

Home, Factory, World: Domestic and Global Fictions in the work of Lavanya Sankaran

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Abstract

Lavanya Sankaran's *The Hope Factory* (2013) weaves together two narratives. One is the story of a Bangalore factory owner struggling to enter the world of transnational capitalism. The second is the story of the everyday struggles of one of his household's servants, a struggling single mother. On the surface, such a division tacitly reinforces the gendered language of globalisation theory, in which markets are 'penetrated' and 'dominated.' I argue, however, that the use of domestic fiction – generically associated with women characters and readers – to explore globalisation, necessarily challenges more conventional, masculinist approaches. As J.K. Gibson-Graham point out, much globalisation discourse fails to take into account the reality that there is no tidy division between life and work, nor between economic and affective relationships. Yet as Sankaran's fiction illustrates, experiences and perceptions of globalisation impact the most intimate moments of our lives, and intimate decisions, such as whom to marry, ripple out into the world. I contend that domestic fiction such as Sankaran's therefore challenges ideas of world literature by insisting on gendered intimacy and specificity, but also risks becoming global literature, with 'a problem-based monocultural aesthetic agenda that elicits transnational engagement.'¹

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Lavanya Sankaran's two works of fiction, *The Red Carpet* (2005) and *The Hope Factory* (2013) occupy a contradictory place in contemporary transnational literature. *The Red Carpet*, a collection of short stories, was showered with international praise upon its publication. It received glowing reviews in publications ranging from *India Today* to *The Washington Post*, booksellers' endorsements from retail giants Borders and Barnes & Noble, and was selected as a Best of First Fiction by *Poets & Writers* magazine. The international reach of Sankaran's debut was underscored by translations into French, German and Italian. She had already established her voice by publishing short stories in *The Atlantic* and *The Wall Street Journal*. With popular, commercial, and critical acclaim alike, Sankaran seemed set on a path to transnational acclaim. Both her own life – one of moving between the United States and India, while working in international finance – and her cosmopolitan characters, seemed well attuned to our twenty-first century sensibilities.

Sankaran followed up her debut with a novel, *The Hope Factory*, which is also set in contemporary Bangalore. In it, members of all classes struggle to succeed in the wake of

¹ Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone*, 99.

globalization's attendant economic and cultural changes. At the same time, Sankaran wrote a number of journalistic pieces for *Vogue*, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian (UK)*. *The Hope Factory* weaves together two narratives. One is the story of a Bangalore factory owner, Anand, struggling to enter into the world of transnational capitalism. The second is the story of the everyday struggles of one of his household's servants, Kamala, a lower class single mother. Thematically, then, the book fits well within the concerns of contemporary transnational and postcolonial literature. Yet, I argue, the structure and genre of the novel have posed unexpected problems for critics that may have contributed to Sankaran's critical neglect, despite her promising beginning.

The structure of *The Hope Factory* is actually tripartite. There are chapters told from Kamala's perspective, as she works, but also cooks, gossips, and worries about her son. There are chapters narrated from Anand's perspective which centre on the factory and his attempts to secure export opportunities with a Japanese automaker. Thirdly, there are chapters set in Anand's home, that focus on his relationship with his wife and children. While Anand links the home and the factory, other characters in each of these settings remain ignorant of these others, though their fates are arguably intertwined. Spatially, those chapters which depict Anand's home from his perspective, bring together the story of the factory – and with it, the story of global capitalism – with that of Kamala. The space of Anand's family is, of course, Kamala's workplace, and therefore not experienced exclusively as a private space. From the outset, therefore, this novel rejects the Indian nationalist division of the spheres so famously delineated by Partha Chatterjee, in which

the world of social institutions and practices [was split] into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology [...]. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity.²

As I will explain further below, both the home and the factory are equally places of economy and spirituality. I argue that in Sankaran's work, the boundary between the home and the world – as understood and shaped by discourses and experiences of globalisation – is ever more porous and even, at times, subject to erasure. I explore this politics and poetics of space in greater detail below.

