

# **MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL**

SUBJECT: ENGLISH CORE  
TEXT BOOK: VISTAS  
CHAPTER: THE TIGER KING

CLASS: XII

## **The Tiger King By Kalki**



## About the author-



**Ramaswamy Aiyer Krishnamurthy**  
9 September 1899 – 5 December 1954  
Pen name 'Kalki'

Ramaswamy Aiyer Krishnamurthy was a Tamil writer, journalist, poet, critic and Indian Independence activist. He penned 120 short stories, 10 novelettes, 5 novels, 3 historical romances, editorial and political writings and hundreds of film and music reviews.

### **Introduction to the lesson –**

The story is a satire on the rich and powerful kings of the olden times. In order to prove the prophecies of the fortune teller wrong, the king of Pratibandapuram mindlessly kills ninety nine tigers but the hundredth one, the cause of the king's death escapes his bullet. Ultimately, the king is killed by an inanimate tiger made of wood. Hence, the prophecy turns to be true, despite the king's efforts to prove it wrong.

### **Lesson and Explanation**

THE Maharaja of Pratibandapuram is the hero of this story. He may be identified as His Highness Jamedar-General, Khiledar-Major, Sata Vyaghra Samhari, Maharajadhiraja Visva Bhuvana Samrat, Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, M.A.D., A.C.T.C., or C.R.C.K. But this name is often shortened to the Tiger King.

*The writer introduces the main character of the story – the king of Pratibandapuram. The king is a hero due to his bravery. He is given a list of titles to emphasize on his greatness. To sum up all the titles in one, the king is called "The Tiger King". The reason for him being called so shall be revealed in the lesson ahead.*



I have come forward to tell you why he came to be known as Tiger King. I have no intention of pretending to advance only to end in a strategic withdrawal. Even the threat of a Stuka bomber will not throw me off track. The Stuka, if it likes, can beat a hasty retreat from my story.

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

*The writer tells us that he would let us know why the king was called 'The Tiger King'. He further promises the reader that he will not go back on his promise even if he is under the threat of an attack by a Stuka Bomber aircraft. Instead, he says that the Stuka bomber aircraft can go back because he is not scared of it and he will tell the reader why the king was called the tiger king.*

Right at the start, it is imperative to disclose a matter of vital importance about the Tiger King. Everyone who reads of him will experience the natural desire to meet a man of his indomitable courage face-to-face. But there is no chance of its fulfillment. As Bharata said to Rama about Dasaratha, the Tiger King has reached that final abode of all living creatures. In other words, the Tiger King is dead.

Indomitable: undefeatable

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

*The writer says that before elaborating about the tiger king one important thing about him was that any person who read about the tiger king would be very excited to meet a man of such undefeatable courage. But he says that there is no chance of meeting the tiger king as the tiger king is already dead and he has reached heaven.*

The manner of his death is a matter of extraordinary interest. It can be revealed only at the end of the tale. The most fantastic aspect of his demise was that as soon as he was born, astrologers had foretold that one day the Tiger King would actually have to die.

Demise: death

Foretold: predicted

*The manner in which the tiger king died was very interesting. The writer could tell us about it only at the end of the story but he adds that a very interesting fact about the tiger king's death was that when the tiger king was born, astrologers had predicted at that time that one day the tiger king would die. This prediction is meaningless because as a matter of fact everyone has to die one day.*

"The child will grow up to become the warrior of warriors, hero of heroes, champion of champions. But..." they bit their lips and swallowed hard. When compelled to continue, the astrologers came out with it. "This is a secret which should not be revealed at all. And yet we are forced to speak out. The child born under this star will one day have to meet its death."

Compelled: forced

*The writer gives an elaborate description of what the astrologers predicted at the time of the birth of the tiger king. They said that the child would grow up to become a brave warrior, a hero and a champion but after that they stopped and bit their lips in order to show their reluctance to speak. When the astrologers were forced to continue, they said that what they would reveal just now was a secret. They said that the child that is the tiger king was born under such a star (that means when he was born the star which was up there in the sky was such) that any person who was born at that time had to meet his death one day. Again, this prediction is meaningless because as a fact everyone has to meet his death one day.*

At that very moment a great miracle took place. An astonishing phrase emerged from the lips of the ten-day old Jilani 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.

