LOCATING SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN INDIAN ETHOS: A Study of Posthumanistic Implications of *Tinai*

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Abstract: In the wake of renewed attention and discussions regarding sustainable development, paying due regard to the nature of a society that existed in ancient India, specifically during the Sangam [*Cankam*] period, could provide insightful observations. It may have resonances with the ancient cultures of various nations across the globe and could complement the sustainable development goals of the contemporary era. The paper attempts to connect the concept of *Tinai*, traditionally associated with Tamil poetics, to critical posthumanism. Identifying the posthumanistic implications embedded in this concept, specifically with respect to the notion of posthumanist subjectivity, could provide crucial insights regarding the ethos of sustainability. This particularly calls attention to the partnership between the human, the ecological, and the material world and the factors that could prove conducive for a harmonious co-existence.

Keywords: Commensal Partnership, Cosmopolitanism, Critical Posthumanism, Posthumanist Subjectivity, Nomadic Philosophy.

1. Introduction
Harmonious co-existence in a non-anthropocentric environment need not necessarily warrant the marginalisation of the human species. It can emanate from a symbiotic partnership between humans and non-humans, including the ecological and the material

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world. This also calls attention to the significance of an ethical development where all beings are accorded due significance. It is in this context that *Tinai* as an ecocritical concept gains attention.

Tolkappiyar "in his work Tolkappiyam (1000-600 BC), first mentions the concept of *Tinai*," but he "himself never defines the term" (Alex 3, Sivathamby 3). It was later commentators who attributed different meanings to the term, including "general theme or content" and "behaviour or conduct" (Sivathamby 4). At the same time, the "tradition of associating each [ecological] region with a particular [human] behaviour pattern as seen in the Cankam texts themselves" is also referred to as *Tinai* (Sivathamby 3), and the present study focuses on this aspect. The ecological and literary concerns embedded here would be focused as it has been observed that "…*Tinai* is not only a concept, but also the social order and poetic convention of the early Tamil people" (Alex 3). *Tinai* may be rightly considered a rendezvous of this society's geographical, social, and literary landscapes that is integrally connected to an ethics of care and symbiotic partnership in its very conception as a literary tradition. To understand the same, delineating posthumanist implications embedded in *Tinai* enables one to associate it with the eschewing of an ego-centric self-based on self-centredness that primarily hinders the development of a sustainable ethos.

Ecocritical implications of *Tinai* garnered popular and extensive attention in India with the efforts of Nirmal Selvamony, a contemporary Indian scholar. The attributes associated with *Tinai* are varied, each of them invariably indicating its inclinations towards or against a pro-ecological perspective. The present study aims to ruminate on the former and take this idea a notch forward to trace its parallels with posthumanism. The article *does not* attempt a study of the socio-historical aspects surrounding *Tinai* with regard to the Tamil society during the Sangam age, spanning from c. 6th century BCE to c. 3rd century CE in the ancient Tamil-speaking area of southern India and northern Sri Lanka. Instead, it frames possible inferences and critical observations with respect to sustainable peace and partnership when *Tinai* is considered a literary convention and is placed within the ambit of the ideals of critical posthumanism. Thereby, it enables one to reflect on the plausible suggestions inherent in this concept in envisaging a

harmonious co-existence, a symbiotic partnership and an ethical development that is devoid of ego-centredness.

To achieve this objective, the ethos of sustainability inherent in the concept of critical posthumanism would initially be delineated. Propositions made by certain selected theorists and philosophers in the field of this branch of posthumanism could prove to be instrumental for the same. The conceptual framework thus devised would serve as the vantage point for analysing *Tinai* as a literary convention during the Sangam period in an attempt to identify its parallels with posthumanist society. Though *Tinai* could be (and have been) subject to socio-political, historical, and geographical studies, the article would focus on its significance as a literary convention. To serve these purposes, the researcher would make critical observations concerning the essay "Early South Indian Society and Economy – The *Tinai* Concept" by Karthigesu Sivathamby, a Sri Lankan historian who makes significant observations regarding *Tinai*. This analysis would primarily inform the third section of the article after establishing the posthumanist conceptual framework from which it would be examined.

