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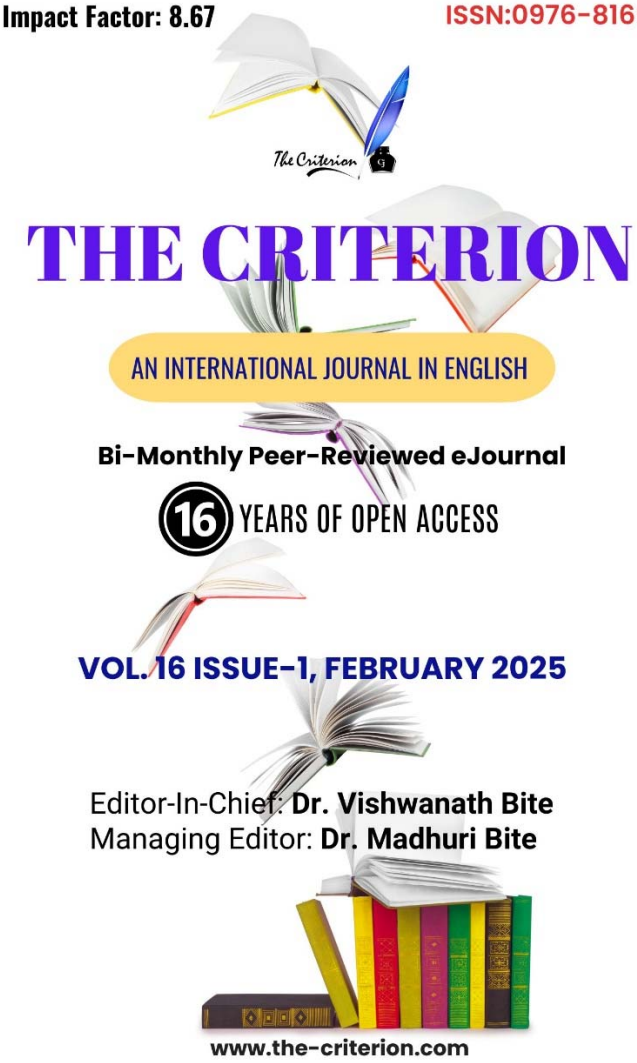

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Regional Utopian Impulses in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay's *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* and *Kalindi*

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Abstract:

This article draws on theories of utopia, distinguishing between concepts of utopian expressions and the specific idea of utopia as an idealized space. This article argues that the concept of utopianism has led to the emergence of new areas in postcolonial studies. The term utopia traditionally signifies either a 'good place' or 'no place,' representing an idealized society characterized by harmony, equitable distribution of resources, balanced labour and knowledge systems. In postcolonial studies, utopia extends beyond economic and cultural equity to encompass alternative visions of communitarian living, often in response to the disruptions of colonial and global transformations. In this context, regional literature serves as a crucial site for exploring the utopian aspirations of marginalized communities, challenging and redefining the colonial and postcolonial structures of the nation-state. This article examines Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* (*Of the Forest*) and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay's *Hansuli Banker Upokotha* (*The Tale of Hansuli Turn*) and *Kalindi* as literary expressions of the utopian impulses of marginalized communities confronting the onslaught of colonial modernity and displacement between the 1920s and 1940s in India.

Keywords: Postcolonial, utopia, utopianism, colonial modernity, Bengali, regional, Bibhutibhushan, Tarashankar.

Looking at Utopia and Utopianism: A Postcolonial Reading

"Everybody lives in the future, because they strive."

— Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

In his article *Introduction: Spaces of Utopia*, Bill Ashcroft suggests that "the utopian dimension of postcolonial studies" is "generated by the various utopian visions of pre- and post-independence writers" (1). Analyzing regional Bengali novels of the colonial period through a postcolonial lens reveals utopian impulses rooted in regional landscapes and lived realities. These works explore how coloniality, modernity, and capitalism shape regional spaces, highlighting marginal subjectivity, subalternity, and the displacement of local cultures.

