

# A.B.M. College, Golmuri

## English Core

### I.Com.

By Manish Prabhakar Singh

## The Tiger King

- **Kalki Krishnamurthy**

(After reading and understanding the overall chapter, copy the Question and Answer at the end in your copy.)

### Brief Biography of Kalki Krishnamurthy

Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy (9 September 1899 – 5 December 1954), better known by his pen name Kalki, was an Indian writer, journalist, poet, critic and Indian independence activist. He was named after "Kalki", the tenth and last avatar of the Hindu God Vishnu. His writings include over 120 short stories, 10 novellas, 5 novels, 3 historical romances, editorial and political writings and hundreds of film and music reviews.

### Introduction

The story 'The Tiger King' is a satire on the pride and stubbornness of those in power. The writer takes us to the days of autocratic and eccentric kings. These kings lived under the thumb rule of British, hence they fear them. Most of the time the rulers were not interested in serving the people and working for the welfare of the public; instead they spent their time in foolish pursuits. They flouted all laws and bent them to suit their selfish interests. The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram tried to belie what was written in his fate. The chief astrologer had predicted that the cause of his death would be a tiger. The King tried his best to belie the prediction. His campaign of tiger-hunting was very successful. All his strategies and wise plans worked till he killed 99 tigers. But the hundredth tiger eluded him till his death. The irony of fate brings quite an unexpected end of the Maharaja. The hero who killed ninety nine tigers couldn't kill the only one that was left. The last tiger he thought to be dead survived. The King's bullet had missed its mark. Ironically, the hundredth tiger which caused his death was not a ferocious beast of blood and flesh. It was a wooden tiger. One of the slivers of wood pierced his right hand and caused infection and a suppurating sore. It ultimately led to his death.

## CHARACTERS

1. The Tiger King: a hero of the story, the Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, also known as His Highness Jamedar, General Khiledar-Major, Sata-Vyaghra samhari, Maharajadhiraja Visva Bhuvana samrat, Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, M.A.D., A.C.T.C., or C.R.C.K.
2. Crown prince: a ten day old baby who later became the Maharaja of Pratibandapuram.
3. Chief astrologer: a royal foreteller of the state.
4. Durai: means “chief, leader” in Tamil.
5. A British high ranking officer & his secretary
6. Dewan: a chief administrative office of the Maharaja.
7. Duraisani: the wife of the high ranking British officer, a greedy woman who takes all the fifty or so diamond rings for herself.

## SUMMARY

The Tiger King is a short political satire on the pride and ego of kings in particular, and of all those in power in general. It also draws attention to the cruelty being meted out to animals and calls for measures to protect the tiger which is close to extinction.

Kalki begins on a humorous note telling the reader that the Tiger King, he is going to introduce us to, is already dead. To relate the manner of his death he begins with the day this king was born. The Tiger King was born as Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, Maharaja of Pratibandapuram. Astrologers predicted that the king would one day die. Hearing the inevitable, a voice spoke and asked them to be more exacting rather than state what everyone knew. All stood stunned to see that it was the ten day old Jung Bahadur who had not only spoken but spoken intelligently. The chief astrologer then announced that the Maharaja would die by a tiger. Again the child spoke saying terrifying, "let tigers beware". Of course Kalki the author admits that this could have a rumour, but it did match what followed.

At the age twenty, Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur ascended the throne. He soon learnt of the prediction and set out to kill his first tiger. He proudly announced this to the chief astrologer only to learn that it would be the hundredth tiger that would be his undoing. Taking this as a challenge the king declared that only he would have the right to hunt tigers in his kingdom. Within ten years he killed seventy tigers, some with ease and some after a fight, but he did kill them all. But this resulted in the population of tigers becoming extinct in Pratibandapuram.

He resolved this problem by marrying into the royal family of a state which had a great number of tigers and soon took his score up to ninety nine. Now the hundredth tiger seemed to be impossible to find. Following a surge in the king's bad temperament the Dewan arranged for a tiger from a park, and the king fulfilled his target by shooting this tiger. Yet unknown to him, his

shot did not kill the tiger, so his score remained at ninety nine. The tiger was killed by one of his men, and buried as per the king's order.

On his son's third birthday the king bought a wooden tiger as a gift. While the king and the Prince were playing with the wooden toy tiger. A wooden splinter pierced the king's hand. This tiny injury flared up to such a major sore that it had to be operated. The Tiger king died during the operation. So in a dramatically and ironical manner, the hundredth tiger finally killed the king.

