

The Tiger and the Deer

Sri Aurobindo

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and
murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the noise of its
steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept and
crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,
Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank
Unsuspecting from the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,
And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep woodland, -
Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature.
But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more in the
dangerous heart of the forest,
As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;
Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great pools in the
leaves' shadow.
The mighty perish in their might;
The slain survive the slayer.

About the Poet

Sri Aurobindo (15 August 1872- 05 December 1950), was a poet, philosopher, educationist, yogi and spiritual Guru. He joined the Indian movement for independence and was imprisoned for writing articles against British Government in India. He became a spiritual reformer and he is revered for his vision on human progress and spiritual evolution. He developed a method of spiritual practice which he called 'Integral Yoga'.

His poetry may be divided into two broad groups, i.e. 'Poetry of Action' and 'Poetry of Meditation'. His main literary works are 'The Life Divine', "The synthesis of Yoga" and "Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol". He has written inspiring commentaries on The Vedas, The Upanishads and The Bhagavad Geeta.

About the poem

“The Tiger and the Deer” is a philosophical and didactic poem expressing a contrast between good and evil, innocence and experience, life and death. It deals with the theme of life and death through the symbols of the deer and the tiger. In spite of death and desolation, the poet seems to be very optimistic about love and peace.

Glossary

perturb: anxious or unsettled

crouching: a position where the knees are bent and the upper body is brought forward and down, in order to defend oneself

slouching: stand, move or sit in a lazy, drooping posture or movement

gleaming: shine brightly

splendour: magnificent and splendid in appearance, grandeur

fatal: causing death

mammoth: a large extinct elephant, typically hairy with a large sloping back and long curved tusks

perish: die

1. Choose the correct alternatives:

(a) "Brilliant, crouching, slouching, that crept...."

Who does this line refer to?

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| (i) cat | (ii) tiger |
| (iii) dog | (iv) deer |

(b) "And it fell and, torn, died remembering....."

Who fell, torn and died-

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| (i) tiger | (ii) deer |
| (iii) forest | (iv) mammoth |

2. Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

(i) What does the tiger stand in the poem for?

(ii) What does the deer stand in the poem for?

(iii) What does a soundless paw mean in the poem?

(iv) "As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia". Comment on the line.

3. Answer the following questions in 30-50 words each:

(i) "The wind slipped through the leaves, as if afraid lest its voice and noise of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour."

Explain whose voice and noise of steps perturbed the grandeur?

(ii) "Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature."

Explain the line.

(iv) Which expression in the poem reveals the optimistic mood of the poet?

4. Answer the following questions in 150 words each:

(a) How would you relate the killing of the innocent deer by the tiger with the healthy values of life by the cruelty of modern civilisation or the materialistic mind?

(b) The poet has presented a balanced picture of nature where both nectar and poison are equally essential for the existence of life. Justify their significance.

(c) What inspiring message does the poem convey?