This paper first examines the etymological origins of utopia and its relevance within postcolonial studies. It then situates utopia within the dynamics of regional literature. The analysis focuses on Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay's *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* and *Kalindi*, exploring their postcolonial interpretations of regional utopian thought. Except for *Kalindi,* the other novels mentioned are available in English translation.

Ashcroft, in his essay, remarks that postcolonial literary writings are characterized by an "irrepressible hope" (1). Postcolonial readings of colonial society by Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Ranajit Guha emphasize the significance of Bengal's regional dynamics. In *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chatterjee examines the fragmented nature of nationalism; in *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty critiques Eurocentric historiography; and in *Small Voice of History*, Guha explores the overlooked narratives of subaltern groups.

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These works demonstrate how the grand narratives of nationalism and colonialism failed to adequately represent the peripheral spaces of colonial Bengal, which remained caught in the throes of colonial modernity.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines regional society as mediated through the fictional works of the Bandyopadhyay duo. The three novels depict rural Bengal with a focus on specific communities: *Aranyak* portrays a complex, stratified society comprising caste Hindus and Adivasis in a forested landscape, *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* narrates the struggles of the marginalized Kahar community, and *Kalindi* recounts the tribal past and the precarious present of the nomadic Santhal community. Each of these novels presents communities grappling with disarray, dislocation, and dismay in the face of an encroaching colonial modernity.

These three novels—*Aranyak*, *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*, and *Kalindi*—explore not only the theme of displacement but also a shared vision that extends beyond it. They are deeply rooted in a sense of place, collective memory, and the utopian aspirations of the communities they portray. Ashcroft underscores the importance of distinguishing between utopia as an idealized, imagined place and utopianism as an ongoing process of envisioning alternative possibilities.

> The pre-independence utopias of soon-to-be liberated postcolonial nations provided a very clear focus for anti-colonial activism in British and other colonies. But this appeared to come to an abrupt halt once the goal of that activism was reached and the sombre realities of post-independence political life began to be felt. The postcolonial nation, a once glorious utopian idea, was now replaced in the literature, particularly in Africa, by a critical rhetoric that often landed authors in gaol. But gradually, for instance in Africa through writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong or Ben Okri, and latterly women writers such as Chimamanda Adiche, Sade Adeniran and Unomah

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> Azuah, post-independence despair has been giving way to broader constructions of future hope. (Ashcroft, "*Introduction*" 2)

To trace the genealogy of postcolonial utopianism, one must first examine the term utopia itself and its role in shaping colonial societies within non-Western traditions and cultures. Thomas More's concept of utopia, or "no place," envisioned an ideal society—whether attainable or not—as "the very embodiment of social aspirations to a perfect community" (Ashcroft, Utopianism 1). More's *Utopia* emerged from his dissatisfaction with contemporary English society, where "the distribution of work, property, wealth, and basic subsistence was grossly unequal, and social conditions were deeply unjust" (Ashcroft, Utopianism 2). At the core of utopian theory lies the vision of a community that equitably shares resources, knowledge, and labour among its people. But this vision remains under constant threat from global capitalism, which challenges attempts by dispossessed communities worldwide to reclaim communal values and social equity. Ashcroft writes:

> We might pause to consider how little has changed in the world. Regardless of the ambivalent tone in which Utopia was conceived, the basic principles of shared property, egalitarianism and universal employment continue to be central to utopian theory because inequality and exploitation remain prominent features of global capitalism. Utopia provided a literary "beginning" to a fundamental feature of human imagination- what Ernst Bloch would later call its "anticipatory consciousness." (Ashcroft, *Utopianism* 2)

Utopian societies are often conceived as inversions of the real world, seeking to overturn oppressive hierarchies and rigid social structures. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's 1905 story *Sultana's Dream* presents a feminist utopia where traditional gender roles are reversed—women enjoy the freedom to work outside their homes, while men remain indoors. Written during colonial rule, the story reflects a forward-thinking vision of a society where women have the autonomy to shape both their domestic and professional lives,

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ultimately imagining a more emancipated world.

