

## The Utopian and the Dystopian in the Dynamics of the Life-Land Interface

S. DEVIKA

The physical environment is an intrinsic part of the human beings' consciousness and identity, defining their habits, customs, rituals and ways of life to such an extent that several writers in different countries down the centuries have sought to understand the world by exploring the intertwining of the natural landscape and life. Ecocriticism studies "the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii) and to the eco-critic, as Barry writes, "nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves . . . present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it" (252). This paper focusses on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (GST) and Anita Nair's *The Better Man* (BM) which are intensely concerned with the regional landscape shaping individual lives, and studies how the environmental contexts such as the river, the mountain and the forest play a vital part in the narrative, instead of merely serving as a beautiful and passive backdrop for the human drama to unfold. Since the eco-critical terrain is inherently inter-disciplinary, I use the spatial/geographical concept of heterotopia elaborated by the post-structuralist theoretician Michel Foucault in his 1967 lecture "Different Spaces" (DS) to interpret the interconnectedness between the natural world and human lives. The environment, which lies outside the hegemonic framework of the society, could be seen as a heterotopic site that offers a space for people to thrive for a