In effect, the present author examines how a literary convention inextricably linked with the then societal systems could prove to be significant for discussions on sustainability in the contemporary era. Specifically, in the context of the study undertaken, this is attempted by calling attention to a bygone past. Hence, by identifying the posthumanist implications with respect to sustainability and tracing it to the Sangam period, the article examines whether the contours of this microcosmic space may be extended such that its macrocosmic implications would turn out to be crucial in the contemporary era. This necessitates an understanding of certain ideals embedded within the posthumanist philosophy, which harbours sustainable peace and commensal partnership. Particularly, the focus here would be on the need to eschew a single, unitary vision of the human subject based on an ego-self. This could be realised by attempting a deconstruction of certain binaries that privilege one entity over the other in a speciesistic framework, a renewed notion of cosmopolitan scenario in a posthumanist setting and an understanding of nomadic philosophy as delineated below. Subsequently, the *Tinai* concept and its potential in realising these ideals are examined.

2. Implications of Posthumanism for a Sustainable Ethos

Since popular notions with regard to posthumanism centre around the demise of humans or a significant alteration of human persona with the proliferation of technology, drawing parallels between a posthumanist society and a sustainable one might seem an arduous task. However, understanding that posthumanist philosophy has various dimensions and examining the conceptual framework surrounding critical posthumanism offers a different picture. The ethos of critical posthumanism is based on the decentering of humans from the epitome of the hierarchy envisaged by a speciesistic framework. But this decentering is essentially intended to curtail the drastic repercussions that may be triggered (or have been triggered) in one's surroundings and society as a result of possessive individualism, which implies the ego-centredness and the indifference of an individual towards the obligations outside the ambit of one's self. This dimension of posthumanism does not vouch for eliminating the human species or marginalising the human community to envisage such a scenario. Instead, it exhorts the co-existence of the human species, nature, and the material world, thus going beyond speciesistic differences and ensuring an egalitarian society in terms of the significance accorded to its members. Thus, the very essence of a critical posthumanist perspective envisions an all-encompassing structure that acknowledges diversity, accommodates fellow humans and non-humans irrespective of differences on any account. It works along the lines of what Stefan Herbrechter, a pioneer in the field of critical posthumanism, calls "the Barthesian idea of 'demythologisation'" (123). This idea works against hierarchical frameworks that place privilege upon one form of existence which causes the less privileged entities or beings to be subject to reckless manipulation or exploitation.

Posthumanities in this regard envisions the coming together of the human and the non-human beings such that none occupies the centre; instead, both engage in a relationship complementing each other. It not only suggests the possibility that the human self is inextricably bound with the latter, but also that one cannot be understood in isolation and outside the ambit of the other, thus foregrounding the reciprocal relationship between both. Further, it problematises and dismantles certain binaries that have been

traditionally based on a hegemonic framework, such as that of the self and the other, nature and culture, *bios* and *zoe* in the course of this process. This will be explicated in the following paragraphs and in the next section, particularly within the context of *Tinai*, to understand their potential significance and implications in the development of a sustainable society.

2.1 The Posthumanist Subject and Deconstruction of Binaries

"The post-subjective form of agency" that is not restricted to the human subject disturbs the dichotomous relationship between the self and the other by attributing agency to non-human beings (Herbrechter 13). Agency here denotes the self-sufficient and autonomous nature of a being, which is only vested upon human individuals in a humanistic framework. Posthumanism extends the notion to the realm of the non-human as well to evoke a non-speciesistic scenario. The very notion of the subject is thus called into question here. A posthumanist subject is one who does not lead an isolated, independent existence but constantly engages in co-operating dynamics with non-human actors in a de-anthropocentred environment. Herbrechter quotes Katherine Hayles, "the presumption that there is agency, desire, or will belonging to the self clearly distinguished from the 'wills of others' is undercut in the posthuman" (Herbrechter 205). This necessarily tends to be a crucial point of relevance in evincing a rendezvous of the human and the non-human.

Being a posthumanist 'subject' means encouraging nature-culture dynamics such that they constitute a continuum. Subjecthood here not only encompasses phenomena and entities that are evidently animate but also embraces the supposedly inanimate matter, thus ruminating on the autonomy of the subject and the object and possibly blurring the privilege traditionally associated with one over the other. This is vividly a critique of 'normative subjectivity' that privileges one species and also "the living or organic against the mechanical or technical," where the latter could be considered inclusive of the material as well (Wolfe xviii). Hence, the principles underlying the notions of singular, universal, unitary subjecthood traditionally linked with the human is expanded, thereby accommodating and encouraging plurality. The crux of the posthumanist subjectivity, as Herbrechter observes,

is in the realisation that humans are in the process of 'becoming human' not via an exclusive mode of growth but via an embracing of inclusive and collective 'becoming' in tandem with the environment and non-human lives. This becomes another case in point, revealing the onus that this philosophy places on a symbiotic co-existence of all beings. It also attributes new conceptions regarding 'life' or the '*bios*.'

