



## BOMBAY TIGER BY KAMALA MARKANDAYA

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### ABSTRACT

*Kamala Markandaya, author of a great novel Nectar in a Sieve, She published ten novels. This novel is the last of which appeared in 1982. For the next two eras, till her death in 2004, she lived a life of secrecy in London outskirts. But she had not stopped writing only after her death, her daughter discovered the finished type set of a new, novel: The Catalyst: Alias, Bombay Tiger. This paper is an attempt to study the cultural life in Kamala Markandaya's Bombay Tiger. Being a post-independent Indian novelist, Kamala Markandaya has personally portrayed Indian social, cultural and political life through her novels. She has reflected these aspects in her novel Bombay Tiger. Her description of cultural life is based on carefully observed traditions and portrayed cultural values and ideas. After the death of Kamala Markandaya her daughter Kim Oliver found and it was published posthumously with the title 'Bombay Tiger' in 2008. Charles R. Larson, a close friends of Markandaya and Professor of Literature, American University, Washington, DC has written an introduction to novel Bombay Tiger (2008) where he writes: Reading Bombay Tiger twenty years after Kamala Markandaya began writing the novel is a kind of exposé for what it says about modern India" (Larson xii). Even though Markandaya lived in abroad she had a touch with the India. She reads English newspapers about the information of India in particular.*

#### INTRODUCTION

The novel *Bombay Tiger* Set in the period of 1980s, The novel is about the story of Ganguli who arrives in Bombay with merciless ambition, and he becomes the city's biggest industrialist. He is the most memorable protagonists in Indian fiction—Ganguli is

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representative of a changing India, supports the era of high socialism. This comprehensive novel, traces his dramatic rise and fall, his loves and losses, and his eventual improvement.

The novel is set in Bombay in the 80s, with a industrialist as its protagonist. Much as the writer uses him to hold all over the story, and runs it forward through his relationships with different characters, she also point outs the narrative reliably to show a side of the story from the side of these characters.

Novelist wanted her protagonist to characterize the changing nature of the Bombay or Indian business world. That's probably what harms the novel, because it clearly promises a vast canvas but leaves many parts incomplete. The author changed her mind after the first two chapters.

Markandaya faced trouble with editors and publishers but agents and destructive critics whom she called "those louts who enjoy destroying a writer's ego". Charles R. Larson, considers her one of the four major novelists from India writing in English of the 20th century, the other three he names being Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. He believes that these four writers redesigned the concept of 'world literature' and that Markandaya was the only one of them to have had a feminist viewpoint. When Markandaya began writing *Bombay Tiger*, the world of Indian fiction in English has expanded. Many of today's writers recognize their debt to her. The long-overdue publication reminds us all of her talent and the rightful place she enjoys in Indian fiction.

*Bombay Tiger*, Kamala Markandaya's after death published novel came as a pleasant surprise to the literary and academics. Wonder, because Kamala Markandaya had been quiet for some long time. She brought out nothing after her 1982 novel *Pleasure City* her readers of the 1950s through 1970s had deferred her and the new generation having had no time and tolerance with her view about social realism did not care to know her. Except for some study going on in university English departments Kamala Markandaya had fallen into unconsciousness.

The author was dynamic in her own way and had worked for twenty years on a novel which her daughter exposed after her death in 2004. The finished typescript was titled *The Catalyst: Alias Bombay Tiger*. She promptly contacted Professor Charles R. Larson, a family friend, from American University, Washington D.C. and with his hard work the book came out, published by Penguin, perfectly timed for the February 2008 Book Fair in Delhi.

Among us who know Kamala Markandaya's style and desire for social realism will be taken aback by the new book. One is left with a kind of uneasiness as one keeps down the book: how can we plan at the chance of events and live with them, while a person sitting in London picks it up and shows it with unyielding sarcasm and dispassionate cynicism.