### **Gist of the lesson:**

- The Maharaja Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bhadur was called “Tiger King”. When he was just ten days old he asked intelligent questions to the astrologers and was told that he would be killed by a tiger. He uttered “Let tigers beware!”
- No other miracle took place, the child grew like any other Royal child drinking white cow’s milk, taught by an English tutor, looked after by an English nanny and watched English films.
- When he was twenty, he was crowned as king. It was then the prediction of his death by the tiger reached the Maharaja’s ear and he in turn to safe guard himself killed a tiger and being thrilled he told the astrologer who replied that he can kill 99 tigers but should be careful with the hundredth.
- From then on he started killing tiger and none was allowed to hunt tigers. A high ranking British officer visited the state that was fond of hunting tiger and his wish was declined.
- The officer requested for getting a photograph with a tiger killed by Maharaja and this request was rejected.
- So to please the officer’s wife he sent fifty diamond rings expecting that she would take one or two instead she kept all the rings costing three lakh rupees and sent ‘thanks’ to the Maharaja. But his state was secured.
- In ten years he killed seventy tiger and didn’t find any in Pratibandapuram so he decided to marry a girl from royal state which had more tigers to complete his target whenever he visited his in-laws he killed five to six tigers. So he killed ninety nine tigers and was feverishly anxious to kill the hundredth but couldn’t find news about the presence of a tiger near a village proved disappointing.
- Now the Dewan was warned of his danger so he visited ‘People’s Park in Madras’ and brought an old tiger and placed it in the forest and informed the Maharaja.
- The Maharaja took great care and shot the tiger and left the place with great triumph the bullet did not hit the tiger but out of fear the tiger had collapsed. Now the staff killed the tiger and brought it in grand procession it was the 3rd birthday of the Maharaja’s son and he wanted to buy a present from the toyshop. He bought a wooden tiger which was poorly carved. 97

- While the Maharaja was playing with the prince a tiny sliver of the wooden tiger pierced his right hand which later on caused his death. Thus the hundredth tiger takes his final revenge upon the “Tiger King”.

### **Justification of Title**

“The Tiger King” is a very appropriate title for the story for several reasons. First of all, the king is crazy about tiger hunting so much that he marries a princess whose father’s kingdom has a sizeable tiger population. He kills one hundred tigers just to fulfill his vow. Secondly, the king with all his frenzy, anger and ruthlessness is as ferocious as a tiger. Thirdly, he dies of a silver prick received from a wooden toy tiger. Finally, the prediction that a tiger would cause the king’s death also comes true. Since the story revolves round the king and the hundred tigers that he kills, it could not be better titled than “The Tiger King”.

### **Theme**

Animals and birds are as much part of the nature as human beings. The destruction or haphazard killing of one species may not only lead to its extinction, but it will adversely affect the ecological balance. Those animals which serve as food for the wild animals will increase in large number, if the beasts of prey are wiped out. Each species, howsoever fierce, deadly, ferocious or poisonous has its role in maintaining ecological balance in nature.

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **Very short questions answers**

Q1. Who is the writer of the story The Tiger King?

Ans: Kalki is the writer of the story The Tiger king.

Q2. Who is the Tiger King?

Ans: The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur is the Tiger King.

Q3. Why does the Tiger King get this name?

Ans: As the king was mad about killing tigers and even had killed a hundred tigers he got his name.

Q4. What is the natural desire among men regarding the Tiger King?

Ans: The natural desire among men regarding the Tiger king is to meet him for his indomitable courage.

Q5. Why can the natural desire to meet the Tiger king not be fulfilled?

Ans: The natural desire to meet the Tiger King couldn't be fulfilled because the king was dead.

Q6. What does the astrologer foretell about the king?

Ans: The astrologer foretold that the king would be killed by tiger.

Q7. What did the chief astrologer caution the tiger king after he had killed his first tiger?

Ans: After the Tiger king had killed his first tiger the chief astrologer cautioned that the king might kill ninety nine tigers, but he should have to be careful with the hundred tiger.

Q8. What did the chief astrologer profess to do if the Tiger king killed the hundred tiger?

Ans: The chief astrologer professed that if the Tiger king killed the hundredth tiger he would cut off his tuft, crop his hair short, tear up and set fire all his books on astrology and he would become an insurance agent.

Q9. What was the price of the wooden toy tiger?

Ans: The price of the wooden toy tiger was only two annas and a quarter.

Q10. How much did the Maharaja pay for the toy?

Ans: The Maharaja paid three hundred rupees for the toy.

Q11. Who were Khader Mian Saheb and Virasami Naiker?

Ans: Khader Mian Saheb and Virasami Naiker are the Tiger King's courtiers who were famous for their ability to eat a whole sheep at a time.

