

Joe D'Cruz's Ocean Rimmed World and the Persistence of Neital: A Neo- Tinai Reading of the Contemporary Coast

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Abstract

Ocean Rimmed World (Aazhi Soozh Ulagu), written by Tamil novelist R. N. Joe D'Cruz and translated by G. Geetha, narrates the life of the Parathavar fishing community along the Tamil Nadu coast. Born into a Roman Catholic Parathavar family and having worked in the shipping industry for over two decades, D'Cruz draws on lived experience to portray the beauty, struggles, and cultural life of the sea, the seashore, and its people from an insider's perspective. The paper reads the novel through the lens of Tinai, particularly Neital, to explore the relationship between the coastal landscape, its people, and the sea. While Blue Humanities is often viewed as a contemporary Western critical framework, the novel reveals that the ecological imagination underpinning human–water relationships has long existed in Indian literary traditions through Sangam Tinai. It also examines the changing coastal world shaped by mechanisation, market forces, and the emergence of new religious traditions through maritime contact. The paper argues that Ocean Rimmed World traces the transition of the classical Neital Tinai into the contemporary littoral world, drawing on the neo-Tinai framework to understand this transformation. Through the sea as an enduring witness, the novel reveals that while the forms of coastal life continue to change, the ecological consciousness of the Neital endures, reaffirming the relevance of Tinai as a framework for reading contemporary coastal narratives.

Keywords: Blue Humanities; Coastal Communities; Ecological Memory; Parathavar ; Tamil - Ecocriticism