientists), we need to work towards that direction. Ecocriticism breaks the artificial wall between science and culture the academy has been guarding for centuries.

Besides the four definitions of eco-criticism above mentioned, Rueckert’s deep ecological, oikological, the one in the Reader, a fifth is a hybrid grafting environment and ecology as in Garrard. If exploration of the relation between literature and environment is eco-criticism, then, all literature is somehow eco-critical because any poetic subject is ultimately part of the physical or mental environment. If so, eco-criticism is just another name for what has already been going by the name of “criticism”. Since this is untenable, eco-criticism cannot be merely criticism of the relation between literature and environment.

A sixth type of definition of “eco-criticism” may be found in the theory of tinai which has been in use as a critical tool in Tamil studies for several centuries. A
careful scrutiny reveals that the common denomination of all these definitions is either
the notion of oikos or tinai. Therefore, let us dwell on each briefly.

Though tinai and oikos, which form the bases of ecology and eco-criticism, are
similar in being human-nature-spirit nexus, there are dissimilarities too. First of all,
ecology is a type of scientific biology and eco-criticism is based on such biology. But
tinai method does not involve quantitative techniques like mathematics and statistical
tools. Therefore, tinai theory may not be termed eco-criticism as such but may well
be deemed an early eco-critical theory for other reasons. The second difference is
with regard to the sacred. Ecology has avowedly counted out the sacred for it was not
amenable to western scientific study. So, the principle of interrelation on which
ecology is based, includes only the physical environment and the organism and not the
sacred. Tinai on the other hand, is a nexus which involves all the three. However,
this is not true of Deep ecology. But all the original eight basic deep ecological
principles (Naess68) do not conform to tinai theory either, particularly the principle of
reduction of human population in order to restore the ecological balance. The third
difference lies in the postulation of land and time as the ground of everything in tinai
theory. Being the ground, the spatio-temporal principle is the primary one. Both
ecology and deep ecology privilege “life”, not land and time. True, eco-criticism
which grows out of the two foundations ecology and deep ecology, does privilege
place. But the source of the pre-eminence of land-time in eco-criticism is not so much
ecology or deep ecology (which ought to be the case) as from the other theories like
Leopadd’s “land ethics”, Peter Berger’s “bioregion”, and James Lovelock’s “Gaia
Hypothesis”.

Obviously, ecology and deep ecology went the way of the bios due to their
origin which is biology. The biological origin of eco-criticism may lead us to presume
that life is the central principle in eco-criticism. But that is not the case. If ecology is logos of oikos, the central principle of ecology ought to be oikos itself.

An ecosystem is a local set of conditions that support life. Tropical rainforest, for example is a biome, a generic type of ecosystem. More locally, one might refer to the ecosystem of a particular forest, wetland, heath land or desert. The word ‘system’ is misleading. Ecosystems are full of variables, often in flux, and subject to force outside their boundaries. New species arriving in an ecosystem will change it. Each local ecosystem is, in this way, part of a larger one, and all together constitutes the global eco system, called the ‘ecosphere’ or ‘biosphere’.

The term ‘Food Chain’ describes one of the sets of relationships that makes an ecosystem: the way in which energy works or circulates. One creature eats another, and is in turn eaten or rots down into nutrients. Food Chain is an important concept for ecologists investigating pollution, because of effects such as biomagnifications, in which some poisons become more concentrated as they pass up the food chain to the few top predators. This was one of Rachel Carson’s concerns in Silent Spring. Ecologist and environmental justice campaigner Sandra Steingraber points out in Having Faith (2001) that, contrary to the usual diagrams, it is not ‘man’ at the top of the food chain, but the breastfed infant…Diagrammatic figures that illustrate this concept—chain,circle,pyramid (as in ‘apex predator’)—are simplifications of a more complex reality.

The word ‘ecology’ is frequently used in connection with the ‘green’ movement. ‘Deep Ecology’, for example, is radical version of environmentalism, conceived in the early 1970’s by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and developed in 1980’s by US environmentalists Bill Devall and George Sessions. Deep Ecologists reject merely technological and managerial solutions, because these constitute yet another form of
human dominance. Instead, Deep Ecologists advocate a biocentric view, which recognizes the non-human world as having value independently of its usefulness to human beings, who have no right to destroy it except to meet vital needs. Deep Ecology proposes drastic changes in our habits of consumption, not only to avert catastrophe but as spiritual and moral awakening. Social Ecology, mainly associated with the US anarchist writer Murray Bookchin, emphasizes the link between environmental degradation and the exploitation of human beings, arguing that better treatment of the environment can only come with the abolition of oppressive hierarchies in human society.

One of the most important elements of prose fiction is the time and place of action or the setting. Every novelist tries to re-inforce his or her imaginative representation of life by the accurate and realistic rendering of the social and natural environment. The setting includes the entire milieu of the story - the manners, customs, and ways of life - which enter into its composition as well as its natural background or environment. Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens, Balzac and Zola have given in their novels a complete picture of the life of their times. However, the novels of writers like Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, and James Joyce, on the contrary, do not give a detailed description of the social milieu.

