

**CLASS XII
VISTAS | SUPPLEMENTARY READER
CHAPTER 2 | THE TIGER KING**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kalki is the pen-name of Ramaswamy Aiyer Krishnamurthy (9 September 1899 - 5 December 1954). He was a Tamil writer, journalist, poet, critic and Freedom Movement activist. His writings include over 120 short stories, 10 novelettes, five novels, three historical romances, editorials and political writings and hundreds of films and music reviews.

THEME

The Tiger King is a story about transience (temporariness) of life and power. It's a satire on the conduct of the people in power. It is found that most of the time, the rulers are not interested and bothered about working for public welfare. Rather, they spend their time in foolish things.

WORDS/PHRASES AND THEIR CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS

Pretending: behaving so as to make it appear that something is the case when in fact it is not

Strategic: calculated

Stuka bomber: a German bomber aircraft that was used in the second world war

Indomitable: undefeatable

Final abode: refers to the final residence of the soul – the heaven.

Demise: death

Foretold: predicted

Compelled: forced

Transfixed: cause (someone) to become motionless with horror, wonder, or astonishment.

Stupefaction: shock

Enunciated: say or pronounce clearly.

Incredible: unbelievable

Rumour: a currently circulating story or report of uncertain or doubtful truth.

Rife: widespread, prevalent

UDAYA PUBLIC SCHOOL, AYODHYA

Hindsight: to understand an event or situation only after it has happened

Court of wards: The Court of Wards was a legal body created by the East India Company. Its purpose was to protect heirs and their estates when the heir was deemed to be a minor and therefore incapable of acting independently.

Tuft: a bunch or collection of threads, grass, hair, etc., held or growing together at the base.

Incoherent: unclear, confused

Proclamation: a public or official announcement

Fling: throw

Confiscated: taken with authority

Bare: here, unarmed

Firm: determined

Resolve: decision

Boar: pig

Durai: tamil word meaning chief or leader

Carcass: the dead body of an animal.

Relented: relaxed his decision

Deliberations: discussions

Dispatched: sent

Unforeseen: unplanned, accidental

Hurdle: problem

Standstill: stop

Extinct: having no living members.

Hara-kiri: a ritual of suicide practiced in Japan.

Brandishing: waving as a threat or in anger or excitement

Shuddering: tremble with fear

Summoned: called

Babble: to talk or say something in a quick, confused, excited, or silly way

Adorned: decorated
Fever pitch: extreme
Anxiety: curiosity
Tally: count, total
Savage: uncontrolled
Wary: be cautious
Gloom: sadness
Dispelled: removed
Exemption: freedom
Wantonly: carelessly
Flout: to go against something or someone
Fury: anger
Obstinacy: firmness
Mounted: increased
Rage: anger
Discontented: unhappy
Catastrophic: causing sudden great damage or suffering
Haul: pull or drag with effort or force
Supplication: pray
Elation: joy
Procession: parade
Bafflement: confusion
Annas: currency used in the olden times. 1 anna = 1/16 rupee.
Sliver: splinter
Suppurating: a wound full of pus
Sore: painful inflammation

SUMMARY

The tiger King is the story of king Jung Jung Bahadur of Pratibandapuram, a brave warrior whose death had been predicted when he was born. The chief astrologer had predicted as the royal child was born in the hour of the bull, the tiger being its enemy, death would come to the child by a tiger. The brave prince asked all tigers to beware of him. He came to be known as 'tiger king'.

The prince became king at the age of twenty and considering killing a cow in self defense to be lawful, went on a tiger killing spree. He was warned of danger from the hundredth tiger that he encountered. As all the tigers in his kingdom had been killed by him but still he had to kill more, he married into a state having a high population of tigers.

When his killings reached ninety nine, he desperately sought the next hunt. Fearing the king's harshness, the minister planted an old tiger in the forest for him to kill. The king fired at it but the tiger escaped the bullet miraculously. The royal hunters feared the king and so did not inform him; rather they killed the beast themselves.

The king was satisfied that he had evaded death and now celebrated his son's third birthday. He got a wooden toy tiger as a gift for the prince. Although it was poorly done, the shopkeeper, fearing punishment under the rules of emergency charged a high price. As both the king and his son were playing with the tiger, one of the thin pieces of wood that were erupting out of the wooden tiger like feathers pierced the king's right hand.

The wound became infectious, spread through his arm and as he was being operated upon, he died.

So, ironically, the hundredth tiger killed the king and eventually took its revenge.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (NCERT)

READ AND FIND OUT

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

The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram is the Tiger King. He got that name because, at the time of his birth, astrologers predicted that he would die due to a tiger. So when he grew up, he decided to kill all the tigers and was known as The Tiger King. He killed ninety-nine tigers but the hundredth tiger, a wooden one, took his life away.

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

Ans. The royal infant grew up into a tall strong young man. He was brought up in the English environment. He drank the milk of a white cow, was taken care of by an English nanny, tutored in English by an Englishman and saw only English films. At the age of twenty, he was declared the king.