Bios is popularly associated with all forms of life, including human life and *zoe* with the non-human. An extension of *zoe* to the *bios* as proposed by Braidotti could be a means of disrupting this binary. She also associates *zoe* with that section of society that is othered with respect to the hegemonic dimensions that constitute the standard perception of the human. Hence, the disruption of *bios/zoe* dichotomy intends to uphold an egalitarian society that accommodates differences. Here, the notion of the *zoe* is starkly different from the meaning attributed to the term by Giorgio Agamben. Agamben's conception of the *zoe* is that of a 'bare life,' where biological facts of life are prioritised over the way forms of life are lived. However, for Braidotti, the *zoe* becomes the vantage point for eschewing the narcissism of humanism as it evokes the dissolution of a fixed subjectivity that the nomadic philosophy too endorses. Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory outlines a sustainable modern subjectivity as one in flux, never opposed to a dominant hierarchy yet intrinsically other, always in the process of becoming, and perpetually engaged in dynamic power relations ("Nomadic theory"). This conception of philosophical nomadism enables the consideration of the *zoe* as an integral part of human life, necessitating reciprocal relationships among the human, non-human, and non-organic entities. This privileges diversity as opposed to monocentrism, hence, problematising the self-other dichotomy, which is in stark contrast to a sustainable ethos.

2.2 Cosmopolitanism and Nomadic Philosophy

The inter-species interactions warranted by posthumanism can trigger the advent of what Donna Haraway calls *autres-mondialisations*, i.e. another world or a different form of globalisation based on solidarity and diversity. It involves a recognition of "differentially situated species, including landscapes, animals, plants, microorganisms, people…" (Haraway 41). This

form of society evidently foregrounds the idea of cosmopolitics in conjunction with copresence and eschews isolated, individual, arboreal existence. The concept is associated with Isabelle Strengers for whom "the cosmos is the possible unknown constructed by multiple, diverse entities" (quoted in Haraway 83). Interaction with a stranger entity, or more appropriately "an other" entity, which is not inherently deemed alien, forms the conceptual framework of this cosmopolitics. Hence, it works towards an interrelationship capable of forging multispecies sociality and new commensal or symbiotic identities. It is also an encounter that diminishes nature/culture dualisms to forge a single nature-culture formation.

Like Haraway, Braidotti too ruminates on a form of *autres-mondialisation* by emphasising the need for a transnational space that recognises and respects differences apart from sameness. "Only a transnational space based not on the assumption of sameness but rather on the recognition of difference can disengage" an individual from ethnocentrism and hence from an ego-centric identity (Braidotti 256). This poses significant ramifications for a sustainable society as it warrants rhizomatic development and accommodates intra-species and inter-species differences to envisage a harmonious co-existence. This non-unitary vision acts as a means of levelling the differences within and outside human communities. Braidotti asserts that "a sustainable ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism" (35). Her nomadic philosophy, which endorses the notion of interconnectedness, foregrounds the idea of a shared subjectivity hence asserting the case for sustainable ethics. This is particularly so because it potentially envisages a "universe of intersecting affective relations" (Braidotti 169), which ensures a "becoming" in conjunction with and in affiliation to other factors beyond one's self. This is one of the underlying principles that informs a harmonious existence and a commensal partnership founded on respect and the acknowledgement of reciprocal behaviours irrespective of the hierarchies established by hegemonic discourses. Hence, it underscores the notion of a fluid, dynamic subjectivity such that it displaces the need for dominant and hierarchical

ontologies and epistemologies that hinder an ethical interaction between and amongst species.