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

Stupefaction: shock

Enunciated: say or pronounce clearly.

*As the astrologers reveal their secret prediction, a miracle took place. The 10- day old tiger king whose name was Jilani Jung Jang Bahadur spoke up. All the listeners were surprised to see a 10- day old baby speak. The tiger king called out to the wise astrologers and the main astrologer removed his spectacles and looked intently at the little baby. The tiger king said in its squeaky voice that all those who are born have to die one day and he did not need their predictions to know this fact. He added that if they told him the manner of his death, that would make some sense to him.*

The chief astrologer placed his finger on his nose in wonder. A baby barely ten days old opens its lips in speech! Not only that, it also raises intelligent questions! Incredible! Rather like the bulletins issued by the war office, than facts.

The chief astrologer took his finger off his nose and fixed his eyes upon the little prince.

“The prince was born in the hour of the Bull. The Bull and the Tiger are enemies, therefore, death comes from the Tiger,” he explained.

Incredible: unbelievable

*The chief astrologer was amazed to see a 10- day old baby speak and ask intelligent questions. It was unbelievable for him just like the news which came from the wars. He took off his finger from his nose and looked carefully at the little prince. Then he added that as the tiger king was born in the hour of the bull which was an enemy of the tiger, hence, the tiger king would die due to a tiger.*

You may think that crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur was thrown into a quake when he heard the word ‘Tiger’. That was exactly what did not happen. As soon as he heard it pronounced, the crown prince gave a deep growl. Terrifying words emerged from his lips.

“Let tigers beware!”

*The writer says that the reader may feel that the tiger king trembled upon hearing the name of a tiger but actually that did not happen. On the other hand, as soon as the Crown Prince Jung Jang Bahadur heard the name of a tiger he made a deep growling sound and spoke terrifying words. He said that all the tigers should beware.*

This account is only a rumour rife in Pratibandapuram. But with hindsight we may conclude it was based on some truth.

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

Rife: widespread, prevalent

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

*Further the writer says that this story is a rumour that was heard by him in Pratibandapuram but if we look at the happenings of the past we could conclude that these rumours were based on true happenings.*

Crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur grew taller and stronger day by day. No other miracle marked his childhood days apart from the event already described.

*The Crown Prince Jung Jung Bahadur grew taller and stronger as the days passed by there were no other miracles in his childhood.*

The boy drank the milk of an English cow, was brought up by an English nanny, tutored in English by an Englishman, saw nothing but English films — exactly as the crown princes of all the other Indian states did. When he came of age at twenty, the State, which had been with the Court of Wards until then, came into his hands.

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.

*As a boy, he drank the milk of an English cow, was brought up by an English governess, got lessons in English by an Englishman and watched English films just like the Crown princes of other Indian states did. When the Crown Prince Jung Jung Bahadur turned twenty years of age, the royal state which had been in the custody of the court of wards was given to him.*

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

*All the people who lived in the kingdom were aware of the astrologer's prediction. Many of the people discussed these predictions and one day, King Jung Jung Bahadur came to know of it.*

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 Pratibandapuram state had many forests which had a number of tigers in them. The Maharaja was aware of an old saying that you could kill even a cow in order to protect yourself. So, he felt that the cow which was considered to be a holy animal could also be killed by a Hindu in order to save himself, then no one would object if he killed a tiger in order to protect himself. So, Maharaja Jung Jung Bahadur started out on a tiger hunting expedition.*

The Maharaja was thrilled beyond measure when he killed his first tiger. He sent for the State astrologer and showed him the dead beast.

*He was very excited when he killed the first tiger. He called for the state astrologer and showed him the dead tiger.*

"What do you say now?" he demanded.

"Your majesty may kill ninety-nine tigers in exactly the same manner. But..." the astrologer drawled.

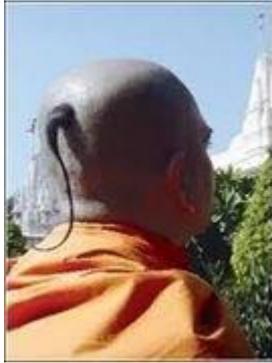
"But what? Speak without fear."