While such boundary crossing has long been of interest to postcolonial studies, reception of *The Hope Factory* has been decidedly mixed. Writing in *The Guardian*, Jessica Holland claims that this novel places us 'almost in Dickens territory.'³ Meenakshi Venkat agrees in her review in the *New York Journal of Books*, claiming that there is nothing new or exciting here and that the novel 'takes few risks.'⁴ Their comments are echoed broadly – the book is enjoyable, the writing is competent, but it fails to push formal, aesthetic or political boundaries. Even more positive reviews, such as the one from Kirkus, praise it as 'a vivid exposé of modern India's

² Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 6.

³ Jessica Holland, 'The Hope Factory by Lavanya Sankaran – Review', *The Observer* 19 May 2013.

⁴ Meenakshi Venkat, 'The Hope Factory: A Novel'.

growing pains.’⁵ It is thus understood as an accessible, realist text, best read by non-Indian audiences for a fortuitous combination of pleasure and information retrieval. Such readings may explain why the book has received no critical attention to date. The book nevertheless seems to have done well with audiences, featured as a top pick by Amazon, on the website SheKnows, and in *Marie Claire* magazine, among others.

Arguably, the novel has sold well and captured the imagination of popular and commercial audiences precisely because of those features – its mastery of, but lack of innovation in genre, for instance, and its familiar deployment of realist narrative – that some critics have found so disappointing. But the novel’s accessibility may be problematic only if we demand that novels fit tidily into pre-established conceptions of national literature, whose study tends to focus on ‘identifying what seems inherently English or American [for instance] in the literatures’ and, therefore by extension, into world literature.⁶ Instead, I argue that Sankaran, who writes for publications in India, the United States, and Italy, among others, should be understood as the author of literature that ‘unfold[s] in a complex system of transnational economic and cultural exchanges’ that is characteristic of the globalisation of English literature.⁷

Anand’s house itself may be the most apt metaphor for *The Hope Factory*. Located firmly in Bangalore’s specific urban landscape, the house is public and even delocalised in several other ways. For Anand, its physical capaciousness denies it the intimacy that would make it a true home. Aesthetically, it draws on a vaguely western ‘modernist aesthetic’ that seems simultaneously culturally neutral – there is nothing especially Indian about it – and distinctly international.⁸ It is as much a staging ground for elaborate and politicised meetings and entertainments as it is a private space. Such events leave Anand wishing ‘to go home’ in the midst of ‘the despair of knowing he was home’ (180). The house, as much as the novel, is of the world – easily understood and entered by culturally diverse readers, but perhaps wholly satisfying to none. The house is not a neutral background but is, like all spaces, ‘living, dynamic, affective and rich in symbolism’.⁹ But here, the carefully muted quality of its life is a symbol unto itself.

This is not to say that this is a book wholly lacking in specificity or intimacy. Globalisation clearly touches, but does not utterly define, Anand – whose life takes him from an austere Brahmin existence in Mysore, to an out-of-caste marriage and a career in industry in cosmopolitan Bangalore. Rather, the local and the transnational are intimately linked, with the factory itself figured as a kind of domestic space, where the diversity of employees mirrors Anand’s household (71). We are continuously reminded of the particularities of his journey. Indeed, Anand is shaped not just by the realities of global capital, but by its fantasies. In the novel’s first scene, he daydreams about having an attractive female secretary with a European name – instead of the highly competent, and Indian, Mr Kamath. Indeed, the novel generates humour from such discrepancies. Kamala, too, is touched by globalisation. From her years as a

⁵ ‘The Hope Factory by Lavanya Sankaran’, *Kirkus Reviews*.

⁶ Paul Jay, ‘Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English,’ 42.

⁷ Jay 34.

⁸ Lavanya Sankaran, *The Hope Factory* 24. Further references will be included in the text as page numbers.