One special feature of the present-day fiction is its specialization. It treats life not in its entirety but in fragments. There is a tendency towards sub-division of the subject matter. Each novel concerns itself chiefly with one or two aspects of life. Thus there are novels of the sea and of military life, novels of the upper class, middle class and the lower class, novels of industrial life, commercial life, artistic life, clerical life and so on. This also includes topographical novels which take for its setting different localities and local types of character like the Scottish novels, Irish novels
Corresponding to this European concept of milieu and setting, in Indian aesthetics also there is a prominent position given to the landscape of action. In recent years, the ecological science has gained wide attention and grown in prominence as a subject of study all over the world as a reaction to environmental hazards faced by the world. Ecology refers the scientific study of ecosystems where living organisms and their non-living environments are inseparably inter-related and where they interact with each other incessantly also. The word ‘environment’ means surrounding objects, regions or circumstances, and the phrase “environmental awareness” means one should be aware of his surroundings so that the surrounding is maintained. But all over the world and particularly in India there is environmental chaos due to many factors of modern life such as technological advancement and industrial development, population growth, pollution of air, water, earth and the entire atmosphere, deforestation and lack of fertile land and vegetation. To a larger extent this chaos is man-made in present day India. The recent land slide in Uttarakhand should open our eyes and the Western Ghats and other such sensitive areas are to be well-protected.

But the ancient and medieval India offers a different picture where man and nature lived in perfect harmony with each other, as seen and known by foreigners as quoted by Babasheb Deshpande. One of the Arab sailors remarks, “India’s rivers are pearls, mountains are rubies, her trees are perfumes.” Another foreign scholar Abdulla Wassaf of 14th century A.D. writes in his history book, “India is the most agreeable land on earth and most pleasant quarter of the world. Its dust is purer than air and air.
is purer than purity itself. Its delightful plains resemble the gardens of Paradise; even the Paradise itself is not comparable to it.” But a very contrasting and miserable condition is found in India today. The ancient people lived happily because they were fully aware of the intimate relation of man with nature and his surroundings and hence they conserved and protected nature and maintained mutual harmony and balance. They expressed this in their Sanskrit literature out of their spontaneous and insightful experiences from the Vedic literature to the modern Sanskrit literature.

Vedic poets deified the Natural Elements or the five cosmic constituents of the Universe and worshipped them as gods as Agnidevata, Vayudevata, Varuna as Jaladevta, Mother Earth and Aakas. They established filial relations by addressing them as mother earth and mother water. In the Rgveda (X-90) Purusa sukta, the whole world both animate and inanimate – is conceived as creation by one Virat Purusa from his various limbs of his body and all are treated on par with one another suggesting that the relation of both is intimate and complementary. In the Yajurveda (ch 36-17) the seer prays for balance in his entire environment. Again Rgvedic poet prays for cordial and sweet relations with all natural elements.

From Vedic times till date, the earth is regarded not as a mere natural object but as loving mother and goddess who sustains all beings. Every devout Hindu prays mother earth to pardon him/her for touching her with feet. Earth, which has ocean for her garments, mountains as her breast, is considered as spouse of God Vishnu. Kindly pardon us for touching you with our feet (ie. by walking on her). The seers consider earth as goddess and mother.

In the Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna says that his form is constituted by eight-fold elements i.e. earth, water, air, fire, space, mind, intellect and ego. Although for modern man these are natural cosmic elements that surround us, for Vedic poets they
are divine elements and have intimate and cordial relations with man. For them water plays a vital role in human life. That is why in Sanskrit one of the synonyms for water is *Jeevan* (ie. life or vitality of life). There are many other synonymous words for water, as *Amarakoskar* lists. The primacy and excellency of water is suggested in *Rgvedic Nasadiya Sukta* (X-129) by stating that before creation there was darkness that was covered by water. The qualities, characteristics, aspects and peculiarities of water are described in various *suktas* of both *Rgveda* and the *Yajurveda*, water is a drink for immortality. Here immortality is to be interpreted in the environmental context and as such it means, “Water cycle which is unending that is to say water changes into steam, steam into cloud, cloud into water”. This way water does not dry. One depends upon food for one’s living and for production of food, agriculture is necessary, and agriculture depends upon water. Thus there is an intimate relation between man and water and epithets used by the Vedic poets exhibit their keen awareness of this aspect of environment. Those who perform daily *sandhyopasana* are aware of the repeated mantra (apohistha) which means that water gives happiness, strength and power. It is a great refreshing object, a propitious saviour, a zealous mother and an adept generator. The Vedic poets were keen observers of nature and natural elements like water. They classified water resources into five physical groups. They are rain water (ie divya) natural springs (sravanti) water dug (i.e. well and canal (Khanitrima), lake water (Svanyanjah) and the last one river (Samudrartha) that merges into ocean. It is striking to note that even rivers are also classified into five categories. That is those that flow over slope (pravata) those that flow in low places (nivatar) those that flow in high places (udvata) those rivers which flow throughout the years, (udanvati) those that dry during summer (anudka). The presiding deity or king of water is Varuna.
The *Cankam (pronounced as Sangam)* poets also were aware of their environment and ecosystems and their literature can be seen as an early model of eco-poetics. The poets of this age systematically codified the complementary aspects of life—human love and heroic life—as poetic themes in relation to space and time. *Tolkappiyam* an ancient Tamil grammatical treatise identifies five major levels of human love and heroic life and connects them to five divisions of land and time.