Regional Utopian Visions in the Works of Bibhutibhushan and Tarashankar

Colonial regional societies have been examined through the lens of subaltern and marginal subjectivities, showcasing their varied efforts to reclaim a place within postcolonial historiography. The aspirations of these societies—for subsistence, survival, and self-determination—reflect a form of future-oriented thinking as they resist the impacts of imperial rule. In colonial Bengal, this resistance gave rise to strong expressions of social dreaming among regional communities, which the novels capture through complex and ambivalent engagements with place. As Ashcroft observes, "Postcolonial utopianism arises from an unrecognized but powerful reality: that successful resistance is transformative, and transformation rests on the belief in an achievable future" (Ashcroft, *Utopianism* 4).

Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* explores the fundamental human tendency to think and hope for the Not-Yet—a vision of a possible future that can bring social change. In their place-thinking, Bibhutibhushan and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay draw deeply from their respective locales, which, even after disappearing, persist in individual and collective memory. This lingering presence signals the elusive return of the past, manifested in the characters' visions of the Not-Yet—a future that may materialize elsewhere, at another time, under different circumstances. As Ashcroft puts it:

> For Bloch, Humans are constantly projected forward, constantly thinking of the future, constantly oriented towards the Not-Yet-Become. It is through the Novum- the idea of the new- that we orient ourselves and reshape questions about the nature of human existence in concrete ways so that we can see more clearly the direction of utopia. The very presence of daydreams, desires, longings, anticipations, confirms the permanent orientation of human consciousness towards the future. Moving from the curiosity and craving of

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> childhood to the constant presence of mature desire Bloch indicates the depth and prevalence of hope. Urging, longing, craving, wishing, imagining, dreaming- the Not-Yet lies deep in human consciousness. (Ashcroft, *Utopianism* 7)

In her introduction to *Aranyak*, Rimli Bhattacharya reflects on Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's literary motivation for documenting the everyday realities of regional life, capturing its enduring spirit of survival:

> Bibhutibhushan's *Aranyak* becomes then a chronicle of the dispossessed in visionary prose. Strangely rich with minute documentation of the hard day-to-day life of gangota peasants, men and women, penurious brahmans, migrant landless labourers and adivasis, it resists ethnography for the most part. All who fight for survival against nature and against man—landlords, rich tenants/moneylenders and their henchmen—are equally the object of the narrator's curiosity. Curiosity impelling an episodic narrative that is threaded by the seasonal links of a baramashyo or baramashya, of an intricately bound social system pervaded by the almost 'normative' hierarchy defined by caste. (Bhattacharya viii)

Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay remains deeply rooted in the traditions of his native region, which significantly shapes his regional novels. Though traditionalist in many ways, he acknowledges and even advocates for change—particularly the kind that allows the subjugated to challenge rigid orthodoxies and colonial dominance in rural Bengal. The inevitable clash with dominant forces gives rise to alternative expressions of community, as marginalized groups struggle to maintain their place or are compelled to migrate in search of survival.

In this context, Bibhutibhushan's *Aranyak* is permeated by the theme of dispossession, where the loss of place forces forest dwellers to migrate as their only viable

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option. Similarly, Tarashankar's *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* portrays a community's forced migration to an urban colonial setting, with its characters repeatedly seeking the vanished village of Bansbadi—an imagined space of belonging that remains central to their identity. These texts, therefore, open up the necessity of future-oriented thinking, emphasizing not the recreation of a lost place, but the endurance of its meaning. In this way, the novels frame place as an impulse—one that fuels resistance against imperial power and enables individuals to redefine their existence in a transformed world. About Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, Mahasweta Devi writes:

> Though he wrote continuously of human progress, he was a lover of the tradition, so deeply rooted in the mind of the nation. And lastly he wrote of rural Bengal from direct knowledge and experience and this won him the loyalty of the readers of the thirties and the forties who had their roots in the villages. (Chakravarty 47)

