

Chapter 2

The Tiger King

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1. Who is the Tiger King? Why does he get that name?

Answer: Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, the king of Pratibandapuram, is known as the Tiger King.

At the time of his birth the astrologers declared that the prince would have to die one day.

The ten-day-old prince asked the astrologers to reveal the manner of his death. The wise men were baffled at this miracle. The chief astrologer said that the cause of his death would be a tiger. The young prince growled and uttered terrifying words: 'Let tigers beware!' He decided to kill one hundred tigers. He thus got the name 'Tiger King'.

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1. What did the royal infant grow up to be?

Answer: The royal infant grew up to be the king of Pratibandapuram who was obsessed with the idea of killing one hundred tigers. He wanted to do so to disprove

the prophecy which said that his death would come from the hundredth tiger. This made him kill all the tigers of Pratibandapuram. He even married for the sake of this ambition. He came to be known as the Tiger King.

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1. What will the Maharaja do to find the required number of tigers to kill?

Answer: To get the required number of tigers to kill, the Maharaja will ask his dewan to find a suitable girl for him to marry. A suitable girl for matrimonial alliance should be the one who would not only come from a royal family but also would belong to a state with a large tiger population. As Pratibandapuram had no more tigers left, a province that belonged to his father-in-law would certainly provide him with an opportunity to kill more tigers and reach his aim of killing one hundred tigers.

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1. How will the Maharaja prepare himself for the hundredth tiger which was supposed to decide his fate?

Answer: The Maharaja would be extremely careful while dealing with the hundredth tiger which was supposed to be the reason for his death. On encountering the hundredth one, he will take a careful aim at the tiger and will shoot it. When it falls in a crumpled heap, he would be filled with joy and will leave the place hastily.

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1. What will now happen to the astrologer? Do you think the prophecy was indisputably disproved?

Answer: The astrologer dies before the king of Pratibandapuram gets an opportunity to kill one hundred tigers. Disproving his prophecy seems to be the sole reason for the king's existence. Except for killing hundred tigers, everything else takes a back-seat for the king. The prophecy cannot be indisputably disproved as the king was ultimately killed by a tiger, though neither by a real one nor by the hundredth one. Looking at the weak, old and almost lifeless tiger that was the hundredth one, no one would have thought that it would escape the king's bullet by fainting at the shock of the bullet whizzing past. It was the "tiny little wooden tiger" from the toy shop that caused the death of the Tiger King.

Page No: 17 Reading with Insight

1. 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?

Answer: The story "The Tiger King" is a supreme example of dramatic irony. Dramatic irony refers to a situation where the complete significance of a character's words or actions is transparent to the audience but is not known to the character.

The character acts in a way grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances or expects the opposite of what fate holds in store for him. Kalki has used a very dexterous use of dramatic irony in the story. After killing the first tiger the King flaunts its dead body before the astrologer to show that he is more powerful than the tiger. However, the astrologer warns the king that he should be "careful with the hundredth tiger". The king chooses to prove the astrologer wrong once again and makes frantic efforts to kill hundred tigers. Thus, having shot at the old tiger, the Tiger king believes he has killed the hundredth tiger. But the reader as well as the king's officers and minions soon come to know that the emaciated tiger does not get killed but only has fainted. The king gets happy of killing the tiger but in actual ignorance of this ironical fate the prediction proves to be right and mere sliver on

wooden tiger's body causes his dramatic death. Quite ironically the hundredth tiger kills the king instead and astrologer's predictions stand vindicated.

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

Answer: Through this satirical story the author has rightly portrayed how human beings have subjected innocent animals to untold torture and death, merely to fulfill their own whims and fancies. The maharaja's indiscriminate killing of tigers led to their extinction in some states, but the maharaja was oblivious to the grave consequences his action was leading to. In order to prove an astrologer wrong the maharaja went on a killing spree proving his dominance over the hapless animals. He wished to show his superiority as a human being and exercised his power to kill hundred unlucky tigers.

3. 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?

Answer: Maharaja's minions were subservient and sycophantic. Most of them were scared of Maharaja and tried to keep him in good humour by obeying his orders. They did not dare to disobey him as his displeasure could mean loss of their jobs or even loss of their lives.

The astrologer was afraid of predicting his death. However, Maharaja had asked him to speak without any fear.

Dewan, who should have advised the king not to kill the tigers, did not dare to go against his wishes and aided his marriage to a princess whose father's kingdom possessed a large number of tigers. Being afraid of losing his job, he presented an old tiger to satisfy the whims of his

Maharaja. Likewise, the hunters chose not to inform him of the survival of the 100th tiger and instead killed it themselves, fearing that they might lose their jobs. Even the shopkeeper, who sold the king a cheap wooden toy tiger, quoted a higher price lest he should be punished under the rules of emergency. So it is evident that the king's minions were driven by fear rather than by any feelings of sincerity towards their ruler. Today's political order is no different. We know too well that many of the people in power are not there because of their ability but because of their influence and power. Moreover, others pander to them for their own vested interests rather than for the good of the country.

4. Can you relate instances of game-hunting among the rich and the powerful in the present times that illustrate the callousness of human beings towards wildlife?

Answer: There have been a few instances of game hunting in the present times. Even the affluent have been involved in instances that illustrate the callousness of human beings towards wildlife.

Salman Khan – Black Buck poaching case.

Nawab Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi - Antelope case.

Salman Khan is a Bollywood celebrity and is fond of game hunting. He poached three Chinkaras in two separate incidents. Black Buck is an endangered species. Despite knowing it Salman killed them. A case was lodged against him but he was acquitted.

Nawab Pataudi, the great cricketer, was also in the news for killing the rare species of antelopes.

5. We need a new system for the age of ecology — a system which is embedded in the care of all people and also in the care of the Earth and all life upon it. Discuss.

Answer: A new system, embedded in the care not only of all people but also of the Earth and life upon it, is required to preserve and sustain Nature's balance at both national and international levels. Formulating rules for the preservation of endangered species or assigning funds for conservation of wild life or imposing ban on hunting and poaching is not enough. People need to be made aware of the repercussions of exploiting nature and its creatures through various awareness campaigns held at schools, colleges and important public gatherings using the media of street-plays, television, films and documentaries etc. People must be made to understand that every creature has a prominent role in the ecological cycle and no one has right to kill other life forms or destroy their habitats. Restoration of Nature's balance as well as a proper system of sustainable development, therefore, has to be followed without fail or intermittent lapses. All the reasons for ecological imbalance like deforestation, rapid industrialization, soil erosion, etc. need to be addressed before global warming and other climatic hazard or natural calamity takes its toll.

(The above answer is only a sample provided for students' reference. It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own.)