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

"What if the hundredth tiger were also killed?"

*The king asked the astrologer for his comments and The Astrologer replied that the king could kill ninety nine tigers in exactly the same way as he had killed the first one and he stopped speaking. The king encouraged the astrologer to continue without fear. So, the astrologer said that the king had to be very careful with the hundredth Tiger that he hunted. The king asked him that what would happen if he killed the hundredth tiger also.*

"Then I will tear up all my books on astrology, set fire to them, and..."



“And...”

“I shall cut off my tuft, crop my hair short and become an insurance agent,” the astrologer finished on an incoherent note.

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

Incoherent: unclear, confused

*The Astrologer replied that he would tear all his books of astrology and set them on fire. He continued that he shall cut off his hair and would change his profession from an astrologer to an insurance agent as he would not remain a good astrologer any longer.*

### 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 would be confiscated.

Proclamation: a public or official announcement

Fling: throw

Confiscated: taken with authority

*From that day the tigers in Pratibandapuram had a nice time as the kingdom banned tiger hunting by anyone except the Maharaja. No one was allowed to kill a tiger other than the Maharaja himself. The law was so strict that an official announcement was made that if anyone was caught killing a tiger or even throwing a stone at a tiger, his wealth and property would be taken away by the kingdom of Pratibandapuram.*

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.

Ambition: a strong desire to do or achieve something.

*The king of Pratibandapuram took an oath that he would attend to all other matters of the kingdom only after he had killed 100 tigers. In the beginning it seems that he would achieve his target very fast.*

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.

Bare: here, unarmed

*It was not that he feared the tiger. When the king went on his hunting expeditions, he faced danger many times. At times, his Bullet missed its target and the tiger jumped upon him. The king would fight with the tigers barehanded but each time he won and killed the tiger.*

At another time he was in danger of losing his throne. A high-ranking British officer visited Pratibandapuram. He was very fond of hunting tigers. And fonder of being photographed with the tigers he had shot. As usual, he wished to hunt tigers in Pratibandapuram. But the Maharaja was firm in his resolve. He refused permission. "I can organise any other hunt. You may go on a boar hunt. You may conduct a mouse hunt. We are ready for a mosquito hunt. But tiger hunt! That's impossible!"

Firm: determined  
Resolve: decision  
Boar: pig

*The writer tells us another instance when King Jung Jung Bahadur was about to lose his throne. A high ranking British officer visited Pratibandapuram. He was fond of hunting tigers and he wanted to get himself photographed with the dead tigers. He wanted to hunt tigers in Pratibandapuram also but as the Maharaja had banned killing tigers by any other person, he did not give permission to this British official also. He offered him to go on any other hunting like mouse or even a mosquito hunt but he refused to arrange a tiger hunting for this British officer.*

The British officer's secretary sent word to the Maharaja through the dewan that the *durai* himself did not have to kill the tiger. The Maharaja could do the actual killing. What was important to the *durai* was a photograph of himself holding the gun and standing over the tiger's carcass. But the Maharaja would not agree even to this proposal. If he relented now, what would he do if other British officers turned up for tiger hunts?

Durai: tamil word meaning chief or leader  
Carcass: the dead body of an animal.  
Relented: relaxed his decision

*The British official's secretary send a message to the Maharaja that the Durai that is the official himself did not want to kill the tiger. The king could kill the tiger, he only wanted to get himself photographed with the dead body of a tiger. But the king did not agree to this proposal also. He said that if he relaxed his decision and allowed the official to get himself photographed with the dead tiger, then other British officers would also come to Pratibandapuram in order to fulfill their wish of hunting a tiger.*

Because he prevented a British officer from fulfilling his desire, the Maharaja stood in danger of losing his kingdom itself.

The Maharaja and the dewan held deliberations over this issue. As a result, a telegram was despatched forthwith to a famous British company of jewellers in Calcutta. 'Send samples of expensive diamond rings of different designs.'