Of "Bharotborsho" and the Marginal in Aranyak

> Aranyak was written during the 1937-1939 period, when World War II was about to begin and British colonialism in India was almost ending. Though Bibhutibhushan does not mention these two events, the urge to clear the forest for cultivable land shown in the novel can be connected with the colonial desire for producing more crops. Britain's interest in producing more crops in the Indian subcontinent during this period is revealed in Madhushree Mukherjee's book Churchill's Secret War (2011), "In 1936, a government committee had recommended that the United Kingdom build a stockpile of at least three months' usage of food and animal feed in order to guard against wartime disruptions of supply. By the time World War II broke out, the entire machinery for feeding the country was in place. (Khan 227)

Published in 1939, *Aranyak* transcends literary stereotypes, incorporating a wide

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range of interpretations. At its core, the novel serves as a powerful critique of colonial modernity and colonial capitalism, deconstructing multiple narratives that it sustains. While often categorized as an eco-critical novel, *Aranyak* is also a political work by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay—one that subtly challenges dominant colonial discourses. The novel not only interrogates colonial knowledge systems but also disrupts the romanticized notion of India as an idyllic *Bharotborsho*. It raises a critical question: can those inhabiting the remotest regions of India envision their homeland as part of a larger national identity—one that, paradoxically, fails to acknowledge their existence and value?

Aranyak presents a diverse array of characters, including both Bengali and non-Bengali subaltern communities living on the fringes of the forest. Satyacharan's perspective on these people is shaped by his own biases, offering insight into a psyche that instinctively otherizes the forest dwellers. Their modes of communication, food habits, and ways of life both fascinate and mystify him, reinforcing his perception of them as fundamentally different. At the same time, his nostalgia for urban culture and its forms of entertainment reveals his deep-seated inclinations. As a product of colonial education, Satyacharan embodies the contradictions of a subject shaped by imperial ideologies. Despite his awareness of the colonial forces displacing the forest communities, he remains powerless to halt their erasure, ultimately leaving when their near-elimination becomes inevitable:

> The narrator's geographical location at the beginning and end of the story is in Calcutta. And this location is a significant strategy in the structure of the narrative. The presence of Calcutta throughout the story is implicit, a protest against this forest nature. The narrator is a middle-class, educated (i.e. English-educated) city man; his pride in culture is strong, his understanding of the needs of civilized people is clear ('the company of friends, libraries, theaters, cinemas, singing'), and at the same time his immense contempt for the uneducated, uncultured Biharis. The narrator's job is to settle land in a vast

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> forest area. To clear the forest and establish settlements. In this work, the Bengali narrator is, of course, only a tool. He is only an employee of rich landlords and businessmen. The nature around him is completely different from his own and familiar nature. Because of this difference, he is a hostile inhabitant of this forest from the beginning. But his initial hostility is more against man than against nature (Das 29, my translation)

The narrator's portrayal reveals a deep-seated regional tension—the clash between his own urban Bengali upbringing, shaped by colonial ideologies, and the lives of the non-urban forest dwellers, who are often perceived as less than human. This dehumanization stems both from their ways of life and their detachment from the modernized world. The narrator himself is implicated in the colonial project of transforming the wilderness through land development initiatives, making him an agent of modernization and urbanization. Amid these conflicts, the novel weaves together multiple narrative strands that challenge the self-proclaimed authority of the colonial worldview:

> Was it fit for human habitation? Not a soul, not a creature by my side. I was utterly companionless. There was not a single person with whom I could exchange a word. The idiots, the barbarians, natives of this region- were they capable of appreciating a fine thought? Was it in their company that I would have to spend my days?
>
> By repeatedly pronouncing the word 'human', the narrator wants to deny the inherent humanity of the people of this region. They are stupid, they are barbaric. The whole world is divided into civilized and uncivilized. This forest region and its people are stupid, barbaric, and uncivilized. And the civilized world is far away, where there is a crowd of people. (Das 30, my translation)

