

The Tiger King by Kalki

About the Author :

Kalki, whose real name was Ramaswamy Aiyer Krishnamurthy (September 9, 1899 – December 5, 1954), was a notable Tamil writer, journalist, poet, critic, and an activist in the Freedom Movement. His literary output consisted of more than 120 short stories, 10 novelettes, five novels, three historical romances, editorials, political writings, and numerous film and music reviews. In recognition of his contributions, Kalki was honored with the Sangeetha Kalasikhami award by the Indian Fine Arts Society in 1953. During the centenary celebrations, a postage stamp was issued in his honor. The government of Tamil Nadu also nationalized his works.

Introduction :

Kalki transports his readers to an era dominated by autocratic and idiosyncratic monarchs. These regal figures were subjected to the dominion of the British, thereby instilling a deep-seated fear in them. In his endeavor to imbue the narrative with an aura of mystique, Kalki deftly incorporates supernatural elements. The imperious king vehemently rejected the astrologer's prophecy concerning his demise, only for his eventual death by the hands of the hundredth wooden tiger to substantiate it.

This story satirizes the arrogance of those in power. Often, rulers don't care about serving the people or working for the public's well-being. Instead, they waste their time on foolish pursuits. Even those close to these powerful figures are more interested in using their proximity for their own benefit. This story is about the fleeting nature of life and power, emphasizing the saying, "Many things can go wrong before a goal is achieved."

Summary :

The story commences by introducing its central character, the Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, often simply known as The Tiger King. The narrator sets out to explain how this name came to be, emphasizing that the readers can never meet the Tiger King since he has already passed away. The story begins with a prophecy made at the time of the Tiger King's birth, which foretold that he would be a great warrior but would eventually meet his demise. This prophecy was connected to the star under which he was born, signifying his death. Remarkably, as a ten-day-old infant, the Tiger King inquired about the manner of his death, displaying surprising wisdom. He was born under the star associated with the tiger, indicating that his end would come at the hands of a tiger. However, instead of fear, the infant responded with courage and declared that tigers should be wary. Though this may be a rumor, the circumstances of his death suggest it could be true.

In the second section, the narrative delves into the Tiger King's growth, noting his exposure to English influences in his upbringing, which included drinking English milk, having an English tutor, watching English films, and being cared for by an English nanny. Nevertheless, the prophecy remained in the minds of the kingdom's residents. The Maharaja didn't view self-defense against tigers as wrong, leading him to embark on tiger hunts. An astrologer warned him that it was the hundredth tiger he should be cautious about, even pledging to change his life if that happened.

In the third part of the story, tiger hunting was restricted for everyone except the Maharaja, who made it a top priority. He even engaged in hand-to-hand combat with tigers and successfully defeated them. At one point, an English officer requested permission to hunt tigers in Pratibandapuram, which the Maharaja firmly denied. This refusal endangered his throne, but he managed to resolve the situation by sending an extravagant gift of fifty expensive rings to the Englishman and his wife. In an unexpected turn of events, the wife accepted all fifty rings, costing the Maharaja a significant sum but safeguarding his kingdom.

The fourth section reveals that the Tiger King has hunted and killed seventy tigers over a decade, depleting the local tiger population. To continue his hunting pursuits, he decides to marry a girl from an area with a high tiger population. He subsequently kills tigers during visits to his father-in-law, amassing ninety-nine tiger skins in his palace. However, he becomes consumed by the desire to kill the last tiger, causing turmoil in the kingdom. The dewan, out of necessity, captures the tiger and presents it to the Maharaja, who kills it. Yet, after the Maharaja leaves, the hunters discover that the tiger survived the gunshot and only fainted from shock. Fearing the loss of their jobs, they shoot the tiger in the foot and bury it secretly in the town, erecting a tomb in its honor.

Three days later, the Maharaja is planning for his son's third birthday and purchases a wooden tiger doll for him. The doll is of poor quality, and a splinter injures the Maharaja's hand as he plays with his son. The injury leads to a severe infection that eventually results in the Maharaja's death. This, in a twisted way, fulfills the prophecy of the hundredth tiger's revenge.

Reference to Context :

Question : Read the given extracts and answer the questions .

- I. At that very moment, a great miracle took place. An astonishing phrase emerged from the lips of the ten-day old Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, "O wise prophets!"

Everyone stood transfixed in stupefaction. They looked wildly at each other and blinked.