⁹ Angus Cameron and Ronen Palan, *The Imagined Economies of Globalization* 60.

day labourer on Bangalore's construction sites, to her (successful) quest to enrol her son in an English-language school, her desires, and her reality, are shaped by globalisation. She admires those from the slum who have succeeded in leaving both it – and poverty – behind, and invests much energy into imagining how she and her son, Narayan, might do the same via education and entry into a profession. Her dreams are the easily comprehensible ambitions of a mother for her son. Narayan, on the other hand, sees things differently, and knows that the construction sites of Dubai are a more likely, but no less globalised, destination (133).

A question which drives the plot in the novel is whether Anand will succeed in expanding his factory. This expansion is figured in decidedly globalised and colonial terms, with Anand and his co-workers compared to 'early American pioneers pressing into the hostile western regions of their country' (12). Here, the 'Indians' of the American West become both the inhabitants of South Asia who balk at the new world order, and paradoxically, the foreign others whom Cauvery Auto, Anand's company, attempts to woo. In order to succeed, Anand must overcome a number of obstacles: obtaining a loan from the bank, negotiating a dubious land purchase, outmanoeuvring corrupt politicians and impressing the plant's transnational clients with Indian capability and potential. Even this global endeavour therefore has national – and therefore homely – undertones, carrying with it a sense of manifest destiny, despite the novel's less than rosy depiction of India's business climate.

While Anand clearly stands to benefit from a successful business deal, Kamala loses her home, and therefore the ability to share a domestic life with her son, Narayan, by the end of the novel. Despite her strong individualism, we get less of a sense of her own personal and cultural journey than Anand's. Kamala's dream is to see her son well-educated, fluent in English, and settled into a middle-class profession. But it is clear from the outset that neither she nor Narayan have any real sense of how that outcome may be achieved; the obstacles are not only considerable and systemic, they are not fully known. When she seeks advice from a successful local man on securing Narayan's success, he assures her that she needs 'luck. And God's blessings' (132). Kamala repeatedly vacillates between rational and supernatural explanations for her fate and that of her neighbours (95). Furthermore, Kamala seems deeply entrenched in India's traditional class hierarchy, and is treated with a lack of respect by her employer, Vidya, that she naturalises to a point of invisibility (65). While political activism offers to Anand and others avenues for addressing problems such as corruption, Kamala's position seems to preclude, at least in the novel, participation in any kind of collective action.

On the surface, such a division tacitly reinforces the gendered language of globalisation theory, in which markets are 'penetrated' and 'dominated'.¹⁰ The notion that subaltern women are quintessential victims of globalisation, capable of only being the beneficiaries of ameliorative efforts after the fact has become something of a truism of the field.¹¹ I argue, however, that the use of domestic fiction – generically associated with women characters and readers – to explore globalisation, necessarily challenges more conventional, masculinist approaches. As J.K. Gibson-Graham point out, much globalisation discourse fails to take into

¹⁰ J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As we knew it)* 121.

¹¹ See Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Diane Wolf, 'A Dialogue on Globalization'.

account the reality that there is no tidy division between life and work, nor between economic and affective relationships. On the one hand, Anand's decision to fund Narayan's education, even after Kamala has been fired by Vidya, Anand's wife, encourages the reader to view him as a benevolent employer and blunts any potential critique of the status of domestic workers in India. On the other, this is one of many instances where affect – Anand sees in Narayan something of himself – and economics intersect in complex ways.

Representing subaltern subjects such as Kamala presents a perpetual problem in English-language Indian fiction.¹² Most such fiction is written by members of the globalised Indian elite, and Lavanya Sankaran is no exception. The domestic sphere is very much part of the ambit of this elite, but this may only heighten the danger of speaking for, and erasing subaltern voices within it. *The Hope Factory* struggles perceptibly with this. The novel depicts interactions between the servants and the family they serve as clipped and infrequent. Kamala's illiteracy reinforces her subaltern status, as does the fact that she cannot even imagine the inside of a bank (121), and regards computers with a mixture of fascination and fear (245). In this, she is juxtaposed even with the other servants, who have had some formal education. Furthermore, the novel struggles to convincingly represent her cultural milieu. The village haunts Kamala's past, but appears largely anachronistic in her present. Indeed, with Kamala's brother and sister-in-law providing conflicting accounts of their lives, the reader is encouraged to think of rural India as a confused, and confusing, place. We are not invited to understand Kamala's journey in the same cultural and political terms as Anand's.

