

THE TIGER KING

Summary

The Maharaja Sir Jilani Jung JungBhadur was called “Tiger King”. When he was just 10 day 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. He was taught by an English tutor and looked after by an English nanny. He 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. He pledged that all other affairs of the state would be attended after killing the hundred tigers.

Then he started killing tigers. None except Maharaja was allowed to hunt tigers. A high-ranking British officer visited the state that was fond of hunting tigers 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 one or two, 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. He asked his Dewan to find the tiger otherwise face his anger. Now the Dewan was afraid of losing his job 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 third 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”.

Main points

1. When the Prince at 'Pratibandhpuram' was born – Astrologers predicted that he would be killed by 100th tiger, to prove the astrologer wrong he killed the first tiger and challenged the prediction.
2. The astrologer said that the 100th tiger would kill him. The Maharaj put all his Estate duties aside and set upon killing 100 Tigers.
3. When all the Tigers in his Estate were killed, he married a princess whose father had many Tigers his forests.
4. He even spent Rs. 3 lakhs to please a British officer who wanted to hunt tigers in his estate.
5. Finally, the hundredth tiger was killed, the Maharaja was very happy & then decided to spend time with his son.
6. He bought a wooden toy tiger on his son's third Birthday – toy was made up by an unskilled carpenter. One of slivers pierced his right hand – developed an infection – operated & died.
7. Irony – killed 99 tigers but wooden tiger took its revenge.

Short Answer Type Questions

Q. 1. Who is the Tiger King?

The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram is the Tiger King of the story. He was known in his kingdom by different names as His Highness Jamedar, General Khiledar-Major, Sata-Vyaghrasamhari, MaharajadhirajaVisvaBhuvanasamrat, Sir Jilani Jung Bahadur, M.A.D., A.C.T.C., or C.R.C.K.

Q2. Why does the Tiger King get this name?

Ans. Tigers dominate the life and even death of the king. So he is named the tiger king. The chief astrologer foretells that he is born in the hour of the Bull. The Bull and the Tiger are enemies. Therefore, his death will come from the Tiger. Ironically, the king who killed 99 tigers, his death was caused by a wooden toy tiger.

Q3. What was the miracle that took place in the royal palace?

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

Q4. How did the chief astrologer react to the tiger king's question about the manner of his death? How did the tiger king take it?

Ans. When the baby barely ten days old, opens its lips in speech. The chief astrologer was wonderstruck. He thought it to be incredible that the baby raised an intelligent question –to know about the manner of his death. The astrologer told that the prince was born in the hour of the bull. The bull and tiger are enemies. Therefore, death to him shall come from the Tiger. The tiger king growled, “Let tigers beware!”

Q5. How was the Tiger King brought up?

Ans. As a child the Tiger King was brought up by an English nanny and tutored by an Englishman. He was given the milk of an English cow. He watched only English movies.

Q6. Why was it celebration time for all the tigers inhabiting Pratibandapuram?

Ans. There was a celebration time for all the tigers inhabiting Pratibandapuram because the state banned tiger hunting by anyone except the Maharaja and a proclamation was issued to the effect that if any one dared to fling a stone at a tiger, all his wealth and property would be seized.

Q7. What did the State astrologer say he would do ‘if the hundredth tiger were also killed’?

Ans. 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.

Q8. What did the high-ranking British officer wish to do? Was his wish fulfilled?

Ans. 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.

Q9. How did the Maharaja manage to save his throne?

Ans. 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 please the officer through bribe by sending

gifts of expensive diamond rings to the **duraisani**, the wife of the British officer. Thus he managed to save his throne.

Q10. What did the Maharaja do when he stood in danger of losing his kingdom?

Ans. The Maharaja obtained some fifty expensive diamond rings of different designs from a British Jewellery Company in Calcutta and sent them to the British officer's good lady expecting her to choose one or two rings and send the rest back. But she kept all the rings and thanked the Maharaja for the gift. This cost the Maharaja three lakh rupees but his kingdom was saved.

Q11. How did the 'duraisani' behave on receiving the gifts?

Ans. Some fifty samples of expensive diamond rings were sent to the duraisani and it was expected that she would select one 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.

Q12. Why did the Maharaja's tiger killing mission come to a sudden still?

Ans. 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.

Q13. What plan did the Maharaja think of to fulfill his vow to kill hundred tigers after the tiger population became extinct in his state?

Ans. When the tiger population became extinct in his state the Maharaja planned to marry a girl of royal family of a native state with a large tiger population so that he would kill the remaining thirty tigers in the state of his father-in-law when he visits that.

Q14. Why did Maharaja order the dewan to double the tax?

Ans. 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.

Q15. What was the happy news which dispelled the Maharaja's gloom?

Ans. Sheep began to disappear frequently from a hillside village. It was not the work of Khader Mian Saheb and Virasami Naicker who were famous for killing sheep. The Maharaja announced a three-year exemption from all taxes for that village. The Maharaja refused to leave the forest until the tiger was found.

