

SUPPLEMENTARY READER :VISTAS

THE TIGER KING BY KALKI

Gist of the lesson:

- The Maharaja Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bhadur was called “Tiger King”.
- When he was just 10 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 20, 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 100th.
- 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 50 diamond rings expecting that she would take 1 or 2 instead she kept all the rings costing 3 lakh rupees and sent ‘thanks’ to the Maharaja. But his state was secured.
- In 10 years he killed 70 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 5-6 tigers. So he killed 99 tigers and was feverishly anxious to kill the 100th 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.

- 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”.

Question and Answer:

1. What was the miracle that took place in the royal palace?

When the Maharaja was a 10 day old infant spoke and asked intelligent questions about his death. After knowing that he would be killed by a tiger he uttered saying “Let tigers beware.”

2. How was the Tiger King brought up?

As a child the Tiger King was brought up by an English nanny and tutored in English by an Englishman. He was given the milk of an English cow. Like many other Indian crown princes he watched only English movies.

3. What did the State astrologer say he would do ‘if the hundredth tiger were also killed’?

The State astrologer was so sure of his prediction that he announced that he would cut off his ceremonial tuft, crop his hair short and become an insurance agent in case the king was able to kill the 100th tiger, too. He was sure that the Maharaja’s death would be caused by the 100th tiger.

4. What did the high-ranking British officer wish to do? Was his wish fulfilled?

The high-ranking British officer wanted to kill a tiger. When he was denied the permission for hunting, he sent a word to the king that he would be happy if he was allowed to get photographed with the dead body of a tiger killed by the king. However, his wish remained unfulfilled.

5. How did the Maharaja manage to save his throne?

The Maharaja had annoyed the visiting senior British officer over the issue of tiger-hunting and ‘stood in danger of losing his kingdom itself’. So, the Maharaja and the Dewan decided to placate and pacify the officer through bribe by sending gifts of expensive diamond rings to the ‘duraiani’, the wife of the British officer. Thus he managed to save his throne.

6. How did the ‘duraiani’ behave on receiving the gifts?

Some fifty samples of expensive diamond rings were sent to the duraiani and it was expected that she would select on or two and return the rest. But the lady proved to be greedy as she retained all of them and merely sent a letter of thanks.

6. Why did the Maharaja’s tiger killing mission come to a sudden still?

Within ten years Maharaja's tiger hunting had resulted in the killing of seventy tigers. However his tiger killing mission came to a sudden standstill because the tiger population became extinct in the forest of Pratibandapuram.

8. Why did the Maharaja suddenly decide to marry? Whom did he wish to marry?

The Maharaja suddenly decided to marry because firstly, he was of marriageable age and secondly, he wanted to kill thirty more tigers in his father-in-law's state in order to complete the tally of hundred tigers. For this reason he wished to marry a girl in the royal family of a state with a large tiger population.

9. Why did Maharaja order the dewan to double the tax?

The Maharaja called the dewan and ordered him to immediately double the tax of the villagers who had informed him of a tiger in the forest because despite his best efforts he was unable to locate the beast. This infuriated the Maharaja.

10. What did the Maharaja buy as a birthday gift for his son?

The Maharaja wished to give his son a very special gift on his birthday and he bought a wooden toy tiger as a perfect birthday gift for his son.

11. How did the king's arm become seriously infected?

The king's arm had got infected from a prick caused by one of the slivers on the wooden tiger. In one day, the infection got flared in the Maharaja's right hand and in four days it developed into a suppurating sore which spread all over the arm. Though he was operated yet he died.

Unsolved Question

1. How did the Maharaja kill the hundredth tiger?

2. The title of the Maharaja reflected grandeur but his death was an anticlimax. Justify.

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

4. What idea do you form about the ruling Indian class during the pre-partition days from the king's encounter with shopkeeper?

5. What idea do you form about the married life of the king?

6. Why did the tiger king decided to marry? How do you conclude his attitude towards marriage?

Long answer type question

1. 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 100 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.

2. 'The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power' Elucidate.