“O wise prophets! It was I who spoke.”

This time there were no grounds for doubt. It was the infant born just ten days ago who had enunciated the words so clearly.

The chief astrologer took off his spectacles and gazed intently at the baby.

“All those who are born will one day have to die. We don’t need your predictions to know that. There would be some sense in it if you could tell us the manner of that death,” the royal infant uttered these words in his little squeaky voice.

Questions :

a. What miraculous event occurred when the ten-day-old Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur spoke?

A) A sudden storm

B) A bright light

C) The appearance of angels

D) An astonishing phrase

Answer: D) An astonishing phrase

b. Find a synonym for "enunciated" in the given passage.

Answer: Uttered

c. What do the people's reactions in the passage suggest about their response to the infant's words?

Answer: The people were surprised and shocked by the infant's ability to speak and the clarity of his words.

d. How does the infant's ability to speak and question the astrologers impact the atmosphere and expectations in the passage?

Answer: The infant's ability to speak and question the astrologers creates a sense of wonder and amazement among the onlookers. It transforms the atmosphere from one of doubt to one of certainty, as there is no longer any doubt that the child is speaking. This event also raises expectations about the child's future and hints at his extraordinary nature.

II.

But everyone in the kingdom remembered the astrologer's prediction. Many continued to discuss the matter. Slowly it came to the Maharaja's ears.

There were innumerable forests in the Pratibandapuram State. They had tigers in them. The Maharaja knew the old saying, 'You may kill even a cow in self-defence'. There could certainly be no objection to killing tigers in self-defence. The Maharaja started out on a tiger hunt. The Maharaja was thrilled beyond measure when he killed his first tiger. He sent for the State astrologer and showed him the dead beast. "What do you say now?" he demanded. "Your majesty may kill ninety- nine tigers in exactly the same manner. But..." the astrologer drawled. "But what? Speak without fear."

"But you must be very careful with the hundredth tiger."

"What if the hundredth tiger were also killed?"

Questions: Answer by choosing an appropriate option.

- a. Assertion: The Maharaja decided to go on a tiger hunt
- b. Reason: The Maharaja had to defend himself from tigers in the forests.

- A) Both the assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- B) Both the assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- C) The assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- D) The assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Answer: A) Both the assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.

b. Find a synonym for "thrilled" in the given passage.

Answer: Delighted

c. Why did the Maharaja decide to go on a tiger hunt after killing his first tiger?

Answer: The Maharaja decided to go on a tiger hunt because he was thrilled by his first tiger kill and believed there was no objection to killing tigers in self-defense.

d. Based on the passage, why did the Maharaja decide to go on a tiger hunt after killing his first tiger?

Answer: The Maharaja went on a tiger hunt because he believed in the self-defense justification for killing tigers and was thrilled by his first kill, ignoring the astrologer's warning about the hundredth tiger.

III.

From that day onwards it was celebration time for all the tigers inhabiting Pratibandapuram.

The State banned tiger hunting by anyone except the Maharaja. A proclamation was issued to the effect that if anyone dared to fling so much as a stone at a tiger, all his wealth and property will be confiscated. The Maharaja vowed he would attend to all other matters only after killing the hundred tigers. Initially the king seemed well set to realise his ambition. Not that he faced no dangers. There were times when the bullet missed its mark, the tiger leapt upon him and he fought the beast with his bare hands. Each time it was the Maharaja who won.

Questions :

a. Answer by choosing the appropriate option.

Assertion: The Maharaja vowed to kill the hundred tigers.

Reason: Initially, the king seemed well set to realize his ambition.

- A) Both the assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- B) Both the assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- C) The assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- D) The assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Answer: B) Both the assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.

b. Find an antonym for "celebration" in the given passage.

Answer: Mourning

c. Why did the State ban tiger hunting by anyone except the Maharaja, and what were the consequences for those who violated this ban?

Answer: The State banned tiger hunting to allow the Maharaja to have exclusive rights to hunt tigers. Anyone who violated this ban risked having their wealth and property confiscated.

d. Based on the passage, what can you infer about the Maharaja's determination to hunt tigers?

Answer: The Maharaja was determined to hunt tigers and vowed to kill a hundred of them, demonstrating his resolve through successful tiger hunting despite facing dangers.

IV.