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*Bombay Tiger* is the portrayal of our ‘becoming’, of how we have controlled Gandhian ideals, and how easily we compromise human values for material gains. Gone are the simple folks of her past works the farmers, the fisher boy, the native goatherd painter, the innocent village girl trying to make it big as an actress. Here are now two village boys who reach the super city Bombay, pack up basic values, and out plan the city people one of them even defeats the western businesspersons in their own game; the master player is one Ganguli whose “rogue brilliance” frightens them; they call him ‘Oriental sonofbitch’, but whom the Bombay merchants affectionately name ‘Bombay Tiger’ for his powerful smartness in commerce.

To say that *Bombay Tiger* is the story one man would be to belittle Markandaya’s skill and her acute opinion of changing India. The scenario is Bombay of the 1980s but it could be any big profit-making metropolitan area because Bombay as such does not figure as a landmark. Narhari Rao, Gopal Gokhale, Pandit Panday’s son Rajiv Panday and an accountant named Krishna all reporting in Bombay from their native village near Srirangapatanam. Gokhale changes his name to Ganguli and plunges headlong in life soon to become a business magnate. His formula is simple; money is authority; greediness brings money, and henceforth power. Way back in school his teacher Pandit Pansey used to summarize British colonialism as “their greed, our stupidity” and unabashedly opposites the dictum, to “our greed, their stupidity” and unabashedly flaunts his indirect ideals. With no consciences, no inhibitions and a fluent tongue he justifies his ways and means and as the story unfolds slowly, we see his huge greed running from project to project; no code of society, no emotion could check his speed.

Somehow, Rao and Ganguli, childhood friends and opponents, complement each other and continue to do so. Rao is tiny, foxy and jealous; Ganguli is resourceful, diabolic and unprincipled. Rao has one advantage over Ganguli he has domestic happiness. But opponent works its and if Ganguli loses his daughter, Rao loses his son. This breaks and breaks Ganguli. Rao complaints and regrets for not having understood his son; While Ganguli turns to vengeance and parcels in jail. Rao disappears from the novel whereas Ganguli rises like Phoenix up the reigns of his business empire powerfully. Even in grief he achieved heroic scopes. To be frank, we may not like him but we can hate him either. This is perhaps the greatest success of Markandaya novel. Somehow, at the beginning of the novel, Rao, observes a “guzzling houseflies” and this disgusting image reminds him of Ganguli.

Between these two immoral loyalists there is Dr. Rajiv Panday almost a Gandhian figure without whom the novel would have condemned. Rao’s ploy is to plant him as his spy to counter Ganguli’s Krishna, but Panday is too authentic to take any false step. No doubt, his ideals have no me for the likes of the Raos and the Gangulis but, these even after his death. That Panday should die and yet he should continue smouldering like a show the victory of



Gandhian ideals. For all his unfair greed and tricks, Ganguli a towering figure. Not tragic like Rao, neither straight like Panday is still interesting because he is out rightly bad and yet human.

Kamala Markandaya seems to have achieved an androgynous with her flowing ideas, handling of situations and knowledgeable in the business world. She exploits the language with power to suit her theme. It is brief and interspersed with masculine strength, unmannerly phrases and words that a woman would rather not undertake into. However, the constructions are long, circumventing and at times ambiguous. There is a 18<sup>th</sup> century flourish in her sarcastic remarks and satiric manner.

Markandaya has ventured into a environment she has not experienced personally. In her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, she talks the world of the farmers, again a topography to which she did not belong. But a little bit she knew it because she had worked among them as a social worker. For this novel she seems to have assembled her material from the media reports. The men are bad, greedy and immoral; some are weak, cunning and unreliable. The women are directionless. Markandaya does not seem to know the contemporary Indian urban woman who was developing in the eighties as strong and able, a force to calculate with. Chandralekha, Manju, Nalini, Sister Pinto, none can fit into the place of new Indian woman. Their freedom appears superficial and shallow. However, the novelist is on familiar area when she comes to Mrs. Rao. Like Rukmani of *Nectar in a sieve*, Mrs. Rao is the earth figure, steady, helpful, supportive and without cruelty.

The novel makes a full reading. There are moments when one wants to keep it aside but the narration is powerful enough to drag you to the end. The book is like Ganguli; you may not love it but you cannot give out with it.

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