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

Ans. Within ten years, the Maharaja killed 70 tigers. So thirty more tigers were required to be shot. But there were no more tigers left in the forest of Pratibandapuram. So, the Maharaja decided to marry a girl from a royal family of a state with a large tiger population.

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

Ans. The Maharaja had killed all the tigers in his kingdom as well as in his father-in-law's kingdom. The number reached 99 tigers. Only one more tiger was required to complete the Maharaja's mission. But by this time, tigers became extinct. In order to search for the last tiger, the Maharaja announced three year's exemption from all taxes for the village which gave him

the news about the probability of a tiger. In his rage, he even doubled the land taxes and gave a warning to the Dewan of losing his job.

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

Ans. No harm will be done to the astrologer because the astrologer is no more by this time. The king thought he had killed a hundred tigers but he missed the hundredth tiger which was killed by his officers. Therefore, the astrologers' prophecy was not indisputably disproved.

SHORT ANSWER-TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. What is the matter of vital importance the author wants to disclose at the beginning of the story? Why?

Ans. The author wants to disclose in the very beginning, the fact that the Tiger King has reached the final abode of all living creatures, i.e. the king is dead. The author wants to clarify this matter because he is sure that everyone who reads about him would naturally want to meet this man of indomitable courage face to face.

Q2. What did the astrologers predict about the child when he was born?

Ans. The astrologers predicted that the child would grow to become the warrior of warriors, the hero of heroes, champion of champions. They also foretold that the child born under this star would one day have to meet its death.

Q3. What was the miracle that happened when the astrologers predicted about the death of the born child?

Ans. The newborn ten-day-old child uttered a phrase after hearing the astrologer's prediction. The phrase shocked and surprised everyone. The child said, 'O Wise Prophets!'. When everyone was stunned into shock and silence, the baby said again 'O Wise Prophets! It was I who spoke.'

Q5. What reason did the astrologer give in support of his answers?

Ans. The astrologer fixed his eyes upon the little prince and explained that the prince was born in the hour of the Bull. The Bull and the Tiger were enemies; therefore, death would come from the tiger.

Q6. What happened when the chief astrologer said that the death would come from a tiger?

Ans. As soon as the crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur heard the word 'Tiger', he did not get thrown into a quake. He only gave a deep growl and terrifying words 'Let Tigers Beware', emerged from his lips.

Q7. What was the reply of the astrologer, when the Tiger King asked the astrologer what he would do if the hundredth tiger were killed?

Ans. The astrologer replied that he would tear all his books on astrology, set fire to them and cut off his tuft, crop his hair short and become an insurance agent.

Q8. What did the Maharaja do to realize his ambition of killing a hundred tigers?

Ans. The State banned tiger hunting by anyone except the Maharaja. Anyone defying this order would lose all his wealth and property. The Maharaja vowed he would attend to all other matters only after killing a hundred tigers. He fired many of his officers for not getting him tigers. He even stayed in the forest for many days. He had married a princess whose father's kingdom had a large tiger population. The Tiger King had to spend three lakh rupees to impress the British official and discourage him from killing the tigers.

Q9. What did the Maharaja and dewan do to avoid the danger of losing the throne?

Ans. The Maharaja and dewan connived to get samples of expensive diamond rings of different designs from a famous British Company of jewellers in Calcutta. About fifty rings arrived and were sent to the British Officer's wife as a gift. They expected her to choose one or two rings and send the rest back. But she kept all the rings and sent back a thank you note. The Maharaja had to pay a bill of three lakhs but was happy that he could save his throne.

Q10. Why did the Maharaja decide to marry a girl of the royal family from a neighbouring state?

Ans. The Maharaja decided to do this so that he could be allowed to hunt tigers from the state of his father-in-law because in his own state he had killed all the tigers available. He wanted to marry a girl from a state with a large tiger population.

Q11. What did the dewan do on hearing the Maharaja's threat?

Ans. The dewan and his wife took the tiger which had been brought from the People's Park in Madras and dragged it to the car and shoved it into the seat. They left the tiger with great difficulty and ensured that it should wander into the Raja's presence. Everything happened according to their plan. The Maharaja took careful aim at the beast and killed it.

Q12. How was the Maharaja hurt and what was the result of the wound?

Ans. One of the sharp slivers of wood pierced the Maharaja's hand. He pulled it out with his left hand and continued to play with the prince. Infection flared in his hand the next day and in four days, it developed into a big sore which spread all over the arm. Despite the operation conducted on him by three famous surgeons, he died. The hundredth tiger had taken its final revenge on him.

Q13. Why did the Maharaja ban tiger hunting in the state?

Ans. The Maharaja wanted to prove the predictions of the state astrologer wrong regarding his death. The prediction was that he would be killed by the hundredth tiger. In order to hunt a hundred tigers, the Maharaja put a ban on the hunting of tigers by anyone except the Maharaja himself.

Q14. Why did the Maharaja double the land tax?

Ans. Ninety-nine tigers had been successfully killed but the hundredth tiger could not be found. News of a tiger being spotted at a hillside village came but it was false. The Maharaja doubled the land tax in anger in order to teach the villagers a lesson.

DO-IT-YOURSELF EXERCISE

Reading With Insight (page no. 17)