Part of the tension in the novel arises from the fact that the bank loan which Anand needs for the factory's expansion can only be secured by offering his family home, and his parents' apartment, as surety (102). If his business machinations fail, he, like Kamala, will be homeless. Anand's family does not know of the risk he has taken. Indeed, even the more elite characters experience a tension between their homely and global selves. Consider Kavika, a childhood friend of Anand's wife, who has recently returned to India after a stint at the United Nations. She has the most physical mobility of any character and, as a single mother of a biracial daughter, has in some ways strayed farthest from Indian conventions. But she nevertheless cherishes Brahmin traditions despite her 'current international sophistication' (166). Indeed, though Anand wishes 'he could be at ease with foreigners' (46) like Kavika, the two bond over their shared nostalgia for traditional Brahmanism. This commitment to Brahmanism, we are told, is not to be confused with 'antediluvian notions on caste, worship, and vegetarianism' (46) held by Anand's more old-fashioned business partner. Anand is arguably attracted to Kavika precisely because she is more cosmopolitan than either himself or his wife Vidya. And cosmopolitanism done 'right' here connotes competence negotiating the wider world, coupled with a healthy – but carefully delimited – attachment to one's own origins.

In other words, to paraphrase Roland Robertson, the condition of life – and of world literature – is that there is difference everywhere. We therefore expect, and even institutionalise it. World literature provides the common framework to incorporate it and understand it. It is the literature

¹² See for example Lisa Lau, 'The Male South Asian Domestic Servant: Master-Servant Relationships, Class Chasms, and Systematic Emasculation,' 42.

of and for the cosmopolitan. 'Cosmopolitan', however, is a vexed term in *The Hope Factory*. When it comes from Anand's traditional father, it is a derogatory term, that suggests an unseemly abandonment of dharma and identity (230). This use of the word has its own, very European, history, at which the novel only hints. For Anand's father, for instance, to be a cosmopolitan is to have one's loyalty to the nation called into question; it also means to be an other and a capitalist. Indeed, he refers ruefully to 'the Gujrati, the Marwad and the Jew ... who ... rule the financial world' (288). Even Anand does not entirely disagree with this rather stereotyped assessment, though he fumes silently during his father's disparaging discourse on manufacturing and global capitalism. Certainly, he is depicted as being less casteist and classist than other characters, and this forms a part of his cosmopolitanism. Yet the bar where he takes his first step towards setting up the crucial land deal, 'a cocktail of races ... percolated and distilled ... by the virulent forces of international mercantilism' (75) is not a space where he feels entirely comfortable. While Anand makes the business connection he seeks, he also is forced into unwished for political, personal, and economic transactions along the way.

This tension is also evident in Lavanya Sankaran's earlier the short story collection *The Red Carpet*. In 'Bombay This,' Bombay represents not cosmopolitanism, as it famously does for Salman Rushdie, but parochialism. Ashwini, recently arrived in Bangalore irritates her listeners with her talk of 'Bombay this and Bombay that' without realising, according to the narrator, that many in her new circle 'had lived in other parts of the country and indeed the world'.¹³ Ramu, the narrator, contemplates Ashwini as a wife, initially rejecting her for being too shallow, and too westernised – though he himself has lived abroad – but changes his mind after learning that she has donated a kidney to a family member.