Q16. Why did the dewan warn the Maharaja not to double the land tax forthwith? What was the reaction of the Maharaja?

Ans. The hundredth tiger was not located. The Maharaja's anger was at its height. He called the dewan and ordered him to double the land-tax forthwith. The dewan warned that the people would rise in revolt. Then their state too would fall a prey to the Indian National Congress. The king didn't relent. He told the dewan that in that case he might resign from his post.

Q17. How did the tiger king celebrate his victory over the killing of the 100th tiger?

Ans. The Maharaja thought that he had killed the hundredth tiger. He was overcome with elation. He ordered the tiger to be brought to the capital in grand procession. The dead tiger was taken in a procession through the town. It was buried and a tomb was erected over it.

Q18. What was the Dewan's tiger like? How did he take it into the forest?

Ans. Dewan's tiger was an old tiger. It was not ferocious and agile. It was passive and exhausted. He was pushed down to the ground. He wandered into the Maharaja's presence and stood as if in humble supplication. The tiger was kept hidden in Dewan's house. At midnight when the town slept in peace, the Dewan and his wife dragged the tiger into the car and drove straight to the forest.

Q19. Why did the Dewan decide to give up his own tiger to be killed by the Maharaja?

Ans. The Maharaja's anxiety had reached a fever pitch. The hundredth tiger was yet to be killed. The Dewan could lose his job if he couldn't search the tiger. He had brought a tiger from the People's Park in Madras and kept hidden in his house. He dragged the tiger to the forest where the Maharaja was hunting.

Q20. Why didn't the hunters tell the King that the tiger was not dead?

Ans. The Maharaja thought that he had killed the hundredth tiger. He didn't know that his bullet had missed the mark. The beast was killed not by him but by one of the hunters. However, they kept it a secret. They feared losing their jobs if the Maharaja knew the truth.

Q21. Why did the shopkeeper charge three hundred rupees from the Maharaja while the actual price of the wooden tiger was just two annas and a quarter?

Ans. The wooden tiger cost only two annas and a quarter. But the shopkeeper feared to quote such a low price to the Maharaja. He could be punished under the rules of Emergency. So he presented it as a rare example of craftsmanship. He charged three hundred rupees as its Price.

Q22. How did the hundredth tiger take its revenge upon the Tiger King?

Ans. The king decided that a wooden toy-tiger was a perfect gift for his son's third birthday. One day he was playing with that wooden tiger. One of the slivers pierced the Maharaja's right hand. Infection spread all over the arm. Three surgeons performed an operation but couldn't save the King. Thus, the hundredth tiger took its revenge upon the King.

Q23. What did the Maharaja buy as a birthday gift for his son?

Ans. 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.

Q24. How did the king's arm become seriously infected?

Ans. 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.

Q25. What caused the death of the Maharaja?

Ans. The prophecy of the chief astrologer came true. A toy-wooden tiger-the hundredth tiger killed the Maharaja. The silver quill on the wooden tiger pierced his hand when he was playing with it on the crown prince's third birthday. It caused a suppurating sore that spread all over the arm. He was operated but died.

Long answer type questions

Q1. What impression do you form about the Tiger King after reading the story?

Ans. The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, had many titles and sub-names. But he was popular as the Tiger King. The chief astrologer predicted that his death would come from a tiger. Crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur grew taller and stronger day by day. When he grew to twenty he took the reign in his hands.

The Maharaja continued his campaign of tiger-hunting with rare singlemindedness. Within a span of ten years he killed 70 tigers. It was his master strategy to marry a girl of a state which had a large tiger population. So he was able to kill 99 tigers in all.

The Tiger King could pay any price to maintain his kingdom. He had to give a bribe worth three lakh rupees to a high ranking British official to retain his kingdom.

The Maharaja knew how to take work from his minions. He used the dewan to find out the suitable girl for his marriage. He could be hot-headed and doubled the tax on the people. He also threatened the dewan to dismiss him from his service. It is ironical that the King met his death by a wooden tiger. At last, the hundredth tiger took revenge upon him.

Q2. How did his campaign of tiger hunting continue? How was he avenged by the hundredth tiger?

Ans. The Maharaja was forced to start the campaign of killing a hundred tigers in self-defence. The chief astrologer had predicted that his death would be caused by a tiger. Particularly, he was advised to be careful with the hundredth tiger. The Maharaja's campaign was a great success. He could kill seventy tigers in ten years. Then an unseen obstacle brought his campaign to a halt. The tiger population in the forests of Pratibandapuram became extinct. The Maharaja adopted a new strategy. The Maharaja married a girl from a state with a large tiger population. Very soon his tally reached 99, just one short of the required hundred.

Ironically, the Tiger King's death came from the hundredth tiger. It was a toy-tiger made of wood. He had presented a wooden tiger to his son on his third birthday. One of the slivers pierced the Maharaja's right hand. Infection spread all over the arm. Three surgeons operated on him but couldn't save him from dying. At last the astrologer's prediction came true. The hundredth tiger took its revenge upon the king.