Deliberations: discussions  
Dispatched: sent

*As the king had refused a British officer from fulfilling his wish, he was in danger of losing his kingdom. The king had discussions with his Minister over this issue. The king sent a telegram to a famous British company of Jewellers based in Calcutta. He asked them to send samples of expensive diamond rings of different designs.*

Some fifty rings arrived. The Maharaja sent the whole lot to the British officer's good lady. The king and the minister expected the *duraisani* to choose one or two rings and send the rest back. Within no time at all the *duraisani* sent her reply: 'Thank you very much for your gifts.'

Duraisani: Tamil word for wife of the chief.

In two days a bill for three lakh of rupees came from the British jewellers. The Maharaja was happy that though he had lost three lakh of rupees, he had managed to retain his kingdom.

*The Jeweller sent fifty rings and the Maharaja sent all of them to the British officer's wife. He wanted to please her in order to make good the damage that he had done by refusing the official from going on a tiger hunt in his kingdom. The king had expected that the British officer's wife would choose one or two*

rings and return the others but she just sent a reply saying thanks for the gifts and she kept all the rings. After two days the British jewelers sent a bill of three lakh rupees for the fifty diamond rings they had sent. The Maharaja was happy that he had saved his kingdom for a sum of three lakh rupees.

#### IV



The Maharaja's tiger hunts continued to be highly successful. Within ten years he was able to kill seventy tigers. And then, an unforeseen hurdle brought his mission to a standstill. The tiger population became extinct in the forests of Pratibandapuram. Who knows whether the tigers practised birth control or committed harakiri? Or simply ran away from the State because they desired to be shot by British hands alone?

Unforeseen: unplanned, accidental

Hurdle: problem

Standstill: stop

Extinct: having no living members.

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

*The king was very successful in his tiger hunting missions. In a span of ten years he had killed seventy tigers. An unplanned problem stopped his mission. The problem was that there were no more tigers in Pratibandapuram. The writer creates humour when he says that maybe the tigers practiced birth control activities and did not produce offsprings or maybe they committed suicide. He also adds that it could be that they ran away from Pratibandapuram because they did not want to be killed by an Indian and on the other hand they want it to be killed by a Britisher.*



One day the Maharaja sent for the dewan. "Dewan saheb, aren't you aware of the fact that thirty tigers still remain to be shot down by this gun of mine?" he asked brandishing his gun.



Brandishing: waving as a threat or in anger or excitement

Shuddering at the sight of the gun, the dewan cried out, "Your Majesty! I am not a tiger!"

Shuddering: tremble with fear

"Which idiot would call you a tiger?"

"No, and I'm not a gun!"

"You are neither tiger nor gun. Dewan saheb, I summoned you here for a different purpose. I have decided to get married."

Summoned: called

*One day the king called his minister and waved his gun towards him. He said that he was yet to kill thirty more tigers. The Minister was scared when he saw the gun and he cried to the king that he was not a tiger as he feared that the king might aim his gun at him. The king said that he was not foolish that he would mistake the minister for a tiger. The Minister was so scared that he added that he was neither a gun. The king said to him that he knew that he was neither a tiger nor a gun but on the other hand, the king had called his minister for another work - the king wanted to get married.*

The dewan began to babble even more. "Your Majesty, I have two wives already. If I marry you ..."

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

"Don't talk nonsense! Why should I marry you? What I want is a tiger..."

"Your Majesty! Please think it over. Your ancestors were married to the sword. If you like, marry the gun. A Tiger King is more than enough for this state. It doesn't need a Tiger Queen as well!"

*The Minister was so confused that he started speaking something in a silly way. He said that the king already had two wives and if the Minister married the king.... the king interrupted the Minister and scolded him for speaking nonsense. He said that he had no reason to marry the Minister and he did not want to marry the Minister. He said that he wanted a tiger so the writer again creates humour when he says that the Minister told the king that he should think over his decision. The minister adds that the king's ancestors were married to the sword and so, if he wanted he could marry the gun. But marrying a tiger and getting a 'Tiger Queen' for the kingdom of Pratibandapuram was not a good thought. He added that a Tiger King was enough for the state and they did not need a Tiger Queen.*

The Maharaja gave a loud crack of laughter. "I'm not thinking of marrying either a tiger or a gun, but a girl from the ranks of human beings. First you may draw up statistics of tiger populations in the different native states. Next you may investigate if there is a girl I can marry in the royal family of a state with a large tiger population."