While for Ramu's mother, organ donation has left Ashwini physically scarred and therefore unsuitable as a bride, Ramu feels just the opposite. This is significant, as it challenges the usual trope whereby the 'native' and 'overseas' Indian is embodied. As Robbie Goh explains, in a discussion of another Bangalore novel, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*:

Marked bodies – masculine, obdurate, grounded, and earthly – thus become the symbolic domain of older and resistant forms of production ... it is the Overseas Indian – suave, knowledgeable, with a seemingly unflappable self-assurance, but also a disconnect with his or her own body, and the body of the nation – who is figured as the invasive outsider.¹⁴

In 'Bombay This,' the marked body is now female, but is now associated with the nation – and with 'a seemingly unflappable self-assurance.' But this is not a nation associated with 'older and resistant forms,' but one that has been thoroughly globalised. Instead, the overseas Indian is also associated with his bodily urges and functions, as Ramu, who has spent many years in the United States, is acutely aware of his libido and the movement of his muscles as he exercises. In *The Hope Factory*, if there is, indeed, any marked body, it is Kamala's, whose lifetime of labour has left her 'sinewed' (191) – but she is always decorously covered and, indeed, physically

¹³ Lavanya Sankaran, *The Red Carpet: Bangalore Stories* 1.

¹⁴ Robbie B.H. Goh, 'The Overseas Indian and the political economy of the body in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry*', 344.

unremarkable. Bodily exposure is the prerogative of the upper classes in both texts, whose wealth guarantees respectability, regardless of attire.

Indeed, visibility and invisibility are recurring themes in these texts. In Lavanya Sankaran's 'Closed Curtains' the new Bangalore, 'richly symbolizing the successful integration of India into a globalizing world economy' is defined both by its architectural newness – the erection of high-rises and the construction of ever larger bungalows – but also by new points of view, as epitomised by the main character's previously panoptic position at his home's window.¹⁵ The narrator is an older man, Mr D'Costa, and has witnessed the transformation of Bangalore from quiet provincial city to international business hub. He spends his days gazing at the new construction and new inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who fascinate him with their seeming ability to be both Indian and foreign at the same time. His voyeuristic intrusion into the lives of his neighbours is mirrored by his wife's retreat into the world of television, particularly cartoons, which she watches almost constantly. Therefore, the symbolic geography of Bangalore is no longer defined by the division between the home and the world, so characteristic of earlier nationalist versions of the nation. Instead, the poor and rich, the foreign and the Indian born continuously observe each other, at home, at work and at play.

In *The Hope Factory*, it is worth noting that even within Anand's household, multiple forms of the global and local compete in the same physical space. The competing perspectives are not merely the binary opposition of above and below, though that certainly exists. Harry Chinappa, Anand's father-in-law, is an ever-present reminder of the older forms of worlding that were a product of the colonial endeavour. His name alone is a reminder of his Anglicisation, as is his policing of other characters' English pronunciation. Harry is associated with his old money of indeterminate origin. He once managed a coffee plantation (albeit unsuccessfully), which seems a rather stereotypically colonial enterprise, but also one which points to the connection between colonialism and current international trade. Harry is now trying to operate in the vague field of 'property development' and wishes to get involved in building shopping malls (110). Anand, on the other hand, via his auto factory, points to a kind of transnationalism born of Fordism – or, in this case 'the famous Toyota Production system' (325). The land broker who ultimately secures for Anand the plot he needs to expand his factory is only one generation from the peasantry himself, and helps uneasily as the land is transformed from a home, a place that nurtures body and soul, into a commodity in a capitalist system. Anand comes to realise he needs all of these individuals – with their diverse perspectives and skills – if his business is to succeed.

Indeed, the domestic tension of Anand's household is inexorably linked to the competing models of identity of each spouse. Willing to do business in a globalised world and to learn what he can from those of other backgrounds, Anand nevertheless maintains a certain nostalgia for his past and feels grounded in his Indian identity. Vidya, whose convent-school education and less stereotypically Indian accent was part of her exotic appeal for the younger Anand, regularly experiments with novel identities via her personal appearance and recreational activities. For Anand, these performances produce a 'horrificing, inadequate facsimile' (164) that serves to further throw into relief the appeal of the authentically cosmopolitan Kavika.

¹⁵ Melissa Myambo, 'Primitive Accumulation: Unwriting Diaspora in Lavanya Sankaran's *The Red Carpet*', 161.