Braidotti's conception of posthumanities invokes a "nomadic eco-philosophy of multiple belongings" (35) as it seems to be founded on the notion of ethics of care which works along with the idea that "animals, machines [here material objects] and earth 'others' can be equal partners in an ethical exchange" (Braidottti 121). This idea also implicitly suggests eliminating a condescending attitude that is likely to arise in any relationship as it could eventually become ego-centric. Posthumanist subjectivity in these regards thus endorses a sustainable subjectivity as it challenges "the anthropocentrism of Western philosophies' understanding of the subject, and of the attributes usually reserved for 'agency'" (Braidotti 156). Though the ethics pertaining to care in forming a sustainable subjectivity is usually associated with conservationist practices, examining *Tinai* concept within the posthumanist framework hitherto delineated is bound to propose and provide insightful observations in this regard by reinforcing its affiliations with a sustainable ethos that "cuts across species, space and time" (Braidotti 262). This becomes particularly relevant since the very essence of posthumanist philosophy conceptualises a pluralistic and dynamic subjectivity that goes beyond the ambit of a unitary self to endorse the ethos of inclusion.

3. Posthumanistic Re-reading of *Tinai*

In the essay "Early South Indian Society and Economy – The *Tinai* concept," which is a part of the anthology *Studies in Ancient Tamil Society*, Sivathamby explicates the concept of *Tinai* in association with Sangam literature, which refers to "an academy of poets and bards who flourished … under the patronage of the Pandya kings of the Sangam age" (Rajan 2). Gods and legendary sages are believed to have attended the first Sangam, in Madurai, and the works of this Sangam are unavailable. The second Sanagam "was attended by several poets and produced a large mass of literature, but only Tolkappiyam (the early Tamil grammar work) has survived" (Rajan 2). Similarly, the third Sangam "also produced vast literature, but only a fraction of it has survived. It is this fraction which constitutes the extant body of Sangam literature" (Rajan 2). Sivathamby, in his explication of *Tinai*, identified the

definitions attributed by later commentators and has examined *Tinai* as a literary convention in Sangam texts wherein different ecological regions are connected to corresponding human behaviours. This could be studied within the ambit of the two major genres of Sangam literature, *Akam (*internal) and *Puram* (external) poetry. *Akam* poetry deals with inner human feelings and emotions, mainly pertaining to the theme of love and *Puram* poetry with public matters such as military exploits, war, etc. (Ramanujan 93).

3.1 The Interface between the Human and the Non-human

According to Sivathamby, *Akam* and *Puram* poems are linked to specific geographical landscapes or ecological regions such that particular human emotions represented in the poems are "characteristic of a particular region" (1). This inter-connection between human emotions and ecology is one of the major aspects that he identified in relation to the *Tinai* concept. Its conception ruptures certain dualisms as envisioned by posthumanism and hints at a cosmopolitan framework based on co-existence along the lines of Harawayen *autres-mondialisation*. Thereby, it points to a sustainable ethos founded on a harmonious partnership and interaction irrespective of speciesistic differences. One may assume that the definition of *Tinai* that refers to a "general theme" or "conduct" could be humanistic as it *prima face* leads one to associate either of these terms solely with the human. However, in contrast, it actually points to the idea of an "integrative oikos" as it ensures a commingling of themes pertaining to the human, the ecological, and material realms. Hence it implies a symbiotic relationship in its conception. Integrative oikos is an integration of "the sacred, nature, culture, and the humans" (Selvamony 2). This becomes particularly evident in the three integral characteristics of *Tinai*, namely *Mutal*, *Karu*, and *Uri*. *Mutal* refers to the "terrain and time," *Karu* includes aspects such as gods, food, flora, fauna, economic activity undertaken, water source and material objects such as musical instruments, and *Uri*, comprises of "the human behaviour pattern that is characteristic of each region" (Sivathamby 10-11). This asserts how *Tinai* encompasses the human and the non-human, the organic and the inorganic, within an umbrella framework. *Mutal*, though literally means the "primary aspect,"

here, it may not be possible to discern a hierarchical relationship between the three groups – *Mutal*, *Karu*, and *Uri* since the latter two have not been similarly identified as the secondary and tertiary aspects, respectively.

The temporal dimension, associated with *mutal*, encompasses not only the linearity of time but also its cyclical nature as it gives due importance to season (Ramanujan 99). This, in accordance with "the molecular sense of cyclical, discontinuous time," forms a part of ideas associated with post-anthropocentrism (Braidotti 151). The temporal, spatial, material, ecological, and cultural factors constituting the three integral aspects of *Tinai* in themselves foreground a "post-subjective form of agency" (Herbrechter 13) as they tend to offer equal space and agency to the humans, non-humans, objects, and the cosmos. Also, they are not founded merely on the premise of a subject-object ontology but on a system of "fugal accompaniment" (Haraway 261) that attempts to diminish nature/culture dualism. This may be deemed an ideal scenario that depicts the human and the non-human in a non-logocentric relationship as it potentially envisages the rupturing of the contours of the *bios* and the *zoe*. Thereby it eliminates the possibilities of a hierarchical or dichotomous relationship between both, thus endorsing Braidotti's nomadic philosophy.