Investigate: find out

*This was very hilarious and the Maharaja started laughing. He said that he did not want to marry either a tiger or a gun but he wanted to marry a girl from another Kingdom. He asked his minister to make a list of all the kingdoms and the number of tigers they had. Next, the Minister was supposed to find out if there was a girl worth marrying in the royal family of a state which had a large number of tigers.*

The dewan followed his orders. He found the right girl from a state which possessed a large number of tigers.

Maharaja Jung Jung Bahadur killed five or six tigers each time he visited his father-in-law. In this manner, ninety-nine tiger skins adorned the walls of the reception hall in the Pratibandapuram palace.

Adorned: decorated

*The Minister followed the orders and he found the right girl from a state which had a large number of tigers. So every time king Jung Jung Bahadur visited his father-in-law, he would kill five or six tigers in*

*the kingdom. In this manner, the king killed ninety-nine tigers and the skins of the tigers decorated the walls of the lobby hall of the Pratibandapuram palace.*

## V

The Maharaja's anxiety reached a fever pitch when there remained just one tiger to achieve his tally of a hundred.

Fever pitch: extreme

Anxiety: curiosity

Tally: count, total

*As the Maharaja has killed ninety-nine tigers, he was to kill just one more to complete his total of hundred tigers. He became very anxious and curious to kill the hundredth tiger.*

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.

*All through the day and night he kept on dreaming of killing the hundredth tiger. The tiger population in the king's father-in-law's kingdom had also finished. He could not find a single tiger anywhere. The king was very desperate for one single tiger that he could hunt after which he would give up hunting as he would not fear tigers any longer.*

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

Savage: uncontrolled

Wary: be cautious

*He was reminded of the late astrologer's words that he was supposed to be very careful with the hundredth tiger that he hunted and the king agreed that tigers were uncontrolled animals and so he had to be cautious of it. But he was not able to find the hundredth tiger that he could kill. The writer again creates humour by saying that it was easier to find tiger's milk in the kingdom rather than an alive tiger.*

Thus the Maharaja was sunk in gloom. But soon came the happy news which dispelled that gloom. In his own state sheep began to disappear frequently from a hillside village.

Gloom: sadness

Dispelled: removed

It was first ascertained that this was not the work of Khader Mian Saheb or Virasami Naicker, both famed for their ability to swallow sheep whole. Surely, a tiger was at work. The villagers ran to inform the Maharaja. The Maharaja announced a three-year exemption from all taxes for that village and set out on the hunt at once.

Exemption: freedom

*This made the king very sad. His sadness came to an end when he got the news that in a hillside village, sheep was disappearing very fast. There were two people in the kingdom- Khader Mian Sahib and Virasami Naicker who could swallow whole sheep. As this was not their job, so it was calculated that there was a tiger at work. The villagers were very excited and they informed the king about it. The Maharaja was so happy that he exempted the villages from all taxes for three years and set out to hunt this tiger.*

The tiger was not easily found. It seemed as if it had wantonly hid itself in order to flout the Maharaja's will.

Wantonly: carelessly

Flout: to go against something or someone

The Maharaja was equally determined. He refused to leave the forest until the tiger was found. As the days passed, the Maharaja's fury and obstinacy mounted alarmingly. Many officers lost their jobs.

Fury: anger

Obstinacy: firmness

Mounted: increased

*The king could not locate the tiger easily and it seemed as if the tiger was hidden in order to go against the king's desire of killing the tiger. But the king was very determined he did not leave the forest until he would find the tiger. With the passing days he became very angry and was firm to kill the tiger. In his anger he removed many officers from his Kingdom.*

One day when his rage was at its height, the Maharaja called the dewan and ordered him to double the land tax forthwith.

Rage: anger

"The people will become discontented. Then our state too will fall a prey to the Indian National Congress."

Discontented: unhappy

*One day, in his fury he called the Minister and ordered him to increase the land tax to double. He felt that by doing this, the people would become unhappy and his kingdom would become a part of the Indian National Congress.*

"In that case you may resign from your post," said the king.