The primary narrator experiences a profound sense of alienation and detachment from

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the people living in the forest; their way of life appears opaque and mysterious to him. Initially, the natural surroundings make him feel deeply uncomfortable and isolated. However, it soon becomes evident that the spectre of urbanization looms over the wilderness—the geography of the region is increasingly vulnerable to colonial land projects, much like in Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay's *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*. In his essay *Aranyak: Bharotborsho Kon Dike*, Shishirkumar Das explores the unresolved dualism that permeates the novel, expressing its central tensions:

> The narrator of this story was initially hostile. Gradually he changed. Before the change was complete, the narrator returned to his own environment, to Calcutta, to Bengal, to civilization. The story changed immediately. Bengalis and non-Bengalis, civilized and uncivilized, city and forest - in this duality, the story finally reached the clash of two civilizations. But even there, the story did not end. (Das 33, my translation)

In the article *Introduction: Spaces of Utopia* by Ashcroft, the author references Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell*, where the narrator accompanies an Aboriginal man to visit his ancestral country—land that remains the country of the old people. Similarly, in *Aranyak*, the old Dobru Panna takes Satyacharan deep into the forest to show him the ancient shrines and places once ruled by their ancestors. For Dobru Panna and Bhanmati, the vast nation of *Bharotborsho* holds little significance; they have neither heard nor known much beyond the confines of their forest.

Ultimately, *Aranyak* remains entangled in unresolved questions and uncertainties. The novel leaves open the question of whether the modern, colonially educated subject merely observes an indigenous culture as an outsider or embraces it. Although the protagonist, shaped by colonial modernity, undergoes a process of revelation, it does not reach full realization. Instead, he remains caught in a state of intrigue, mystification, and sympathy for a way of life he perceives as incompatible with an increasingly urbanized and rapidly changing

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society.

The Tale of Hansuli Turn and *Kalindi*'s Utopian Impulses

The clash among zamindari families, their subjects, and the peasants in Tarashankar's *Kalindi* signals the decline of the zamindari system with the emergence of newly wealthy peasants and dominant classes. However, more significant is the socio-political dynamic within which the struggles of the Santhals unfold. Ahindra's sympathy for the nomadic Santhals and his defiance of colonial authority reflect broader socio-political tensions and his attempt to challenge the deep-seated stagnation of the system. Yet, his actions prove largely ineffective in alleviating the rising class conflicts in the village or in preventing the Santhals from being oppressed and displaced from the *char* lands. Local forces continue to operate autonomously, shaped by the shifting emergence of privileged classes vying for dominance.

Tarashankar's narrative encapsulates the Santhals' historical memory—marked both by their fierce resistance during the Santhal uprisings and by the subsequent subjugation that tempered their rebellious spirit. Even in the face of repeated defeat, their survival through migration reflects their resilience and adaptability, allowing them to navigate adversity and move on when circumstances demand. Ashcroft's essay *Introduction: Spaces of Utopia* reflects how the utopian idea remains deeply resonant in literature due to its creative possibilities. Even within works of realism, as exemplified by the African writer Dambudzo Marechera, utopian fiction embodies the "productive and volatile beyond common expectation... it plunges into the unknown" (Ashcroft 13).

In regional spaces, distance from the centre allowed local power dynamics to continue with the overarching forces of colonial modernity and the global war in which the British colonists were engaged. As a result, change occurred gradually and in subtle ways. The semi-feudal zamindari system persisted for some time, even in the early years before or around World War II. In *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*, the initial depiction of Bansbadi presents an

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almost idyllic yet superstitious, zamindari-ruled Kahar society, where a seemingly minor conflict arises with the defiance of Korali, a young Kahar man. Korali refuses to acknowledge Bonowari as the Kahar chief, rejects their zamindari subjugation, and provokes tension by constructing a well-fortified, brick-walled house and choosing to live separately within the village. His defiance of village orthodoxy serves as a catalyst, introducing the accounts of city-dwelling labourers as an alternative way of life—one that Korali aspires to embrace.