I contend that domestic fiction such as Sankaran's therefore challenges ideas of world literature by insisting on gendered intimacy and specificity, but also risks the thematic flattening that Emily Apter ascribes to global literature, which 'signifies not so much the conglomeration of world cultures arrayed side by side in their difference, but rather a problem-based monocultural aesthetic agenda that elicits transnational engagement.'¹⁶

In other words, the framework for global literature invites not so much an appreciation for cultural difference or aesthetic incommensurability, but for the investigation of a theme – the impact of globalisation – across geographical and cultural space for purposes of comparison. Such a project implicitly necessitates the production and selection of readily substitutable examples. Though, on the surface, global literature might claim to move away from world literature, with its traditional celebration of great (and therefore universal) books, it simply exchanges a common, if ineffable quality – greatness – for a common, and equally ill-defined problem – globalisation.

It is easy to see how Apter's description above might apply to *The Hope Factory*. Aesthetically, Sankaran's fiction fits tidily into the Western tradition of realist domestic fiction, despite its globalised plot. It has garnered considerable praise for its representation of Bangalore, a city just emerging onto the literary landscape both within India and internationally. As Anna Tsing points out, however, 'there can be no territorial distinctions between the "global" transcending of place and the "local" making of places'.¹⁷ Nor can the emergence of Bangalore as a local place in the international literary landscape be divorced from Bangalore's importance to cultural and economic projects of globalisation, both in India's liberalisation program, and as a node in the global marketplace for business process outsourcing.

Indeed, for Bangalore and other cities cultural and capitalist forms of globalisation are explicitly linked. Bangalore held its first literary festival in December 2012. With sessions on queer literature, poetry, and memoir (among other things) and a school outreach program, the festival revealed a literary Bangalore poised to change its place in the world, and Indian, literary scene. An even more ambitious festival was held in September 2013. Such festivals cast the city as both a major urban cultural centre for Indians – whose migrations within India are arguably just as, if not more, significant, than migrations to metropolitan centres elsewhere – and as a location vying for recognition on a global cultural stage. Sarah Brouillette's *Literature and the Creative Economy* (2014) argues that, at least since the 1990s, literature and other arts have had a powerful influence over economic policy makers, as is evidenced by diverse Western governments seeking to monetise the arts through official designations for cities such as 'City of Culture' (UK), 'Capital of Culture' (US), and 'Cultural Capitals' (Canada). The interplay between culture and capital in the nomenclature is no coincidence; cities themselves comprise 'complex networks of capital and culture'.¹⁸

Sankaran's fiction is uncomfortably aware, however, of the dangers of transnational aesthetics, which are both textualised and mocked in *The Hope Factory*. In search of a real estate

¹⁶ Apter 99.

¹⁷ Anna Tsing, 'The Global Situation', 338.

¹⁸ Rashmi Varma, *The Postcolonial City and its Subjects: London, Nairobi, Bombay*, 6.

broker to aid in his factory's expansion, Anand meets an associate at the 'Latest Latest Bar ... located in the ELIPT Mall' which the locals agree, mocking its official name is 'Extremely Luxurious but in Poor taste.' In this mall,

shiny escalators swooped upward in a space seemingly imported from shrieking Dubai; an amazement of gilt and a fresco-covered ceiling in a mock-up of the Sistine Chapel ... the Creator's hand holding out ... Santa Claus-like ... the urgent promise of ... handbags, perfume bottles, designer labeled shopping bags. (72)

This aesthetic nightmare, born of capitalist globalisation, responds explicitly both to criticisms of globalised cosmopolitanism as essentially consumerist, and to fears of the postcolonial exotic, by having Anand not only articulate his discomfort, but avoiding this space for the remainder of the novel. (Subsequent meetings with the land broker occur in the factory, in his car, and in an open field, among other locations.) In contrast, Anand connects the manufacture of auto parts to the ancient craft of stone temple construction, for which he has an aesthetic, if not religious, affinity (326).