The dewan went home convinced that if the Maharaja did not find the tiger soon, the results could be catastrophic. He felt life returning to him only when he saw the tiger which had been brought from the People's Park in Madras and kept hidden in his house.

Catastrophic: causing sudden great damage or suffering

*By doing so the Minister would also resign from his post. This was the king's way of threatening the Minister. The Minister realized that the king was very angry and he thought that if the tiger was not found soon, it could lead to destruction. The Minister found that the tiger that had been brought from the People's Park in Madras was hidden in his house, he felt relieved.*

At midnight when the town slept in peace, the dewan and his aged wife dragged the tiger to the car and shoved it into the seat. The dewan himself drove the car straight to the forest where the Maharaja was hunting. When they reached the forest the tiger launched its satyagraha and refused to get out of the car.

The dewan was thoroughly exhausted in his efforts to haul the beast out of the car and push it down to the ground.

Haul: pull or drag with effort or force

*The Minister along with his wife pulled the tiger into his car and drove the car to the forests where the Maharaja was hunting. The tiger did not come out of the car and the Minister had a tough time pushing the tiger out of the car into the forest.*

On the following day, the same old tiger wandered into the Maharaja's presence and stood as if in humble supplication, "Master, what do you command of me?" It was with boundless joy that the Maharaja took careful aim at the beast. The tiger fell in a crumpled heap.

Supplication: pray

*The next day the same tiger was spotted by the Maharaja. He was very happy to see the hundredth tiger and he aimed at the tiger. The tiger fell down as if it had been shot dead by the king. He was overjoyed to have killed the hundredth tiger and had fulfilled his vow.*

“I have killed the hundredth tiger. My vow has been fulfilled,” the Maharaja was overcome with elation.

Ordering the tiger to be brought to the capital in grand procession, the Maharaja hastened away in his car.

Elation: joy

Procession: parade

*The king was happy to have killed the hundredth tiger. He ordered that the tiger should be brought to the capital in a grand procession and went away in his car.*

After the Maharaja left, the hunters went to take a closer look at the tiger. The tiger looked back at them rolling its eyes in bafflement. The men realised that the tiger was not dead; the bullet had missed it. It had fainted from the shock of the bullet whizzing past. The hunters wondered what they should do. They decided that the Maharaja must not come to know that he had missed his target. If he did, they could lose their jobs. One of the hunters took aim from a distance of one foot and shot the tiger. This time he killed it without missing his mark.

Bafflement: confusion

*After the king had left the hunters took a closer look at the tiger and saw that it was alive. They realized that the king's bullet had missed the tiger. The tiger had nearly fainted due to the shock as the bullet had passed close to it. The hunters were confused what to do and so, one of them aimed at the tiger and shot it dead.*

Then, as commanded by the king, the dead tiger was taken in procession through the town and buried. A tomb was erected over it.

*Then the hunters followed the king's orders and took the dead tiger to the town in a procession. It was buried and a beautiful tomb was erected on the tiger's grave.*

A few days later the Maharaja's son's third birthday was celebrated. Until then the Maharaja had given his entire mind over to tiger hunting. He had had no time to spare for the crown prince. But now the king turned his attention to the child. He wished to give him some special gift on his birthday. He went to the shopping centre in Pratibandapuram and searched every shop, but couldn't find anything suitable. Finally he spotted a wooden tiger in a toyshop and decided it was the perfect gift.

*After a few days, the maharaja's son's third birthday was celebrated. Till that time the king had been so engrossed in tiger hunting that he had never spent any time with his family. Now, as he had fulfilled his vow of killing hundred tigers, he gave his attention to his child. King Jung Jung Bahadur wanted to give a special gift to his son on his birthday and so he went to the shopping centre in Pratibandapuram. He searched every shop but could not find any suitable gift for his son. Finally, he saw a wooden tiger in a toy shop and considered it to be the perfect gift.*



The wooden tiger cost only two annas and a quarter. But the shopkeeper knew that if he quoted such a low price to the Maharaja, he would be punished under the rules of the Emergency. So, he said, "Your Majesty, this is an extremely rare example of craftsmanship. A bargain at three hundred rupees!"

Annas: currency used in the olden times. 1 anna = 1/16 rupee.