Within the Kahar community, rituals and ritualistic celebrations shape their social world, with liquor consumption marking the end of their daily labour before they fall asleep. While alcohol serves as a form of recreation, it also underscores a deeper social problem. It symbolizes the unequal power relations between landlords and Kahar labourers, as liquor suppresses hunger—the fundamental need for food. In this way, hunger becomes a tool of oppression and liquor a means of temporary relief. Thus, the image of people falling asleep after celebrations reflects not just festivity but a reality shaped by economic hardship, where cheap *desi* liquor numbs the struggles of daily existence.

The wartime demands soon cast a shadow over Banshbadi, as large vehicles encroach upon the land, stripping away its greenery, cutting down trees revered by the Kahars, and leaving the people bewildered. The construction of railroads further disrupts their way of life. The palanquin-bearing *Behara* Kahars and guarding *Atpoure* Kahars suddenly find themselves thrust into an unforeseen wartime crisis, deprived of their familiar struggles and the small comforts of cheap intoxication.

As the self-sustaining village disintegrates, a mass exodus unfolds in the novel. Those who were once evicted are forced to seek livelihoods in cities and factories. In his essay *Paddy, Mangoes, and Molasses Scum: Food Regimes and the Modernist Novel in The Tale of the Hansuli Turn*, Brooke Stanley talks about the British government's dual approach to this transformation. Tarashankar's novel similarly captures the transition of rural life into urban

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existence, as the simple-living Kahars are suddenly displaced, becoming city-dwellers, daily wage labourers, or vagrants. After the intrusion into the Hansuli Turn, Suchad's narration takes on an alienated tone, evoking the haunting presence of a lost place—where memories of the past blur with the realities of the present. Stanley remarks:

> Most suffering occurred in isolated villages but relief kitchens were located in towns, requiring patients to travel far on food. Many relocated to Calcutta in search of food… By prioritising the war effort and censoring reports of famine, Britain sought not to relieve famine victims but to hide them. (263)

Suchad, in *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*, preserves her oral accounts as a living archive of the Kahar community's cultural memory:

> Whereas rural serfdom was the Kahars' own "tale", the great river of history sweeps them into the era of global capitalism. Euro-American hegemony reconfigures amid the waves of decolonization that follow World War II. The Kahars' circumstances do not improve but are in some sense modernised, a process that Tarashankar represents as a negotiation between genres. The modernist novel, then, can be seen as a staging globalisation through form: it integrates local cultures into globality by interweaving genres." (Stanley 266)

Stanley discusses the fundamental challenge that globalized capitalism poses not only to the diverse expressions of local cultures but also to literary forms, further complicating their structure. This compels authors to develop strategies that preserve the nuances of local cultures in ways that resist easy interpretation. In doing so, decolonizing the text becomes a means of safeguarding multiple narrators—both oral and written—from erasure. Suchad's dialogues and monologues serve this purpose, often acting as a crucial counterpoint to the narrator's portrayal of the story:

> Globalisation's vast scale and heterogeneity introduce a representational

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> problem: how to describe such a monster without homogenising the many localities involved? (Stanley 266)

The colonial portrayal of tribals as either uncivilized or criminal was not only a widely held perception but also found official recognition in colonial government records. This framing echoes in *Aranyak* and *Kalindi*, where the history of tribal resistance is juxtaposed with their inherent inclination toward a peaceful existence—one that, under colonial narratives, rendered them either criminals or ignorant fools. Both novels capture these complexities, illustrating how the long history of oppression, though often obscured in written records, persists through oral traditions that recall the pre-colonial past. In a similar vein, Madhumita Chakraborty notes, "The Kahars belong to an untouchable 'criminal tribal,' the inhabitants of Hansuli Turn soon to be epically transformed by the effects of World War II and India's independence movement" (1).

