

The Tiger King - Kalki.

Class 12 - Vistas Ch 2 - Kalki (1899-1954)

Setting

Fictional princely state - Pratibandapuram ;
pre-Independence south India .

Bride's state = also tiger-plentiful .

Author note

R. Krishnamurthy , pen-name 'Kalki' .

Tamil journalist + novelist .

Wrote Ponniyin Selvan ; Sivakamiyin Sapatham.

Five-word anchor

PROPHECY -> HUNT -> COUNT -> TOY -> SPLINTER

Birth prophecy of death-by-tiger ; vow
to kill 100 tigers ; staged hundredth ;
wooden toy tiger ; septic splinter wound .

Full royal title

Jamedar-General Jung Jung Bahadur .

English upbringing : English cow , nanny ,
tutor + English films .

Plot - Five Beats

Scene 1 - Prophecy

Infant : 'Let tigers beware!'

Astrologers : he will die by a tiger .

Vow : kill 100 tigers to defy fate .

Scene 2 - Hunt to 70

Bans hunting by others ; kills 70 in

Pratibandapuram ; runs out of tigers .

Scene 3 - Marriage (+29)

Marries princess of tiger-plentiful state ;

kills 29 more ; $70 + 29 = 99$ total .

Scene 4 - Hundredth (staged)

Diwan + his aged wife haul a half-starved tiger from People's Park , Madras , at night .

Maharaja's bullet only stuns / misses it .

Attendant quietly finishes the tiger .

Maharaja never learns the truth .

Scene 5 - Wooden toy

Birthday gift - cost two annas + a quarter ;

shopkeeper inflates price to Rs 300 .

Splinter -> septic wound -> Maharaja dies .

Character - the Maharaja

Protagonist + main object of satire .

Four-marker arc

- (i) PRIDE - infant's bravado .
- (ii) OBSESSION - hundred-tiger vow .
- (iii) SELF-DECEPTION - hundredth tiger presumed dead by his own shot .
- (iv) DEFEAT BY SMALL INSTRUMENT - wooden toy + splinter .

Key traits

- * Brave-as-bravado .
- * Driven by superstition + horoscope .
- * Authoritarian - bans others from hunt .
- * Self-deluded - never learns truth .
- * Reared as 'English' - cow , nanny , tutor .

Famous childhood scene

At 10 days old , astrologers warn :

'death will come from a tiger' .

Infant prince replies (in adult Tamil) :

'Let tigers beware!' - the chapter's

opening dramatic joke .

Diwan + British Officer

The Diwan - comic foil

Terrified of Maharaja - will do anything .

Arranges :

- marriage to tiger-plentiful state
- hauls People's Park tiger at midnight in a bullock cart with his aged wife
- hides the silent-kill truth

Survivor of court culture - NOT a villain .

British Officer - colonial foil

High-ranking officer asks for a photograph with a dead tiger .

Maharaja refuses (citing prophecy) .

Sends 3 dozen expensive diamond rings to the officer's wife to smooth things over ; she keeps all 3 dozen . Cost = Rs 3 lakh .

Caricatures

(a) colonial taxidermy / hunting fashion .

(b) princely gift culture + sycophancy .

(c) Maharaja's wealth wasted on flattery , not on his own subjects .

Themes (4)

(a) **SATIRE** on royal arrogance -
 central theme . Pride mocked by
 the smallness of the toy that defeats it .
 Kalki calls it 'tuberculosis of vanity' .

(b) **ANIMAL CRUELTY + CONSERVATION** -
 99 real tigers killed for a horoscope .
 Pre-Project Tiger conservation argument .

(c) **FATE vs FREE WILL** -
 Effort to defy fate IS the mechanism
 by which fate fulfils itself .
 Dramatic irony throughout .

(d) **SYCOPHANCY + COURT CULTURE** -
 Diwan's terror , attendants' lies ,
 British officer's gift cycle .
 Sycophancy = system , not a flaw .

Tone + technique

Mock-heroic narrator , deadpan delivery ,
 hyperbole + dramatic irony throughout .

Key Quotations

1. 'Let tigers beware!' - the infant
(chapter's opening dramatic joke) .
2. 'Tigers were also so terrified of
the Maharaja that they ceased to
exist .' - the mock-heroic narrator .
3. 'The wounded animal had only fainted ;
one of the attendants quietly took
aim and shot it dead .' - the lie
that preserves royal pride .
4. 'A tiny little wooden splinter had
pierced the Maharaja's right hand .' -
prophecy fulfilled (Ch climax) .
5. 'The operation was successful . The
Maharaja is dead .' - deadpan exit ,
the chapter's last line of satire .
6. 'In any case , I will kill the
hundredth tiger myself .' - the vow
that drives the whole hunt .

PYQ + Mistakes

PYQ Map

- 2025 - Satire on royal arrogance (Q1)
- 2024 - Senseless slaughter of animals (Q2)
- 2023 - Yes-man culture / minions (Q3)
- 2022 - Modern game-hunting parallels (Q4)
- 2021 - Humorous / ironic eye (Q6)

Common Mistakes

- X Praising Maharaja's bravery .
- X Saying he killed the 100th himself - attendant did , not the Maharaja .
- X Calling the toy tiger 'an accident' - it is dramatic irony , not chance .
- X Confusing the Diwan with a villain .
- X Wrong toy price - it is two annas + a quarter , inflated to Rs 300 .
- X Wrong tiger count - 70 in own state + 29 in bride's state = 99 ; 100th = toy .
- X Saying 100th came from 'a zoo' - source is People's Park , Madras .
- X Skipping the conservation reading .

Value Points + Recall

Indian extensions

- * Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- * Project Tiger, 1973 - Jim Corbett NP.
- * Art 51A(g) - fundamental duty to protect wildlife.
- * Tiger doubling 2006 - 2022.

Modern parallels

- * Cecil the Lion (Zimbabwe, 2015).
- * Canned hunting, southern Africa.
- * Indian tiger / rhino poaching.
- * US hunting leases on private land.
- * Trophy fishing tournaments.
- * Exotic-pet black market.

1-mark MCQs

- Q. Author ? - Kalki Krishnamurthy
- Q. State name ? - Pratibandapuram
- Q. Toy real cost ? - 2 + 1/4 annas
- Q. Toy inflated price ? - Rs 300
- Q. 100th tiger source ? - People's Park
- Q. Tigers killed in own state ? - 70
- Q. Tigers killed in bride's state ? - 29
- Q. Surgeons sent for ? - Madras (3)