## **Short questions answers**

Q1. What did the royal infant utter in his little squeaky voice?

Ans: The royal infant utter in his little squeaky voice that no one needs any prediction for death for we all know one who takes birth is going to die one day, But the astrology will make some sense if that could tell him the manner of his death.

Q2. What explanation was given by the chief astrologer to the query of the little tiger king?

Ans: The explanation that the chief astrologer gave to the query of the little Tiger King was that the Tiger King was born in the hour of the bull. As the bull and the tiger are enemies hence the king's death would come from the tiger.

Q3. What did the Tiger king pronounce when he heard that his death would be caused by a tiger?

Ans: The Tiger King on hearing that his death would be caused by a tiger, he had a deep growl and with terrific words he asked the tigers to beware.

Q4. What was easier to find than tigers, after the Tiger King killed the ninety ninth tiger?

Ans: The Tiger king carried on with his vow. To prove the prediction of the chief astrologer wrong, he started killing tigers. After killing the ninety ninth tiger, The Tiger King became restless to complete his vow. He was searching for the hundredth tiger. At that time he told that it was easier to find tiger's milk than a live tiger.

Q5. What was the happy news for the Tiger King after a long time?

Ans: The Tiger king waited for the hundred tiger for a very long time. But sometime later he got good news that in his own state sheep began to disappear frequently from a hillside village. And everyone suspected it to be tiger.

Q6. Why was there no objection to the killing of tiger?

Ans: Tiger King was born in the hour of the bull. As the bull and the tiger are enemies hence the king's death would come from the tiger. When the Tiger King was born, the chief astrologer had predicted that he would be killed by the tiger. And when the king grew up and came to know about it, he thought for his defence and security and then he decided to kill the tigers so that the tigers could not kill him. He also knew the old saying that one may kill even a cow in self defence. So he thought that there could certainly be no objection to killing tigers in self defence.

Q7. What were the various dangers faced by the Tiger king in his hunting spree?

Ans: The Tiger king faced many dangers in his hunting spree. Sometimes when he missed the target leapt upon him and he had to fight with the beast with his bare hands. At one time he was even in danger of losing his throne. A high ranking British officer, who was very fond of tiger hunting, came to visit Pratibandapuram. But the Tiger king did not give permission to the officer. And for that reason, that high ranking officer got angry with the king and the king was in danger of losing his kingdom.

Q8. What did the Maharaja do to appease the British officer whom he prevented from hunting tigers?

Ans: Maharaja had to appease the British officer whom he prevented from hunting tigers in his state. Maharaja had deliberation over this issue with his dewan. They dispatched a telegram to a famous British company of jewellers in Calcutta, and asked them to send some samples of diamond ring. Some fifty rings were sent and Maharaja sent all fifty rings to the British officer's good lady. But the lady accepted all of them. Though the Maharaja lost three lakh rupees but he managed to retain his kingdom.

Q9. What will happen to the astrologer when the king thought that the prophecy has disproved?

Ans: No harm will be done to the astrologer, because the king had challenged the astrologer when he was angry. But now as he believes that he had completed his vow, he must be very much happy and would forgive the astrologer. No, the prophecy was not indisputably disproved because the king was not successful in killing the hundredth tiger as his shot has missed. The tiger only became unconscious, but the king thought he had killed it and left the place. It was his hunter only who had killed the tiger.

Q10. What is the author's indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the willfulness of human beings?

A. The author is indicating that the king being mighty, killed so many innocent animals merely to prove the astrologer wrong or to overcome his fear without realizing the severity of his actions. He did not accept destiny which has its own ways as death struck upon him by a lifeless, wooden tiger.

## **Long Question Answer**

Q1. How did the tiger King finally die?

Ans: The prediction that the chief astrologer made came true. Maharaja wanted to give something special to his little son on his third birthday. He searched for something special everywhere in the shopping centre of Pratibandapuram. Finally he found a wooden tiger in a toy shop and thought it to be perfect gift for his son. He bought that and gave that to his son. The toy was made by some unskilled carpenter that had a rough surface and pierced the Tiger King's hand while he was playing with the toy with his son. Thus the infection spread all over the hand of the king. Three famous surgeons were brought from Madras to operate the king but the king died.

**Q2.** Draw a sketch of the character of the Tiger King?

**Ans:** The Tiger king of Pratibandapuram Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur had got many names. But he was well known as the Tiger King. When he was born, the chief astrologer predicted that the king would be killed by the tiger.