In *Aranyak*, the oral recollections of Dobru Panna and others narrate the adivasis' early presence and their successive migrations, a pattern that also accounts for the repopulation of the *char* areas in *Kalindi*. The history of this community unfolds through their nomadic way of life, making *Aranyak* and *Kalindi* literary bridges to their communal past and collective memory of displacement. Yet, their dislocation does not end within the scope of either novel—it remains an ongoing reality.

In her essay *Debt, Time and Extravagance: Money and the Making of 'Primitives' in Colonial Bengal*, Prathama Banerjee discusses how colonial efforts deliberately segregated tribals from the permanently settled historical society. This was initially achieved by relocating the nomadic community to the Rajmahal foothills, designating *Damin-i-Koh* as their confined living space, and restricting their economic exchanges to colonial government-controlled markets. However, their deep-rooted instinct for nomadism became both a means of survival and a mode of resistance, allowing them to evade complete subjugation even as

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they remained vulnerable to deprivation and exploitation. For a time, this nomadic existence enabled them to operate on the periphery of the colonial economic system, minimizing their reliance on capital.

The narratives in *Aranyak* and *Kalindi* display this movement-driven existence, particularly through the tribals' food habits, which challenge the centrality of money in an increasingly capitalist world. The tribals inhabiting *Kalindi*'s *char* and the Kahars of Banshbadi evoke a sense of fluid, uncharted spaces—mutable and ever-shifting. Colonial modernity, which appears inevitable, ensures a vanishing present—its traces lingering like a spectre, neither fully erased nor entirely intact.

In *Kalindi*, Tarashankar draws comparisons between various competing claimants of the floating *char* land, including zamindars and upwardly mobile affluent peasants. Parthapratim Bandyopadhyay regards Tarashankar as a chronicler of history, documenting the transformations of changing times:

> Tarashankar has brought the Santals as a counterpoint to these farmers. The chars that are the focus of the novel are the Santals who first settled here... These almost nomadic Santals appear in the novel *Kalindi* with their folk life's myths, stories, songs, and painted civilization; again, how they are swept away in the process of larger society and history, the so-called civilized people exploiting and oppressing them in an ugly way - even the dilemmas and conflicts that arise within them, Tarashankar draws with almost historical impartiality. (85, my translation)

The *char* itself serves as a striking example of the postcolonial uncanny—a space marked by uncertainty, instability, and transformation. The inevitability of conflicts, the waning authority of the zamindars, and the rising influence of Bimal Babu collectively foreshadow a future in which the zamindari system is on the brink of collapse, "Tarashankar

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has shown the arrogance and methods of Bimal Mukherjee alongside the zamindari nobility and arrogance. But despite this, Tarashankar could not ignore this historical process of change" (Bandyopadhyay 88, my translation).

The breadth of Santhal history, spanning decades, unfolds through the repeated recollections of their uprisings and subsequent disillusionment in *Aranyak* and *Kalindi*. The once-fiery spirit that fueled their revolts has now faded, leaving behind a people without land or recognition. Figures like Ronglaal and others in *Kalindi* perceive the Santhals as ignorant, yet simultaneously recognize the potential to exploit their labour. The passage of time has reduced the tribals to an overlooked populace—one that clings to the memory of its former glory but, having lost everything, now turns once again to migration. This movement appears to echo their sense of failure despite their legendary past rebellions.

The inhabitants of these uncharted spaces carry with them a cultural memory of an archetypal place—one that evokes a vision of an old, idyllic home rooted in a distant, imagined past, yet never fully realized in the present. Such cultural imaginaries seem to sustain the postcolonial imagination of a place—forever deferred, never reaching a satisfying conclusion or fulfilling the communitarian desire, always projected into the future. The utopian impulse works through metaphorical and spiritual symbols, preserving the essence of these lost spaces.