He had this one thought during the day and the same dream at night. By this time the tiger farms had run dry even in his father-in-law's kingdom. It became impossible to locate tigers anywhere. Yet only one more was needed. If he could kill just that one single beast, the Maharaja would have no fears left. He could give up tiger hunting altogether. But he had to be extremely careful with that last tiger. What had the late chief astrologer said? "Even after killing ninety-nine tigers the Maharaja should beware of the hundredth..." True enough. The tiger was a savage beast after all. One had to be wary of it. But where was that hundredth tiger to be found? It seemed easier to find tiger's milk than a live tiger.

Questions:

a. What did the late chief astrologer warn the Maharaja about regarding the hundredth tiger?

- A) The hundredth tiger would be easy to find.
- B) The Maharaja should not hunt the hundredth tiger.
- C) The hundredth tiger would be savage.
- D) The hundredth tiger would bring good luck.

Answer: C) The hundredth tiger would be savage.

b. Why did the Maharaja need to be extremely careful with the last tiger he intended to hunt?

Answer: He needed to be careful because the late chief astrologer had warned him to beware of the hundredth tiger, as it would be savage.

c. Answer by choosing an appropriate option.

A. Assertion: The Maharaja wanted to find the last tiger to kill.

B. Reason: He had run out of tiger farms and was determined to end tiger hunting.

A) Both the assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.

B) Both the assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.

C) The assertion is true, but the reason is false.

D) The assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Answer: A) Both the assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.

d. Based on the passage, what can you infer about the Maharaja's determination to find the last tiger to kill?

Answer: The Maharaja was determined to find the last tiger to eliminate all his fears and end tiger hunting, but he had to be extremely cautious due to the warning about the hundredth tiger.

Short answer type questions to be answered in 40- 50 words.

1. How does the title, "The Tiger King," reflect the central theme of the story?

Answer: The title reflects the story's focus on the Maharaja's obsession with tiger hunting and his quest for power. It highlights the irony of a king known for hunting tigers when he, too, becomes a victim of his own ambition.

2. How does Kalki use humor and satire in "The Tiger King" to criticize the behavior of those in power?

Answer:

Kalki employs humor to highlight the absurdity of the Tiger King's actions, such as his obsession with tiger hunting. Satire is used to critique the arrogance and greed of those in positions of authority, revealing how they manipulate rules for personal gain.

3. What is your opinion of the Tiger King's character, and what does it reveal about the flaws of those in power?

Answer: The Tiger King's character reflects the arrogance and selfishness of many leaders. His obsession with hunting and disregard for the welfare of his people highlights the flaws of those in power, where personal desires often take precedence over public good.

4. Why did the Tiger King's determination to kill a hundred tigers lead to his downfall?

Answer: The Tiger King's determination to kill a hundred tigers blinded him to the warnings about the hundredth tiger. His arrogance and obsession with hunting caused him to overlook the potential danger, leading to his tragic demise.

5. How does the story address the theme of destiny and the unexpected in the Tiger King's fate?

Answer: The Tiger King's fate is a powerful example of how destiny can be unpredictable. Despite his confidence and hunting prowess, he meets his demise through an unexpected source, a wooden tiger, highlighting the theme of the unforeseen in life.

6. How does the Tiger King's character resonate with modern political figures, and what lessons can be drawn from his story?

Answer:

The Tiger King's character shares similarities with some contemporary leaders who prioritize personal interests over the welfare of their constituents. The story serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of responsible and selfless leadership.

7. What can you infer about the role of superstition in the story, given the significance of the astrologer's warning?

Answer: The astrologer's warning and the Tiger King's response reveal the role of superstition in the narrative. The belief in prophecies and omens influences the characters' decisions and

8. How does the Tiger King's obsession with tiger hunting reflect the abuse of power?

Answer: The Tiger King's obsession represents the misuse of power. He bends rules to suit his desires, leading to the banning of tiger hunting for anyone but himself. This abuse of authority highlights how those in power can manipulate regulations for personal gain.

9. How does the story's humor and satire affect your perception of the Tiger King's character?

Answer: The humor and satire make the Tiger King's character appear ridiculous and self-absorbed. It creates a negative perception of his arrogance and obsession with hunting, portraying him as a figure to be criticized and mocked.

10. What might the story suggest about the consequences of prioritizing personal ambition over the welfare of others?

11. Answer:

"The Tiger King" implies that prioritizing personal ambition, as seen in the Tiger King's obsession, can lead to dire consequences, including the downfall of both the individual and their kingdom.

