

REPRESENTATION OF MULLAI TINAI IN THOMAS HARDY'S THE WOODLANDERS AND TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Dr. N. Saraswathy Antharjanam

Associate Professor, Department of English, S.D. College, Alappuzha

Abstract

The correlation of time and place (mutal porul) with natural settings (karu porul) helps to achieve the right projection of human emotions (uriporul). In this context it is possible to conclude that the Wessex landscape in The Woodlanders acts as a tinai. These landscapes and their natural milieu serve as a background for expressing the appropriate phase of love associated with them which helps to rightly convey the mood of the lovers. The description of human emotions in relation to nature and great love and concern for nature connect the English writer Thomas Hardy with the South Indian Cankam poets. This paper attempts to explain the conventional mullai tinai and its echoes in Thomas Hardy's The Woodlanders and Tess of the D'Urbervilles. The idealized landscape known as tinai, in which akam poetry is based is nucleus to the design of the poems. There are five such landscapes in akam proper, kurinji, marutam, mullai, neytal and palai. Each landscape is named after a flower or tree native to it and each is associated with a season, time of day, specific God, animals, birds, trees, occupation, food, musical instrument, raga, community and hero. Most significantly each landscape is associated with an aspect of love.

Keywords: Mullai tinai, Hollybush, Cankam, uri porul- emotion, Hintock

The Cankam (pronounced as sangam) poets never lost sight of the landscape that they knew and their poems were full of concrete and unforgettable details of the flora and fauna of their region. These songs not merely portray the natural beauty of each region but the people's day-to-day life lived close to nature. The scenic splendour of nature provides the background for Cankam poems. The splendid description of nature in the poems shows the poets' great concern for nature and shows how nature and human beings are interconnected. This interrelation between man and nature is first identified by Wordsworth and it is he who introduced it to the English world. Thomas Hardy "the observant painter of rural scenes" (H. Willaims, Jstor org) makes it more expressive and celebrates it in his novels and poems. It is difficult to dissociate people from their environment in his novels. The moods of earth and sky enter into human life, colour it and even play their roles in the story.

A tinai is not just literal topography. It is a stylized notion of landscapes conditioned and conventionalized for the purpose of aesthetic communication. It is a means of bringing together aspects of nature and human society for achieving artistic coherence. The correlation of time and place (mutal porul) with natural settings (karuporul) helps to achieve the right projection of human emotions (uriporul). In this context the chapter elucidates that, the Wessex landscape in The Woodlanders acts as a tinai. The landscape and its natural milieu serve as a background for expressing the appropriate phase of love associated with them which help to rightly convey the mood of the lovers.

Mullai is a forest region representing evening time when the lady love is patiently waiting for her lover. The specific flower is jasmine and the animal of the area is deer. The region is filled with konrai trees and due to the presence of rivers the soil is red and fertile paving way for rich farming by the farmers there. Thomas Hardy, a major poet and novelist of 19th c. was born on 2nd June 1840, in the village of Higher Bockhampton near Dorchester, a country town which he made famous in his books. He was taught at home by his mother before he attended grammar school. At sixteen Hardy was apprenticed to an architect, and for many years he was an architect. Hardy's house in Bochkampton was in an idyllic setting and unaffected by the advancement of the railways and industries.

Hardy was much interested in nature from the very beginning. He was attracted by the landscapes, woodlands, hills, dales, beautiful flowers and wild creepers. Thomas Hardy set all his novels in "a merely realistic dream country" (Hardy, "Preface" Far from) the Wessex. The region of Wessex an ancient heptarch was covered by many of the lovely places which Hardy was associated with. Like Wordsworth's Lake district Hardy's favourite Wessex was covered by the growth of wild forest and woodlands. When he was a boy, Higher Bockhampton, his native village and the town of Dorchester were almost in the woods. The cottage wherein Hardy was born was fully surrounded by wild trees, bushes and creepers, but when the Industrial Revolution took place in the latter part of the 19th century and the railways came to Dorset, the forest began to disappear.