*The wooden tiger cost only two and a quarter annas but the shopkeeper knew that if he quoted such a low price to the king, he would punish him. So, the shop owner told the king that the wooden tiger was a perfect example of craftsmanship and that it cost a mere three hundred rupees.*

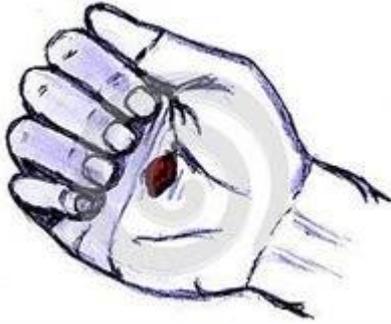
"Very good. Let this be your offering to the crown prince on his birthday," said the king and took it away with him. On that day father and son played with that tiny little wooden tiger. It had been carved by an unskilled carpenter. Its surface was rough; tiny slivers of wood stood up like quills all over it. One of those slivers pierced the Maharaja's right hand. He pulled it out with his left hand and continued to play with the prince.



Slivers: shavings

*The king was very happy and he said that this was the shop owner's gift to the Crown Prince. He took the tiger with him. The king and his son played with the wooden tiger. The tiger had been made by an unskilled carpenter and it had tiny shavings of wood pricking out of it. One of the shavings pierced the maharaja's right hand. The Maharaja pulled it out and continue to play with the prince.*

The next day, infection flared in the Maharaja's right hand. In four days, it developed into a suppurating sore which spread all over the arm.



Suppurating: a wound full of pus  
Sore: painful inflammation

*The next day, there was a lot of infection in the maharaja's right hand due to that shaving of wood that had pricked his hand. In a period of four days, the infection turned into a wound full of pus and spread all over the king's right arm.*

Three famous surgeons were brought in from Madras. After holding a consultation they decided to operate. The operation took place.

The three surgeons who performed it came out of the theatre and announced, "The operation was successful. The Maharaja is dead."

In this manner the hundredth tiger took its final revenge upon the Tiger King.

*Three famous surgeons were called from Madras and they decided to operate upon the king. After the operation the surgeons came out of the theater and said that the operation was successful and the Maharaja was dead.*

*Here the surgeons' words are contradictory because if the king died, it meant that the operation was unsuccessful whereas they said that it was successful. Actually, they were supporting the words of the astrologer. The wooden tiger was the hundredth tiger that had killed the king Jung Jung Bahadur and thus, made the astrologer's prediction true. So, in this manner the hundredth tiger took revenge upon the tiger king and killed him.*

### **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.

### Question and answers -

1. The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. How does the author employ the literary device of dramatic irony in the story?

A. The king was full of pride. He thought he could achieve anything, even overpower death. He tried to prove the predictions of the royal astrologer as false. He had predicted death for the king by a tiger. As the king killed one, he cautioned him against the hundredth tiger that he came across.

Ironically, the king killed the hundredth tiger also and overpowered death but as it was destined to be, the tiger escaped the bullet miraculously. He had killed ferocious tigers of flesh and blood but his satirical death came by a wooden toy tiger which he had got as a birthday gift for his son. A tiny piece of wood from the toy wounded the tiger king's hand and finally killed him. This was an unexpected end of the mighty maharaja 'the tiger king'.

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

A. The author is indicating that the king being mighty, killed so many innocent animals merely to prove the astrologer wrong or to overcome his fear without realizing the severity of his actions. He did not accept destiny which has its own ways as death struck upon him by a lifeless, wooden tiger.

3. 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? Do we find a similarity in today's political order?

A. The king's minions feared him and tried to please him. They wanted to keep him happy and so, spoke what was pleasing to the king's ears.

The astrologer was initially reluctant to predict the king's future. It was when the king asked him 'to speak without fear' that he spoke.

The minister did not advise the king not to kill so many innocent animals; rather he searched for a kingdom with a high population of tigers for the king to kill.

The royal hunters did not inform the king about the hundredth tiger being alive as they feared losing their job.

The shopkeeper sold the toy tiger to the king at a high price because he feared punishment.

In today's political order also, we can see that the people who are in subordination try to please their seniors in order to retain their positions.