12. How does the Tiger King's decision to marry in search of more tigers to hunt comment on historical practices of royal marriages?

Answer:

The Tiger King's decision to marry for the sole purpose of acquiring more tigers to hunt satirizes historical royal marriages, which often served political or territorial interests. It exposes the absurdity of such practices when driven by personal ambition.

13. How did you feel about the Tiger King's ultimate fate? Did he deserve the outcome he received?

Answer: The Tiger King's fate evokes mixed feelings. While his arrogance and obsession make him a flawed character, his demise through a wooden tiger feels somewhat undeserved. It highlights the unpredictability of life's outcomes.

14. What does the story convey about the relationship between power and fear in the context of the Tiger King's rule?

Answer:

The story illustrates that the Tiger King's power was rooted in the fear he instilled in his subjects. This relationship between power and fear reflects the common historical dynamic where rulers used fear as a means of control.

15. How does the story address the transience of power and the consequences of neglecting the welfare of the people?

Answer: "The Tiger King" highlights the transient nature of power and how rulers who neglect the welfare of their people may ultimately lose their authority. The story serves as a cautionary tale about the pitfalls of selfish leadership.

16. How might the story's setting in colonial India under British rule contribute to its critique of autocratic kings?

Answer:

The setting in colonial India adds depth to the story's critique of autocratic kings by highlighting how the British had influence over the local rulers. It underscores the absurdity of the Tiger King's behavior in a changing political landscape.

Long answer type questions to be answered in 120-150 words.

1. The king was callous as a ruler and behaved whimsically. Thus, the people in his kingdom suffered while he fulfilled his desire of killing a hundred tigers. Do you find leaders or politicians in the world today being indifferent to the needs of the people and behaving in the same way? Comment with relevant examples.

Answer : The character of the King in "The Tiger King" indeed reflects the callousness and whimsical behavior of certain leaders or politicians in the world today. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon phenomenon. Many leaders prioritize personal interests over the needs of their people, leading to the suffering of their constituents.

One glaring contemporary example is the situation in some authoritarian regimes where leaders amass wealth and power while their citizens face poverty and repression. North Korea's Kim Jong-un, for instance, maintains a lavish lifestyle while his people endure extreme poverty and lack of basic necessities.

Furthermore, political corruption is a widespread issue in many countries. Elected officials may embezzle public funds, as seen in the 1MDB scandal involving former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, leaving the nation in financial turmoil.

In democratic nations, leaders who cater to special interests or neglect the concerns of marginalized communities also exhibit indifference to their citizens' needs. For instance, some critics argue that certain U.S. politicians prioritize corporate interests over addressing the healthcare and economic needs of their constituents.

In summary, the callous and whimsical behavior of the King in "The Tiger King" finds parallels in contemporary leaders and politicians who prioritize personal gain or power over the well-being of the people they are meant to serve, causing undue suffering and societal disparities.

2. The Maharaja justified his actions based on the maxim: 'You may kill even a cow in self-defence,' so there would be no objection to killing tigers in self-defense.' Do you think it is right to justify our actions in this way? Elaborate

Answer : The Maharaja's justification for killing tigers in self-defense based on the maxim, 'You may kill even a cow in self-defense,' raises ethical questions. While the Maharaja used this reasoning to pursue his obsession with tiger hunting, it is important to consider the broader implications of such justifications.

First, the maxim itself is subject to interpretation. While self-defense is a valid reason for taking action to protect oneself, it is essential to apply this principle judiciously. Killing a tiger, which is a protected species and often endangered, solely for personal pleasure, doesn't align with the genuine concept of self-defense. Tigers rarely pose a threat to humans unless provoked.

Moreover, the Maharaja's actions reveal a dangerous precedent. Justifying actions in the name of self-defense can be a slippery slope. If individuals can use this reasoning to engage in activities that harm other creatures or the environment, it can lead to widespread ecological and ethical issues.

In a broader sense, we should consider the ethical responsibility that comes with power and privilege. The Maharaja's actions reflect how those in authority can misuse their position to fulfill personal desires while disregarding the welfare of others and the environment. This story serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the need for ethical leadership and a responsible approach to justifying one's actions.

3. Imagine you are an ardent environmentalist who is involved in the Save the Tiger campaign. You have been asked to deliver a speech in a seminar related to your campaign and the need for the youth to be involved in such campaigns. Draft your speech.