Indian literary aesthetics is a story woven through many languages, and the Tamil strand in it is of as much important as the Sanskrit one, since Tamil is the mother of three other literary languages: Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. Hence very ancient Tamil text like *Tolkappiyam* has a special place in the history of Indian literary theory. A.K.Ramanujan’s commentary on *Tolkappiyam* has done great service to the cause of modern interpretation of ancient Tamil poetics. The early literary expressions were in poetry, hence theories were also developed concerning poetry. The study intends to focus on the application of this poetic theory into prose fiction.

As the concept of *tinai* is found in *Tolkappiyam*, it must have been overworked in Tamil literature. In Malayalam, as a critic Dr.K.Ayyappa Paniker has done great service to popularise this theory and strongly recommends to use this theory as a tool to interpret works of various literatures for the benefit and growth of those literatures. The Malayalam poet D.Vinaya Chandran went a further step to introduce this theory as a subject or paper in the Mahatma Gandhi University for the Post Graduate Course. In Malayalam again one Mr. Sreedharan and Mr.V.J.Sebastian used this theory to interpret some novels of M.T Vasudevan Nair and Uroob and some poems of various other poets as well. But in English Literature very few attempt is made in this field.
There is commendable body of writings in Tamil using the concept of *tinai* as a yardstick as any other literary concept for studying or analyzing a literary work. And the novels of Margaret Laurence, Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi *Sivasankara* Pillai ought to have been fruitful subject for analysis, criticism or research work. But here is a different approach which is not yet or only sparingly experimented especially in English language and literature i.e. select novels of each novelist have been analyzed in the light of *tinai* concept. Hence the relevance of the topic *The Tinai Concepts in Selected Novels of Margaret Laurence, Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai*.

Be it Canadian, British or Indian, civilization mostly originated on the river banks. Thus there is river bank civilization viz. Indus Valley Civilization, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Chinese and Greek Civilization. Though there is the famous saying, “East is East, West is West, the two shall never meet” at least in the case of literature, they do meet and influence and complement each other. Here a humble attempt is made to prove that one can find the presence of the concept of *tinai* of the East in the novels of the West as well.

This study is carried out on the hypothesis that a uniform pattern of “green thinking” correlates the novels of Margaret Laurence, Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, irrespective of their diverse geographical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Only select novels of these novelists have been taken up for an ecocritical reading in this study. Margaret Laurence represents Canadian fiction whereas Thomas Hardy and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai belong to British and Malayalam literatures respectively. The rationale behind the selection of these authors is the presence of shared ecological concerns in their writings. This research is an attempt to identify the contours of the aesthetics and ideology of environmental
concerns expressed by the select novelists in the present situation of ecological
instability.

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows: chapter 1-“Introduction,”
which introduces the topic and the situatedness of ecocriticism and tinai, chapter 2-
“The Tinai Concept: Aspects of Ancient Tamil Poetics” explicates the concept in
detail, chapter3- “Prairie Tinai and The Diviners” serves as a mirror to the literary
landscape of Manawaka ,chapter 4-“Mullai Tinai and Hardy’s The Woodlanders”
offers a reflection of mullai in Hardy’s Wessex, chapter5- “MaruthaPorul and Two
Measures of Rice” reflects on the features of Thakazhi’s Tinai, Kuttanadu and
chapter6- “Conclusion” summarises the previous chapters and finds the commonality
among them.

The source of material consists of primary materials, secondary and tertiary
materials. The primary materials are naturally one novel each of three writers such as
The Diviners of Margaret Laurence, The Woodlanders of Thomas Hardy and Two
Measures of Rice of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. The writings, criticisms and
interpretations on these works and writers and for the theory, translations and
interpretations of A.K.Ramanujan and Dr. K.Ayyappa Paniker being the chief source
among other sources form the secondary materials. Internet is also accessed.

Porulatikaram, the third part of the ancient Tamil text Tolkappiyam (fourth
century or older), is the earliest basic text of Dravidian poetics. It contains an early
model of eco poetics, in so far as it tries to relate poetry to the time and place of its
origin. The first principles or mutal porul are the landscape of the region as well as
the time of the day and the year under reference. The assumption here is that human
emotions are conditioned by environmental factors. Ancient Cankam poetry in Tamil
evokes those features. This physical landscape affects and reacts with the mindscape of characters. This is evident from very ancient times, even in the epics. In the ancient Tamil poetics, this landscape is referred to as *tinai*. 