Further, this is asserted in the interconnection between ecological regions and human emotions represented by *Tinai*. Even though the human emotions represented include the depiction of emotions such as "anxiety," "agony of separation," and "annoyance," the researcher would like to call attention to the association of such emotions to a particular terrain, thereby foregrounding the inter-connectedness between the human and the non-human. These human emotions and behaviours are not randomly assigned to a particular landscape; rather, they emanate from the geographical peculiarities associated with the region, thus depicting the inextricable link between both the entities. In fact, the presence of an ethical interface and sustainable peace is embedded in the very conception of this literary tradition more than its thematic aspects, as it implicitly suggests the seamless expansion of human subjectivity to include the natural world in its manifestation. Also, the fact that each *Tinai* is referred to by "the names of flowers peculiar to the region" (Sivathamby 1) further

asserts this observation. For instance, in the case of poetry dealing with *Akam* themes, the landscapes are mainly divided into five, "namely, the montane [mountain] (*kurinci*), the pastoral (*mullai*), the riverine (*marutam*), and the littoral (*neytal*) and the desertic (*paalai*)" and the corresponding human emotions exhibit various facets of romantic or familial love (Alex 3). Here, the latter term in each case corresponds to the names of flowers peculiar to these regions. In *Akananuru* 318,[1] the references made to "mountain country," "forest animals," "elephants," "waterfalls," "hunters," "bamboo jungle" overarchingly represent it as a *kurinci* poem, as these features and the flower *kurinci* are considered endemic to the mountainous terrain. The human emotion represented in this poem equally corresponds to the peculiarity of the terrain as it surrounds a "man of the mountain country" who has left the region probably for a temporary period.

Similarly, a close examination of *Palai Tinai*, offers an underlying suggestion implicit in the characteristics of this region and the economic activity associated with the same, which includes plundering and looting of travellers (refer to Table 1). This *Tinai* does not represent a distinct ecological region; instead, it represents the transformation of *mullai* or *kurinci* into an arid region (Sivathamby 9). It is possible to infer that in parallel to the transformation thus evinced from a serene environment to a deserted landscape, human mindscape also undergoes a transition in terms of variations inherent in human emotions and it tends to be in contrast to an earlier state of affairs. At least certain individuals undergoing this transformation are the very same persons who, in a *mullai* or *kurinci* setting, possibly do not exhibit such modes of conduct. Hence, the aridness of the region represented in *palai* is seamlessly integrated with a human activity that corresponds to a similar state of mind in an individual.

In the case of *Puram* poetry, some of the poems in this genre deal with themes pertaining to "military activity," such as "capture and recapture of cattle," "guarding and raiding of settlement," and "guarding and attacking of fortifications" (Sivathamby 2-3). The

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[1]*Akananuru* is a part of *Akam* anthology and comprises "400 love poems, 13–37 lines each" (Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape* 94).

Tinai identified with these activities are also named after certain flowers *Vetci*, *Vanci*, *Ulinai*, *Tumpai*, and *Vakai*, like in the case of *Akam* themes (Sivathamby 2-3). In *Puram* poetry too, the focus on the literary convention in itself rather than the thematic elements, qualifies it to be studied within the ambit of posthumanism since the activities mentioned corresponds to the peculiarities of each topographical region. The hilly regions and pasturelands could be associated with cattle herding and rearing; the pasturelands provide space for establishing settlements; and increased affluence associated with an agrarian economy leads to probable conflicts amongst people. Hence, this literary convention shows how human activities and emotions are influenced and integrally connected to the respective environs of its habitants. These representations in themselves undercut human essentialism, though the theme depicted pertains to the human since it is inextricably bound to the ecological landscape and related aspects emanating from its peculiarities. In fact, essentialism of any form does not seem to be vouched for by *Tinai*.