Answer :

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and fellow advocates for a cause that is not just urgent but a moral imperative – the preservation of our majestic tigers.

Today, I stand before you as an ardent environmentalist, a proud supporter of the "Save the Tiger" campaign. It's not just about saving a species; it's about preserving the delicate balance of nature. Our world is a complex web, and when a single strand weakens, the entire fabric of life is threatened. Tigers, as apex predators, play a crucial role in maintaining the health of their ecosystems. Their survival is an indicator of the overall health of our environment.

But what I want to emphasize today is the need to engage our youth in this cause. The younger generation is the torchbearer of change, and their involvement is critical. They are inheritors of this planet, and they deserve to inherit a world that's rich in biodiversity, not one where magnificent creatures like the tiger exist only in history books.

Today's youth is informed, passionate, and tech-savvy. They have the power to spread awareness faster than ever before. They can inspire change at a rate we've never seen. But they need our guidance, support, and encouragement. It's our responsibility to ignite that spark within them, to make them understand that their involvement is not just a choice; it's a duty.

The "Save the Tiger" campaign provides a platform for the youth to channel their energy and enthusiasm into something meaningful. It's a cause that transcends borders, politics, and personal interests. It's about the future of our planet, and the youth must be at the forefront of this battle.

Encouraging the youth to be involved in campaigns like this not only safeguards our environment but also fosters a sense of responsibility and global citizenship. It teaches them to be stewards of the Earth, to understand that every action, no matter how small, has an impact.

So, my message today is clear – let's empower the youth. Let's educate them about the importance of conservation, about the critical role that tigers play in our ecosystem. Let's inspire them to raise their voices, to march alongside us in this crusade. Together, we can ensure that our future generations witness the grace and beauty of these magnificent creatures in the wild, not just in photographs.

In conclusion, we need the youth not only for the "Save the Tiger" campaign but for the greater cause of preserving our planet. They are the change-makers, and we must guide them, support them, and stand with them. Together, we can make a world where tigers roam freely, where ecosystems thrive, and where our youth inherit a planet teeming with life. Thank you.

5. 'Knowing too much of your future is never a good thing.' In light of this quote, examine how knowing the future paved the way for the king's end.

Answer :The quote "Knowing too much of your future is never a good thing" is profoundly relevant to the downfall of the Tiger King in Kalki's story. The king's obsession with his own fate, as foretold by the astrologer, became his undoing. He knew from the prophecy that he would die at the hands of a tiger, and this knowledge led him down a path of reckless and obsessive behavior.

The king's belief that he could defy fate and overcome the prophecy fueled his relentless pursuit of tiger hunting. He became consumed by the desire to prove the astrologer wrong, leading him to prioritize his ambition over the welfare of his kingdom. His arrogance and disregard for the warning about the hundredth tiger made him blind to the very real dangers he faced.

Ultimately, the king's knowledge of his future led him to ignore the astrologer's caution, and he celebrated prematurely after what he believed was his hundredth tiger kill. The wooden tiger, overlooked due to his overconfidence, caused an infection that led to his demise.

In this tragic tale, knowing too much about his future made the king blind to the present, leading to his downfall. It serves as a cautionary reminder that excessive preoccupation with one's destiny can have dire consequences.

6. Do you think an author who includes several instances of satire in a story faces the risk of being too cynical? Explain in reference with the chapter, The Tiger King.

Answer: An author who includes several instances of satire in a story does not necessarily face the risk of being too cynical. Satire, when effectively employed, serves as a tool for social criticism and commentary rather than a mere expression of cynicism. In "The Tiger King" by Kalki Krishnamurthy, satire is utilized to mock the behavior of those in power, particularly the Tiger King, without necessarily promoting cynicism.

The story satirizes the arrogance and absurdity of the Tiger King's actions, such as his obsession with tiger hunting and his disregard for the welfare of his people. The satirical elements highlight the flaws in his character and leadership, shedding light on the consequences of unchecked power. However, this satire does not necessarily convey a completely cynical perspective. It aims to critique and prompt reflection on the behavior of leaders, encouraging readers to consider the real-world implications of such actions.

Satire, when balanced and thoughtfully executed, can be a powerful means of social commentary, drawing attention to the shortcomings of those in authority without veering into excessive cynicism. The intent is not to condemn but to provoke thought and discussion, making it a valuable literary tool rather than a risk of cynicism.