The king grew up in the palace. He was provided the milk of an English cow. An English nanny brought him up. He was taught English by an English teacher and he had seen only the English movie. When he was twenty years old, he took to rein his kingdom. He started his campaign of tiger hunting, and within ten years he had killed seventy tigers. Then he married a girl of a state which had a large tiger population, so that he can complete his vow of killing hundred tigers. Thus he had killed the hundredth tiger too, but it was actually killed by his hunters.

The king was very much concerned for his state also. Once he even gave a bribe of three lakh to a British officer to retain his kingdom. While he was campaigning the tiger hunting, he once declared a three year exemption from all taxes for the villagers who informed him about having a tiger in their village. The Dewan, who had always helped and obeyed the king in everything, was threatened by the king when he was not able to find the hundredth tiger. The Tiger king had to die because of a cut that he got from a wooden toy tiger. And thus the prediction of the chief astrologer happened to come true, the hundredth tiger took its revenge and killed the king.

**Q3.** Describe the irony regarding the death of the Maharaja?

**Ans:** The end of the story "The Tiger King" is very much ironical. The author gives a very brilliant flavour of irony while describing the manner of the king's death. The Maharaja had killed ninety nine tigers and was only one step ahead to complete his vow. But his Dewan managed the hundredth tiger for the king.

After shooting the hundredth tiger, the king thought that he had killed that actually fainted and fell down and which was actually killed by his hunters. The king was killed by a wooden toy tiger. It is very much ironical that he had killed ninety nine tigers, but one toy tiger had taken revenge upon the king. One of silvers of wood pierced the right hand of the king and caused infection, which ultimately brought his death.

**Q4.** How did the Tiger King meet his end? What is ironical about his death?

The wooden toy tiger the king had got as a birthday present for his son had been carved by an unskilled carpenter. It had a rough surface with tiny slivers of wood standing up like quills all over it. One of those slivers pierced the Maharaja's right hand and although the king pulled it, his arm got infected. In four days, it developed into a suppurating sore and spread all over the arm. The king died while being operated upon.

The king's death is ironical but not surprising for the reader who is, in fact, looking forward to it. Having 'killed' the 100th tiger, the king is jubilant for he has fulfilled his vow and disproved the prediction of the royal astrologer. He is now at ease for he thinks he cannot die of a tiger's attack. No wonder, he orders the 'dead' tiger to be taken in a procession through the town and

gets a tomb erected over it. All this while he does not know that the 100th victim was not killed by him but by other hunters. That is indeed quite ironical. Death is lurking around him and the king is unaware of it. Again, it is ironical that a king who has killed 99 tigers and is bold and fearless dies of a mere 'sliver' on the body of a wooden tiger. Thus, ironically death does come to him from a tiger.

**Q5.** Discuss the title of the story 'The Tiger King'.

Ans. The Tiger King is an appropriate title for the story for several reasons. First of all, the king is very involved with tiger hunting so much so that he marries a princess whose father's kingdom has a sizable population. He kills hundred tigers just to fulfill his vows. Secondly, the king with all his frenzy, anger and ruthlessness is as ferocious as a tiger. Thirdly, he dies of a silver prick received from a wooden tiger toy. Finally the prediction that a tiger would cause the king's death also comes true. Since the story revolves round the king and the hundred tigers he kills, the title could not be more apt

**Q6.** The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. How does the author employ the literary device of dramatic irony in the story?

Ans- The king was full of pride. He thought he could achieve anything, even overpower death. He tried to prove the predictions of the royal astrologer as false. He had predicted death for the king by a tiger. As the king killed one, he cautioned him against the hundredth tiger that he came across.

Ironically, the king killed the hundredth tiger also and overpowered death but as it was destined to be, the tiger escaped the bullet miraculously. He had killed ferocious tigers of flesh and blood but his satirical death came by a wooden toy tiger which he had got as a birthday gift for his son. A tiny piece of wood from the toy wounded the tiger king's hand and finally killed him. This was an unexpected end of the mighty maharaja 'the tiger king'.

**Q7.** How would you describe the behaviour of the Maharaja's minions towards him? Do you find them truly sincere towards him or are they driven by fear when they obey him? Do we find a similarity in today's political order?

A. The king's minions feared him and tried to please him. They wanted to keep him happy and so, spoke what was pleasing to the king's ears. The astrologer was initially reluctant to predict the king's future. It was when the king asked him 'to speak without fear' that he spoke. The minister did not advise the king not to kill so many innocent animals; rather he searched for a kingdom with a high population of tigers for the king to kill. The royal hunters did not inform the king about the hundredth tiger being alive as they feared losing their job. The shopkeeper sold the toy tiger to the king at a high price because he feared punishment. In today's political order also, we can see that the people who are in subordination try to please their seniors in order to retain their positions.