3.2 The Cause for Ethical Development:

Moreover, the behavioural patterns of the five *Tinai*s are also in conjunction with the socio-political and economic significance of the geographical landscape, thus foregrounding the interplay of nature-culture dynamics. Sivathamby has delineated the same with respect to Marutam, Palai, and Kurinci, the elaborate one being with respect to Marutam where he associates the "socio-economic significance of utal-sulking as a behaviour pattern in Marutam" *Tinai* (Sivathamby 18) since it is an agrarian economy. Hence, the affluence arising from the same in relation to other *Tinai*s encourages certain practices that do not interfere with "property rights and family succession" but causes anxiety for a devoted wife (Sivathamby 19). The economic activities undertaken in association with different *Tinai*s further reinforce this nature-culture continuum since they are apparently in accordance with the peculiarities of the respective ecological regions as depicted in the table below:

Region	Diet	Economic Activity	Source of Water
1 Hill	Millet, bamboo, rice	obtaining honey, digging for yams, driving away birds that eat the corns of millet	Streams and fountains
2 Pasture land	Varaku, camai and mutirai	Cattle-rearing, weeding the millets, thrashing out the grain with buffaloes	River (in pasture land)
3 Agrarian	Rice	Transplantation, weeding, harvesting, mating the cattle	River, domestic wells, ponds
4 Littoral	Food brought after the sale of fish and salt	Fishing, salt cultivation, the sale of these two	Sandy wells, pits of saline water
5 Dry (Palai)	Things robbed and plundered	Misleading the travellers and plundering them	Wells and fountains

Table 1 (Sivathamby, "Early South Indian Society and Economy," 11).

The table, except in the case of the last category, represents a sustainable paradigm that is less intrusive and not overtly exploitative. Evidently, ego-centric pursuits for large-scale commercial exploitation do not seem to have existed within this framework since each terrain's inherent, pristine niches are *prima facie* maintained without drastic alterations or forced human intrusions that do not correspond to the geographical reality. Fishing and salt cultivation associated with the littoral region is perhaps the only instance that might appear to be intrusive. The repercussions of the same may be assumed to be minimal while considering the indigenous practices that would have been utilised for the same. However, when the relative monetary benefits arising from each occupational activity turns out to be self-centred, it is bound to create significant disturbances. As mentioned before, this is represented in *Akam* poetry concerning *marutam* and the behaviour pattern associated with it, i.e. "sulking," and also in *palai tinai* where the associated economic activity is in contrast to others,

hence, calling the very notion of development and civilisation into question. In all likelihood, the suggestion here is that ego-centric pursuits do not qualify to be described so. In extension, this foreshadows the plausible disturbances that could pervade the physical landscape as well, when human actions tend to become largely self-centred and arrogantly profit-oriented more than meeting the requirements of subsistence and survival. Thus, in the long run, it reinforces the need for ethical development. It also further asserts the inextricable bonding between human subjectivity and ecology represented in this literary convention.

Tinai apparently harbours the implication of a cosmopolitan, egalitarian space that accommodates diversity such that one entity or being is not favoured over the other (Sivathamby 10). At this juncture, Sivathamby's mention of Tolkappiyar having used the word "*ulakam*," meaning world, for each region becomes important. Though the essayist observes that the term is used to denote the uniqueness of each region and its inhabitants and hence its difference from another of the kind, an alternate reading may be possible in this regard, especially in conjunction with the notion of Haraway's *autres-mondialisation*, based on diversity and solidarity. When *mutal*, *karu*, and *uri* are observed as occupying an egalitarian space in *Akam* and *Puram* poetry, it becomes a concrete example realising this idea. For instance, in *Akam* poetry human conduct or behaviour is implicitly foregrounded via the use of the "inset scene," which accords due significance to the former and the latter.

In *Kuruntokai* 3, which is a part of *Akam* anthology, the inset scene of bees making honey from the flowers of *kurinci* becomes the image suggesting lover's union (Ramanujan 102). Here, in the inset scene, the inherent nature of bees is described, and the connection with the human emotions is actually derived by a reader and not overtly suggested, thereby avoiding a scope for essentialism of any kind. In this context, the very need for demythologisation to counter anthropocentrism is also diminished since the inset scene here goes beyond mere personification or anthropomorphising as they too tend to be anthropocentric to a certain extent. Thus, the literary technique employed in itself serves the purpose of placing the human and the non-human at par with each other.