Q3. The Tiger King is a satire on the pride and power of Maharaja of Pratibandapuram. Describe the use of dramatic irony leading to the death of the Tiger King.

Ans. The Tiger King is a satire on the pride and stubbornness of those in power. 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. Not that the King didn't try his best to belie the prediction. His campaign of tiger-hunting was very successful. He was single minded and determined. But the satirical aspect of the whole story is the King's inability to kill the hundredth tiger. 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.

Q4. Why did the Maharaja's anxiety reach a fever pitch? What steps were taken to hunt the hundredth tiger?

Ans. The Maharaja's anxiety reached a fever pitch. One more tiger was to be killed to achieve his tally of a hundred. By this time the tiger farms had run dry even in his father-in-law's kingdom. But soon came the happy news that dispelled his gloom. There was a possibility of a tiger living in a hillside village. The Maharaja announced a three-year exemption from all taxes for that village. He set out for hunt at once. The tiger was not found but the Maharaja refused to leave the forest.

The dewan himself was in danger of losing his job. He got a tiger arranged from the People's Park in Madras. The tiger was left in the forest where the Maharaja was hunting. He took a careful aim at the beast. The tiger fell down on the ground in a heap. Then came the anti-climax. The tiger survived. The Maharaja's bullet missed its mark.

Unfortunately, the king didn't know that the hundredth tiger was not killed by him. So the hundredth tiger caused his death. Ironically, the hundredth tiger that caused his death was not a ferocious beast. The king died of the deadly infection. A wooden toy-tiger, was the cause of his death.

Q. 5. How did the Tiger King come in the danger of losing his throne and how did he save his kingdom?

Ans. The state banned tiger hunting by anyone except the king. Once a high ranking British officer visited Pratibandapuram. He was fond of hunting tigers. He liked to be photographed with the tigers he had shot. The Maharaja was firm in his resolve. He refused permission. He was ready to organise any other hunt. The officer could go on a boar hunt but the tiger hunt was impossible.

The British officer's secretary sent word through the dewan. The Maharaja could do the actual killing. The officer only wanted to be photographed holding the gun near the dead tiger. The Maharaja didn't relent. He prevented a British officer from fulfilling his desire. The Maharaja stood in danger of losing his kingdom itself. He held deliberations over the issue with the dewan. Samples of expensive diamond rings were ordered. A famous British company of jewellers in Calcutta sent fifty rings. The Maharaja sent the whole lot to the British officer's good lady. She was expected to choose one or two rings. The lady kept all the rings with her. She sent her thanks to the Maharaja for the gifts. The Maharaja was very happy. Though he had lost three lakh of rupees, he had managed to retain his kingdom.

Even the coteries who surround these power centers are interested in taking advantage of the proximity for their own welfare. This is a story about transience-of life, of power and reverberates the maxim: "Too many slips between a cup and a lip."

Q6. Justify the title 'The Tiger King'.

Ans. "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".

Q7. Pick out the instances of satire in the story 'The Tiger King'.

Ans. Satire employs irony, sarcasm, ridicule, etc. in exposing and criticizing follies and vices in men. The story uses humour to criticize self-seeking Kings who willfully exploit both nature and their subjects for selfish interests.

1. When the Maharaja of Pratibandhpuram was told that he would be killed by a tiger, he could never imagine the twist in fate where a toy tiger could be fatal. Because of his conceit, he was unprepared for such surprises flung by life at him.
2. The grandeur associated with a king's life proves a mockery. The news of the king's ailment invited not one, but three surgeons. They got so tied up in technicalities that they declared the operation successful even though the king died.
3. The story also satirizes the corrupting influence of power. Just because the Tiger King had power, he felt he could browbeat his subjects and even defeat fate. He neglected his responsibility as a ruler. He neglected the welfare of his subjects, his family, increased and reduced taxes at will and sacked his officers. They feared him or else he would have learnt the truth.
4. When we see the king gloating over his bravery after killing the hundredth old, weak tiger, we notice that Kalki is satirizing the notions of cowardice and bravery. There is no heroism in fighting an unequal battle. The King's cowardice was obvious when he justifies that one may kill even a cow in self-defence.
5. Kalki is also criticizing the King's men and subjects who pander to his whims out of fear or like the shopkeeper manipulate and fool him.

Q8. Where do you find humour in the story 'Tiger King'?

- Ans.**
1. The instance of the Stuka bomber
 2. The king's offer of mouse hunt.
 3. The incoherent blabbering by the Dewan and the Chief Astrologer
 4. The Dewan procuring an old tiger from people's park and its stubborn refusal to get off the car and the description of its waiting in humble supplication to be shot.
 5. The shopkeeper quoting three hundred rupees for a cheap two annas and a quarter toy tiger

Q9. What is the author's indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the willfulness of human beings?

Ans. 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.

Q10. 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?

Ans. 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 job or even loss of their lives.

The astrologer was afraid of predicting his death, till Maharaja told him to "speak without 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 any feelings of sincerity towards their ruler.