The postcolonial reality of migration emerges as an outcome of the crisis of dwelling in marginal spaces, as seen in *Aranyak*, *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*, and *Kalindi*. Yet, amid this turmoil, there are subtle hints of a future shaped by socio-political mobility, role reversals, political consciousness, and, most importantly, a subaltern subjectivity forged from an evolving sense of solidarity among people from various sects of the regional world. These emerging possibilities are born out of complex relationships with colonial modernity—an era transitioning into political independence but still bearing the weight of a painful past.

Conclusion

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Aranyak, *Kalindi*, and *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* employ memory as a powerful tool in preserving cultural heritage, using it as a medium to exercise a vision of utopianism. While these narratives conclude with the displacement of their respective communities, the remembrance of their past foreshadows the rich possibilities of the future, where the spirit of hope holds the potential for social transformation.

Aranyak experiments with the concept of the nation within a colonial context, where its reflections on *Bharotborsho* function not merely as passing references but as acts of social dreaming in a time when the colonizer and the colonized compete to impose their respective visions of nationality—imperial and vernacular. In contrast, *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* is deeply rooted in the regional aesthetics of the Kahar community's everyday struggles with their collective history. Within this peripheral world, steeped in mystic beliefs and rituals, Kahar elder Suchad's storytelling embodies elements of magic realism, portraying the act of recalling the past as a means of defining the present and envisioning the future. Although colonial-capitalist incursions dismantle these societal structures, Tarashankar's characters persist in their social dreaming—evident in Suchad and Nosu's continued storytelling after being displaced from Bansbadi and in Korali's return to search for traces of the long-lost village. These moments imbue the narrative with utopian impulses, gesturing toward an unknowable future.

The cultural identity of the Santhali community in *Aranyak* and the Kahar community in *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* endures even after they lose their places of belonging. The spirit of utopianism and hope manifests in their resilience—the ability to move on, adapt, and continue in new environments that remain starkly hostile to their traditional ways of life. In this sense, their past serves as an anchor, helping them navigate the unfamiliar realities of a colonized world. The act of fiercely remembering their collective past after displacement generates powerful reactions within the community, reinforcing their identity and shaping their response to the future.

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This continuity does not result in a simple reclamation of their past identity but rather fosters a hybrid one—a fusion of the old and the new, where survival and resistance take on collective forms. The return of the past continues to permeate the present, fueling deeper aspirations. It represents a time and history not fully grasped by either the author or the reader but instead visualized with unforeseen and unknowable outcomes in the wake of colonial displacement.

In their act of dreaming and yearning, the communities in *Aranyak* and *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* exhibit similar impulses—holding onto their past while shaping their present accordingly. These texts also serve as rich sites for interpreting various subjectivities in relation to utopian dreaming, questioning both collective aspirations and individual desires for a utopian future. Regional literature, in this sense, intertwines geography, culture, and the search for identity within the colonial world, making it a crucial space for imagining utopian formations in marginal societies.

At the end of *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*, Korali's individual subjectivity—markedly different from Bonowari's—seems to seek an alternative identity through his connection with the lost village. His return to Banshbadi suggests a reimagined collective identity, one that the Kahar community may have aspired to in the urban-colonial landscape of Bengal but which remained beyond the comprehension of both the colonizers and the privileged caste society.

What kind of futures can be anticipated at the end of these novels that might resolve the crises of dwelling? What transpires in Korali's mind as he revisits the desolate, dried-out, and disfigured village of Banshbadi, only to begin tilling the land once again? The endings of *Aranyak*, *Kalindi*, and *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* hint at alternative futures—possibilities that are not immediately realized within the narratives but linger beyond their conclusions. In all three cases, the Adivasis of *Aranyak* and *Kalindi*, along with the Kahars of *The Tale of*

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Hansuli Turn, appear to be seeking new places for relocation beyond their cherished homelands. This search itself signifies the persistence of utopian dreaming.

Their vanishing present must find a future—a space where hope can transform their cultural archives into instruments of survival and reinvention. Despite the bleak realities imposed by colonial modernity, the spirit of utopian dreaming endures, ensuring that new narratives of subaltern subjectivity and dwelling continue to emerge within the regional sphere of the postcolonial world.

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