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## The Tiger King Introduction

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The story "The Tiger King" by Kalki is a satirical tale that mocks the arrogance and willfulness of autocratic rulers. Set in the days of eccentric kings under British rule, it highlights their fear of the British and their self-centered pursuits. Kalki adds a supernatural element to create mystery, as the king disbelieves an astrologer's prophecy about his death, which ultimately comes true through a wooden tiger, the hundredth tiger he was destined to kill.

The story criticizes rulers who neglect their duties and indulge in foolish activities, while those around them exploit their power for personal gain. It reflects on the transient nature of life and power, emphasizing the proverb "Too many slips between a cup and a lip." The narrative also advocates for the protection of tigers, condemning human cruelty towards innocent animals.

### Themes

- Satire on the conceit and arrogance of those in power.
- Criticism of neglectful and selfish rulers.
- Protection of wildlife, especially tigers.
- The inevitability of fate and destiny.

## Title Significance

The title "The Tiger King" is apt because the king is obsessed with tiger hunting, marries into a family with a large tiger population, and kills ninety-nine tigers. His ferocity and ruthlessness liken him to a tiger. Ironically, he dies from a wooden toy tiger, fulfilling the prophecy that a tiger would cause his death.

## Message

The story conveys that obsession and loss of self-control lead to self-destruction. It also teaches that destiny is unchangeable, regardless of one's actions.

## Irony and Satire

The story is rich in irony, especially dramatic irony where the king is unaware that he missed killing the hundredth tiger, while others foresee his doom. His pride and attempts to defy fate ironically bring about his downfall. The king's grand titles and ferocity contrast sharply with his death by a wooden toy tiger, symbolizing nature's revenge.

Satire is used to expose the follies of autocratic rulers who exploit nature and their subjects. Examples include the king's disbelief in the prophecy, the absurdity of the surgeons declaring a successful operation despite his death, and the corrupt influence of power on the king and his subjects.

## Light Humour

- The mention of a Stuka bomber.
- The king's offer of a mouse hunt.
- The incoherent speeches of the Dewan and Chief Astrologer.
- The stubborn old tiger refusing to leave the car.
- The shopkeeper's exaggerated price for a cheap toy tiger.

# The Tiger King Summary

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The Tiger King, Jilani Jung Bahadur, is born under a star that foretells his death by a tiger. At ten days old, he astonishingly speaks about death and his fate. The chief astrologer predicts he will kill ninety-nine tigers but must beware the hundredth.

The king bans tiger hunting except for himself and embarks on a mission to kill tigers. Despite challenges, including a near attack by a tiger and political obstacles, he kills seventy tigers in ten years. To find more tigers, he marries a princess from a tiger-rich kingdom and kills more tigers, reaching ninety-nine.

With only one tiger left, the king becomes anxious. Unable to find a wild tiger, a tiger is brought from a park and shot by the king, who believes he has killed the hundredth tiger. However, the tiger was not dead, and a hunter kills it secretly to protect the king's pride.

On his son's third birthday, the king gifts him a wooden tiger. While playing, a splinter from the toy pierces his hand, causing a fatal infection. Despite surgery, the king dies, fulfilling the prophecy that the hundredth tiger would cause his death.

## Key Terms

- **Autocratic:** A ruler with absolute power.
- **Invincible:** Incapable of being defeated or overcome.
- **Innumerable:** Too many to be counted.
- **Suppurating:** Undergoing the formation of pus; festering.

## Practice Set

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### Level 1 – Easy

- Who is the protagonist of "The Tiger King"?

- What prophecy did the astrologer make about the king?
- Why did the king marry a princess from a tiger-rich kingdom?

## Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the irony behind the king's death.
- How does the story criticize the misuse of power?
- Describe the role of superstition in the story.

## Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the theme of fate versus free will in "The Tiger King."
- Discuss how Kalki uses satire to convey his message.
- Examine the significance of the wooden tiger in the story.

## Answer Key

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### Level 1 – Easy

- The protagonist is Maharaja Jilani Jung Bahadur, the Tiger King.
- The astrologer predicted that the king would have to kill ninety-nine tigers and that the hundredth tiger would cause his death.
- The king married a princess from a tiger-rich kingdom to have access to more tigers to hunt and fulfill his vow.

### Level 2 – Moderate

- The king dies from an infection caused by a splinter from a wooden toy tiger, fulfilling the prophecy in an unexpected and ironic way.
- The story shows how the king abuses his power by neglecting his duties, imposing taxes arbitrarily, and exploiting his subjects.

- Superstition drives the king's actions, as he tries to avoid the prophecy but ends up fulfilling it.

## Level 3 – Challenging

- The story contrasts fate and free will by showing the king's attempts to change his destiny, which ultimately fail, suggesting fate is inevitable.
- Kalki uses satire through irony, humor, and exaggeration to criticize autocratic rulers and their follies.
- The wooden tiger symbolizes the inevitability of fate and nature's revenge, being the instrument of the king's death despite his efforts to avoid it.

## Quick Reference

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- **Author:** Kalki
- **Genre:** Satire, Short Story
- **Main Character:** Maharaja Jilani Jung Bahadur (Tiger King)
- **Setting:** Pratibandapuram State
- **Theme:** Arrogance of power, fate, protection of wildlife
- **Literary Devices:** Irony, satire, humor

## Glossary

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- **Autocratic:** Having unlimited power; absolute rule.
- **Satire:** Use of humor, irony, or exaggeration to criticize.
- **Prophecy:** A prediction of the future.
- **Irony:** A contrast between expectation and reality.
- **Suppurating:** Forming pus; infected.