

# **GURU GOBIND SINGH PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHAS**

## **e-content & weekly assignment, Week 5**

**Class XII**

**English**

---

### **2.The Tiger King**

**By- Kalki**

#### **About the Author:**

Kalki Krishnamurthy (1899 —1954), better known by his pen name Kalki, was a Tamil writer, journalist, poet, critic and Indian independence activist. His writings include over 120 short stories, 10 novelettes, 5 novels, 3 historical romances, editorial and political writings, biographies, travelogues and hundreds of film and music reviews. Kalki has the skill to take the reader into the times of the story.

#### **Theme / Central Idea of the Lesson:**

The Tiger King' is a story about the transience of life and power. It is 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. Most of the people, who surround these powerful people, are also interested in taking advantage of the proximity for their own welfare.

#### **Appropriateness of Title:**

"The Tiger King" is a very appropriate title for the story for several reasons. First of all, the king is crazy about tiger hunting and he marries a princess whose father's kingdom has a sizeable tiger population. He kills one hundred tigers just to fulfil his vow. Secondly, the king with all his frenzy, anger and ruthlessness is as ferocious as a tiger. Thirdly, he dies of a sliver prick received from a wooden toy tiger. The prediction that a tiger would cause the king's death also comes true. Since the story revolves around the king and the hundred tigers that he kills, it could not be better titled than "The Tiger King".

#### **Moral/ Message of the lesson**

Through this satirical story, the author has rightly portrayed how human beings have subjected innocent animals to untold torture and death, merely to fulfil their own whims and fancies. The Maharaja's indiscriminate killing of tigers led to their extinction in some states, but the Maharaja was oblivious of the grave consequences his action was leading to. The author strikes home the message that the ruler's primary duty should be the welfare of the citizens.

#### **Important Themes:**

- 1.Satire on the conceit of those in power.
- 2.A comment on politicians who put personal gratification, fulfilment of their own whims and fancies above the good of the masses or even good governance.
3. Pride has a fall, self-destructive nature of man.

4.The need for conservation of wildlife.

#### **Character sketch of the tiger king:**

1. Self-centred (decides to deal with matters of the state only when the threat to his life is removed and the 100 tigers are killed).

2.Egoistic (he thinks he can challenge fate, the astrologers and hunt down all the tigers, gloats when he feels he's succeeded by buying the wooden tiger as a present for his son; likes flatterers, fires anyone who disobeys his orders.

3.Whimsical and irrational (three-year exemption from all taxes, doubles the land tax according to his changing moods).

The Tiger King is a typical royal personality. He was born into a royal family and grew up into a strong young man who at the age of 20 was crowned to be the king of Pratibandapuram. At this time, he came to know about a prophecy relating to his death to be caused by a tiger. He decided to kill all the 100 tigers before a tiger could dare to kill him.

The Tiger King symbolises a ruler having power and authority but none of it is directed to the welfare of the state. He behaves like a dictator and his ministers bow before him in mortal fear. They become a party to his ruthless killing of tigers. He is whimsical and goes to extremes. For example, when he is happy, there are processions, exemption of taxes, etc. but when he is angry, taxes are doubled, punishments become severe. The entire state machinery is misused and manipulated in his pursuit of killing tigers. Tiger King seems to be crazy, eccentric and inhumane. He starts killing tigers just to prove the prediction wrong. Though he exhibits his valour by killing tigers, he is very coward at heart and is scared of death.

**Character sketch of Dewan:** The Dewan is a senior courtier but, in reality, holds no authority. He is very scared of the Tiger King and survives at his mercy. Though he is sensible and experienced but is never listened to or given any respect by the king. His practical knowledge helped the king to save his kingdom. When the tiger king refused the British officer to hunt the tiger, it was Dewan's idea of gifting diamond rings to his wife to save the kingdom from the wrath of the British officer.

Dewan's efforts to locate and present the hundredth tiger are very comical. When he got an ultimatum from the King, he brought an old tiger from the circus and placed it in the forest. The Tiger King shoots this tiger and gets the satisfaction of killing the hundredth tiger. Though at times, Dewan appears to be foolish, he is practical enough to save himself.

#### **Chapter Summary:**

'The Tiger King' describes the Maharaja Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur of Pratibandapuram. When the king was just 10 days old, astrologers predicted that he would be killed by a tiger. At this, the 10 days old prince, for a surprise to all, uttered, 'Let tigers beware!'. The child grew like any other royal child, drinking the milk of a white cow looked after by an English nanny and watching English movies.

At the age of 20, he was crowned as the king and came to know about the prediction relating to his death. From then, he started killing tigers and banned the tiger hunt by any other person in the state. As

per the astrologer he needed to be careful with the hundredth tiger even if he had killed ninety-nine tigers.

Once a high ranking British officer visited his state and wanted to go for tiger hunting. But his wish was declined and in order to secure his state from the wrath of the British officer, the Maharaja sent 50 diamond rings worth Rs3 lakh to the officer's wife.

The Maharaja killed seventy tigers in ten years and there was no tiger left in Pratibandapuram. In order to achieve his target of killing a hundred tigers, the Maharaja decided to marry a girl from a royal state which had more tigers to complete his target. Every time, when he used to visit his in-laws, he used to kill 5-6 tigers. In this way, he could kill ninety-nine tigers but couldn't find the hundredth tiger. The Maharaja got furious for not finding the hundredth tiger and threatened the Dewan who in order to save himself got an old tiger from the circus and with great difficulty placed it in the forest.

The Maharaja shot this tiger and felt happy and victorious. But, in fact, the bullet did not hit the tiger. The tiger collapsed out of fear. But none of the staff wanted to take the risk of telling the truth to the Maharaja. So they killed it and brought it in a grand procession.

Finally, Tiger King was happy and satisfied. On the third birthday of his son, he bought a wooden tiger for his as a gift. This was so poorly carved that while playing with it, a tiny sliver of the wood pierced the king's apt hand which later on developed an infection. He was operated upon and during this, he died. Thus, ironically the hundredth tiger, i.e. the wooden tiger, took its revenge and killed the tiger king.

### ASSIGNMENT

#### Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What did the astrologers predict about the child when he was born?
2. What was the miracle that happened when the astrologers predicted about the death of the born child?
3. What was the reply of the astrologer, when the Tiger King asked the astrologer what he would do if the hundredth tiger were killed?
4. What did the Maharaja do to realize his ambition of killing a hundred tigers?
5. Why did the Maharaja and dewan do to avoid the danger of losing the throne?
6. Why did the Maharaja not agree to the proposal of the British officer's secretary?
7. Why did the Maharaja decide to marry a girl of the royal family from a neighbouring state?
8. How does the author satirize the upbringing and education of crown princes of Indian States?
9. How did the Maharaja get the name 'Tiger King'?
10. How did the Dewan manage to get the 100th tiger for the Maharaja?
11. How did the Tiger King become the victim of the hundredth tiger?

#### Long Answer Type Questions:

1. The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. Discuss.
2. How did the Tiger King meet his end? What is ironical about his death?
3. How did the Tiger King achieve his target of killing a hundred tigers?

4. The story 'Tiger King' gives a strong message to preserve wildlife. It is the callous attitude of those in power to plunder natural resources which have led to the miserable condition of Mother Earth. Discuss.