In *The Woodlanders* the background of the novel is not as hostile as Egdon Heath. The villagers do not play a role of Greek chorus for the first time as in Hardy's main works. From the view point of the death of Giles, this novel may be called a pastoral elegy which is only in the latter part of the novel. One can find most of the tinai of both akam and puram in epics like Mahabharatha or Ramayana or the Bible or the complete works of Shakespeare. The landscapes figuring in such major works are so varied. One may not find the plants mentioned in *Tolkappiyam* outside the major regions of South India;

but the insight into the vital connection between the themes, the characters, the landscape, the flora and fauna and the features of social life of a given region is relevant to the study of the literature produced in other parts of the world as well (Panicker 55).

The striking feature of the Wessex novels of Hardy is the remarkable continuity Hardy has maintained in the landscape of Wessex. But like the landscapes of Cankam poetry, the landscape of Hardy's novels is a stylized one; it is the Wessex of the imagination. The author of *Tolkappiyam* is careful not to be too dogmatic in identifying a particular landscape with a particular emotion or mood or theme. When the features of a tinai are specified, there is no implication that they belong only to a particular part of the Dravidian world. If too close an identification had been sought between the different elements of akam poetry, the system would have broken down even when applied to Cankam poems; these are approximations to be interpreted imaginatively rather than literally. The concept of tinai mayakkam, the merging of the elements of different tinai, is a pointer to the liberal and creative use of critical and aesthetic concepts. *Tolkappiyar* is not advocating rigid or mechanical application of theory. Hardy had a predilection for using topography as grand metaphor. An entry in one of his note-books says:

I am convinced that it is better for a writer to know a little bit of the world

remarkably well than to know a great part of the world remarkably little. And it is this intimate knowledge of “a little bit of the world”, which he christened Wessex, that links him to the poetics of tinai. A tinai is both the landscape of a geographical location and a landscape of the imagination. In the preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy finds a felicitous definition for it: “the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream country.” (qtd. in Hawkins 1)

Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* abounds with references and descriptions of mutal, karu and uri poruls of mullai tinai. Mutal porul is a combination of place and time. Forest region is the place and rain and beginning of night are the macro and micro time units of mullai tinai. Karu porul consists of deity, food, animal, tree, bird, measuring vessel, occupation, raga, people, hero and flower. The deity of mullai tinai is Maayon (Sree Krishnan), food-varag, ‘muthira’(some grains or cereals), animal -deer, rabbit, tree- konrai, bird-kaanan kozhi (wild hen), measuring vessel- Earukolppara, occupation- cattle rearing, people- aayar, and flower- mullai (jasmine). The heroine’s patient waiting over separation is the uriporul of mullai tinai. The spot is lonely, and when the days are darkening the many gay charioteers now perished who have rolled along the way,...return upon the mind of the loiterer. (1) The forest region unfolds itself in *The Woodlanders* as “[the] rampler who, for old association’s sake...woodlands, interspersed with apple- orchards” (1).

The wee hours of the morning being the backdrop for the novel, Hardy with a keenly observant eye records the magical moments by which night changes into day. A splendid description of a morning unfolds itself in the following lines:

THERE was now a distinct manifestation of morning in the air, and presently the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child. The woodlanders everywhere had already bestirred themselves, rising this month of... absolute darkness. It had been above an hour earlier, before a single bird had untucked his head,... twenty pairs of eyes stretched to the sky to forecast the weather for the day.(25)

Cattle rearing and farming are the occupations found in the mullai tinai. But here, in *The Woodlanders* one finds planting or growing trees and jobs connected to timber and trees. Apple orchards and groves of various trees like elm, oak and fir and firewood are there. “Firewood was the one thing abundant in Little Hintock, and a blaze of gad-ends made the outhouse gay with its light, which vied with that of the day as yet” (27). Most of the occupations are related to the woodland. For example, copse-work, timber-trade cider-making spar-making and planting saplings are usual occupations. George Melbury is engaged in timber and copse-ware business while Giles Winterborne is doing the apple and cider trade. Marty does her father’s occupation of spar-making and helps Giles in sowing seeds and growing saplings. The occupation of copse-work is described thus;