Both texts arguably fall short of answering Arundhati's Roy call to use a place-based perspective to challenge the teleology of globalisation.¹⁹ Yet Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) and its reception also participates in a complex process of play related to the emerging global marketplace and the very conditions of academic literary criticism.²⁰ I contend that Sankaran's work is similarly ambivalent and complex. Even as he expressly links certain forms of Indian aesthetic with the products of transnational capitalism, Anand, in *The Hope Factory*, engages in an interior monologue that argues for the Indianisation of English that would be at home in any text on postcolonial theory (15). Similarly, *The Red Carpet* is populated with characters who are 'paradigmatic of the era of globalization' and who overtly reflect on the 'social theories they preach in the universities'.²¹ Sankaran's fiction is therefore 'problem-based' in a highly self-conscious fashion.

Even at a plot level, however, *The Hope Factory* does not truly invite us to consider alternatives to globalisation, or provide much scope for dissent, but merely to ask what ameliorative steps might be taken to ease the suffering of individuals like Kamala and her son. To the extent that the narrative of *The Hope Factory* posits an answer, it is greater incorporation of Kamala into the space of the transnational. Such a trajectory is already in evidence in her move from village to city. Kamala bears witness to a transforming urban landscape, in which farmers are becoming businessmen, and corner shops are replaced with internet cafés, doctors' offices, and English schools (257). She herself has a mobile phone, which she uses to call her sister-in-law in the village, and such technological innovations are positioned as unproblematic.

The relative absence of strategies of resistance in Sankaran's work, and the relative failure of what resistance is depicted in the face of the pressures of globalisation, may also have contributed to its neglect by postcolonial critics and theorists. If, as Simon Gikandi, argues, *The*

¹⁹ Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics*, 82.

²⁰ Elleke Boehmer, 'East is East and South is South: The Cases of Sarojini Naidu and Arundhati Roy', 64-5.

²¹ Myambo 160-1.

Satanic Verses is the quintessential text of literary globalisation (and therefore posited as a site for scholarly analysis and intervention) then, it follows, that the global text is idealised as stylistically complex, aesthetically dense, thematically subversive and relatively inaccessible. Certainly Sankaran's work is very different from Salman Rushdie's. But, Gikandi cautions, we should attend to texts that 'cannot be read as stories of hybridity, diaspora, or métissage, they demand a rethinking of the tropes that have dominated the discourse of postcolonial theory in relation to both global culture and nationalism'.²² After all, it is premature to imagine that the national has been relegated to minimal importance within the transnational, and dangerous to discount the global longings of non-Western subjects, which may not fit tidily into contemporary theory.

The conclusion of *The Hope Factory* brings it firmly back to the domestic sphere, with a pooja performed to give thanks for the factory's success. Anand is attempting to repair his strained relationship with his wife Vidya; his success in global business provides the foundation for reconciliation at home. As Geetha Ganapathy-Doré points out, in Sankaran's work the 'co-existence of...the traditional world and the newly minted and moneyed one' is 'not too hostile'.²³ This accommodation between these putatively separate worlds seems to leave both the nation and the project of transnational globalisation securely intact, a paradox that may appear readily recognisable and comprehensible to readers.

The final pooja in *The Hope Factory* provides a fitting response to the book's epigraph, 'an ancient line for modern times ... may all prosper.' Both the opening and the closing of the novel therefore produce an intermingling of Hindu piety with global capitalism, the public and the private, the home and the world. But the Pooja produces a homely space from which Kamala and her son are now both literally and figuratively excluded. Kamala has lost her house, and there is little hope for the recuperation of her domestic life. Both Anand and Kamala are described as blessed (366, 371), but whereas for Anand, that blessing is expanding prosperity and influence, for Kamala, it takes the form of a dutiful, English-speaking son who she now only rarely sees. Globalisation offers Kamala and her son their only hope for the future, and it is a rather thin one.

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²² Simon Gikandi, 'Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality', 640.

²³ Geetha Ganapathy-Doré, *The Postcolonial Indian Novel in English*, 77.

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