The notion of *autres-mondialisation* may also be further explored in association with the idea of *Tinai mayakkam*. "Tolkappiyar speaks

of '*Tinai mayakkam*'- blending of the features of one *Tinai* with those of another" (Sivathamby 17). Though he acknowledges the depiction of more than one ecological region in Sangam poetry, he does not support the blending of different human behaviours. On the other hand, a few other scholars argued against "the blending of the *nilam* – the land (region)" (Sivathamby 18) in Sangam poetry probably because they deemed it an inappropriate literary convention to blend features of a landscape which they probably assumed to be self-sufficient and isolated in themselves without a need for interaction or dependence on another terrain.

The focus of the researcher, however, is not on the exclusion embedded in such propositions but on the fact that in contrast to these opinions, "blending," in terms of the features of ecological regions and human behaviours, may be identified in Sangam literature. For instance, in *Akananuru* 348, it is possible to identify the elements and behavioural patterns associated with the *kurinci*, *marutam*, and *palai tinais*. The references here to "hillsmen," the guarding of millets, the mention of "honey," "bamboo," "elephants" are typical of a *kurunci* poem. At the same time, subtle undertones of betrayal, the suggestion that the guardsmen have not been vigilant of their crops, which implies that their women are not secure, pervades the poem, and these aspects point to *marutam*. Also, the references to "summer" and "viper, these aspects being associated with *palai* suggests that all *Tinais* harbour the possibility of turning dry and arid like the *palai*, due to disturbances in ecological landscapes and human mindscapes. Hence, *Tinai-mayakkam*, a literary aspect in itself problematises the distinction between the human and the non-human by evincing an equal blending of their distinct features associated with different *Tinai*s.

The very notion of *Tinai mayakkam* in this context is particularly significant as it foregrounds the probability of co-temporal existence of societies belonging to different ecological regions. Though Sivathamby undertakes the question of successive evolution of humans or their co-temporal existence in relation to the *Tinai*s, a conclusive answer may not be possible in this regard. Rather, the very notion of blending associated with *Tinai mayakkam* as a literary convention emphasises the possibilities of interactions and exchanges between different units, thereby eliminating the possibilities of an isolated existence. Placing *ulakam* within this

framework shows how both diversity and solidarity may be achieved irrespective of intra-species or inter-species differences in opposition to isolated, individual, independent existence. This once again asserts the potential for cosmopolitanism harboured by this society.

4. Conclusion

Inherent within the cosmopolitan framework envisaged by *Tinai* hitherto is the significance of partnership and exchanges between people and their environment. This scenario may be deemed a miniature representation of the planet or the cosmos in its entirety. The inclusive framework thus proposed has been able to show how the various aspects of *Tinai* are on an equal plane and in integral relationship with each other. This endorses "a new model of kinship … which moves beyond the subject-object distinction imposed by classical rational thought and induces instead new forms of empathy, a new sense of connection" (Braidotti 208). The sustainable ethos hitherto delineated in the literary contextual background of *Tinai*, appears to be in conjunction with this posthumanist perspective. The new model and connections thus proposed have ensued from an effective problematisation of significant binaries. This is a prerequisite that necessitates the eschewing of an egological consciousness as it could fundamentally cause a hindrance to sustainable ethos. Hence, a syncretic space that accommodates humans and non-humans irrespective of differences on any account in the current global setting modelled along the lines of the society represented via *Tinai*, could offer a plausible solution.

The problematisation of certain hierarchical dichotomies as endorsed by the *Tinai* concept indicates the potential for an ethical interface embedded within the scope of a literary convention as it implicitly suggests an ethics of care. Within this framework, human significance is not dismissed; instead, the human and the non-human come to occupy an egalitarian, cosmopolitan space that is founded on seamless integration. Also, the ethical notion of development proposed in the previous section hints at the notion of a sustainable economy which enables "the collapse of mono-centred systems and of binary modes of opposition between centre and periphery" (Braidotiti 8), hence endorsing a web-like structure

that foregrounds inter-connectedness rather than a singular, linear development. The ethics of care embedded in the concept manifests itself not significantly in the thematic concerns that it deals with but rather in the very conception of *Tinai* that offers an implicit rendezvous of human emotions, behaviours and the ecological landscape which influence each other.

From the observations made, it may be possible to conclude that the problematisation of human subjecthood as a single, unitary subject could be a beginning point for dealing with sustainability in the contemporary era. Hence, it rightly suggests an "alternative social order" (Selvamony 215) when placed within the purview of a posthumanist framework which turns out to be inevitable with regard to contemporary discussions on the need for a sustainable living.

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