Copse-work, as it was called, being an occupation which the secondary intelligence of the hands and arms could carry on without the sovereign attention of the head, allowed the minds of its professors to wander considerably from the objects before them; hence the tales, chronicles, and ramifications of family history which were recounted here were of a very exhaustive kind. (28)

The emotion or uri porul assigned for mullai tinai is iruthal-i.e. heroine’s patient waiting. It happens in the life of Marty South as well as Giles Winterborne .Grace’s father had promised

Giles that he would give Grace's hand in marriage when they were too small or young, then he sends his daughter for higher studies so that she may become a sophisticated lady. For all these years Giles had been waiting for her to finish her pursuit and return from the far off place. On the other hand, Marty South had been waiting for Giles's love throughout her life even after knowing that he loved Grace. These two 'waitings' may be taken as the *uri porul* i.e, the emotional component of the *mullai tinai* of The Woodlanders.

The character of the Melbury family was of that kind which evinces some shyness in showing strong emotion among each other; a trait frequent in rural households, and one curiously inverse to most of the peculiarities distinguishing villagers from the people of towns. Thus hiding their warmer feelings under commonplace talk all round, Grace's reception produced no extraordinary demonstrations (52-53).

Grammer Oliver taking her candle wished Miss Melbury good-night. The distant glimmer attracted the attention of Grace and she reflected over that. She found:

....It was strange to her to come back from the world to Little Hintock and find in one of its nooks, like a tropical plant in a hedgerow, a nucleus of advanced ideas and practices which had nothing in common with the life around. Chemical experiments, anatomical projects, and metaphysical conceptions had found a strange home here (59).

It is usual that if a rare or unknown thing is to be made more common or known it will be compared to a more familiar or known thing. In this sense when Grace wants to compare, it is the world of flora that comes to her mind quite impulsively. The people of this woodland of Little Hintock breathe the flora and fauna of this place is made clear here. This again conforms to the concept of *tinai* by becoming a part of their thinking zone. The place and its plant and animal kingdom affecting and reacting with the mindscape of the human beings of that place or the inhabitants of the habitat is known as the *uripporul* of the *tinai* concept. Giles Winterborne wants to assure himself fully well that he will get Grace's hand in marriage; so he is impatiently waiting for a chance to get a glimpse of Grace and looking towards her door. Finally Mr. Melbury and Grace appear.

The description of human emotions in relation to nature and great love and concern for nature connect the English writer Thomas Hardy with the South Indian Cankam poets. Hardy may be confined to English Wessex and the Cankam poets to South Indian Dravidian world, but the faithful depiction of environment and its elements in their writings is common to both of them. The Wessex landscape in *The Woodlanders* acts as a *tinai* and the novel conforms to the concept of *mullai tinai* in particular. Previously some *tinai* study has been made in the case of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* also.

An attempt had been made earlier to analyse different landscapes within the Wessex of Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles* in the light of *tinai* in *akam* poetry of Cankam Literature. There, each landscape and its natural milieu serve as a background for expressing the phase of love associated with it, help to rightly convey the mood of the lovers, Tess and Angel. It is possible to find out different *tinai*s in the Wessex of Thomas Hardy. There are five landscapes in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* comparable to *akam tinai*s as they revolve around the different stages of love between Angel and Tess.

The novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a story of love between Tess Durbeyfield and Angel Clare, in the background of rural Wessex. In this course of love Tess and Angel undergo

all the phases of love which akam poetry enumerates and they reunite in the end only to separate forever. Tess Durbeyfield, a poor village girl meets Angel Clare during a summer in the beautiful valley of Var and they fall in love with each other. Their love ripens as the season matures and the romance leads way to marriage. They separate as Angel goes off for the inevitable journey, in search of wealth. Angel goes to Brazil in order to start farming. The realization of Tess's past, which includes her seduction by Alec D'Urbervilles, increases the intensity and profundity of separation. As time passes, Angel realises that he can no longer live separated from his loving wife, so he returns to her. But it is too late as Alec D'Urbervilles, "the archetypal Victorian Villain" (Kettle 50) has already done the damage. At the end, both Tess and Angel forgive each other. But after the reunion they can't live happily ever after as Tess is sentenced to death for murdering Alec.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, unlike Hardy's other novels, exploits the diversity and distinctiveness of the Wessex landforms and its agricultural practices. Five distinctive landscapes are identifiable in Tess of the D'Urbervilles within the boundary of Hardy's Wessex. They are Crow-foot, Lily, Hollybush, Swede and Pine. These landscapes are named after the tree or flower commonly seen in that region. Crow-foot is a water plant and Hollybush is a kind of shrub, Lily is again another water plant. Swede is a root vegetable plant and Pine is an evergreen tree.

Similar to akam poetry, Hardy's Wessex accommodates mutal porul or the first principles, i.e., time and place, Karuporul or the native elements (flora, fauna, etc) uriporul or the human emotions appropriately set in mutal and karu. In the novel, time is divided into year, month and day. The year is divided into four large time-units (macro) as seasons; spring (March-May), summer (June –August) autumn (September-November), and winter (December-February). The day is divided into small time-units (micro): dawn, morning, midday, evening dusk and night. Particular large time-units and small time-units are associated by conventions with particular regions. 'Space signifies different landscapes in the novel. There are five different landscapes in the novel. Crow-foot or the rich heath land valleys of the From, lily or the heavy clayland of the vale of the Blackmoor, Hollybush or the barren heathland which impinge upon the path of the heroine's journey. Swede or the forbidding chalk upland of Flintcomb-Ash and, Pine or the sandy seashore of Sandhourne.

Native elements or karu in the Wessex region include the flora and fauna of the region, the seasons, water bodies, occupation of the people. Each landscape in the novel, Tess is further associated with an appropriate uri or phase of love. Lovers' union is associated with crow-foot, patient waiting with lily, elopement and separation with Hollybush, infidelity and beloved's resentment with Swede and forgiveness with Pine. A short description of the main features of the five Wessex landscapes is given.

The mutal, karu and uriporuls of Tinai Poetics can be expanded as a mirror to the literary landscape combined with timescape, a reflection of the bioscape and the locale as extension of the self or mindscape respectively. In this sense Hardy's woodlands of the Wessex and its climates become the mutal, all the natural elements form the karu and the emotions of all the characters of The Woodlanders, especially the mindscape of the very 'Autumn's brother', Giles serves as the uri of the mullai tinai of the novel, The Woodlanders. If one looks through the goggles/spectacles of tinai, there is nothing but 'tinai' in this novel. The little Hintock, the Great Hintock, Sherton Abbas are some of the places that are found in the novel. The countryside

around makes the Hintocks. The time is divided into year, month and day. References to all major seasons are also there in the novel.

The macro or larger unit of time assigned for mullai tinai is the rainy season and the smaller division of a day or the micro-time unit for this 'tinai' is evening, dusk or beginning of night. Innumerable references to both these time units accommodate this novel to the mullai tinai. Ecocriticism began in consciousness-raising; it has much to say about the specific histories and the mythical structures in which humankind's consciousness of environment has been and continues to be expressed. But its ultimate value will be as a form of consciousness: it models an attentiveness, an attunement to words and to the world that acknowledges the intricate, inextricable networks linking culture and environment, and in so doing it has the capacity to bridge the dangerous abyss between the sterile cultural determinism of postmodernity and the truly tarrying biological – especially genetic – determinism of millennial science. This is the synthesis that is implicated in Hardy's *The Woodlanders* and the tinai it embodies. Instead of slipping into an environmental extremism, tinai illustrates how nature informs our life by harmonising nature and culture, even as Hardy explains in *The Woodlanders*.

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