

THE TIGER KING



- **Kalki** (Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy)
(1899–1954)

Callous attitude towards innocent wildlife

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THE TIGER KING

- **Kalki** (Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy)
(1899 –1954)

About the Author :

Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy, better known by his pen name **Kalki**, was an Indian writer, journalist, poet, critic and Indian independence activist. He was named after 'Kalki', the tenth and last avatar of the Hindu God Vishnu. He was a prolific writer. His writings include over 120 short stories, 10 novellas, 5 novels, 3 historical romances, editorial and political writings and hundreds of film and music reviews. Kalki received the Sangeetha Kalasikhamani award conferred on him by The Indian Fine Arts Society in 1953. A postage stamp was released in honour of Kalki.





THE TIGER KING

Prelude

What is the general attitude of human beings towards wild animals?



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 TIGER KING

The story is a blend of

Humour

Satire

&

Irony



THE TIGER KING

Background of the story

The story 'The Tiger King' is a satire on the pride and stubbornness of those in power. The writer takes us to the days of autocratic and eccentric kings. These kings lived under the thumb rule of the British. Most of the time the rulers were not interested in serving the people and working for the welfare of the public; instead they spent their time in foolish pursuits. They flouted all laws and bent them to suit their selfish interests. The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram tried to belie what was written in his fate. The chief astrologer had predicted that the cause of his death would be a tiger. So he started killing tigers. His campaign of tiger-hunting was very successful. All his strategies worked till he killed ninety nine tigers. But the hundredth tiger eluded him till his death. The hero who killed ninety nine tigers couldn't kill the last one. The last tiger he thought to be dead survived. The King's bullet had missed its mark. Ironically, the hundredth tiger which caused his death was not a ferocious beast of blood and flesh. It was a wooden tiger. One of the slivers of wood pierced his right hand and caused infection and a suppurating sore. It ultimately led to his death.



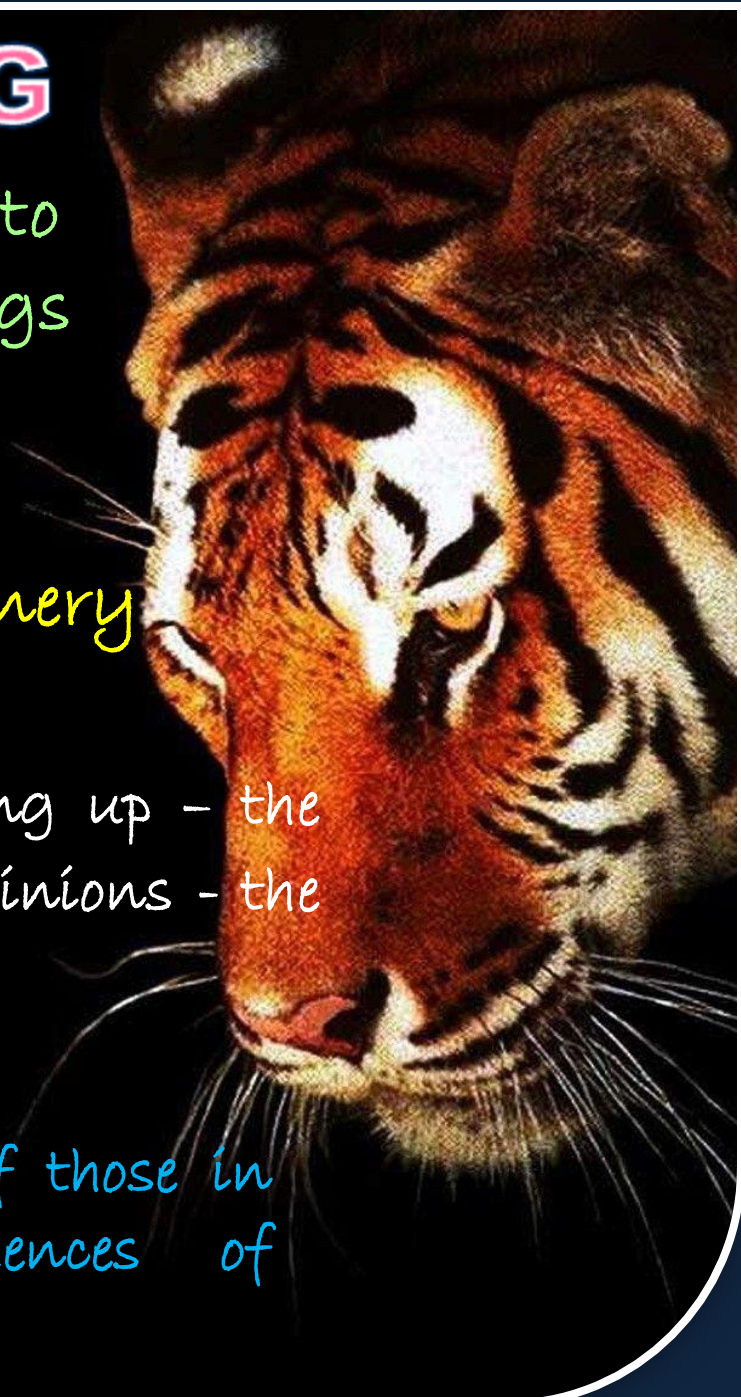
THE TIGER KING

Theme: Ecological imbalance due to wilfulness of human beings

Sub-Theme: Abuse of power & administrative machinery

Plot: King's birth - phase of growing up - the mission - saving the throne - role of minions - the death - the irony

The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. It emphasises the consequences of selfishness and vanity of human pride.



THE TIGER KING

CHARACTERS :

The Tiger King : Protagonist, Maharaja of Pratibandhpuram, known 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.

Chief Astrologer : a royal foreteller of the state

Dewan : the chief administrative office of the Maharaja

Durai : means “chief, leader” in Tamil, high-rank British officer

Duraisani : the wife of the British officer, a greedy woman who takes all the 50 diamond rings from the king

Villagers : greedy





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SUMMARY

'The Tiger King' is a story of an arrogant King who disproved the prophecy of the astrologer, but destiny proved to be powerful and the prediction which was made when the king was ten days old comes out to be true. The Maharaja Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur was called "Tiger King". When he was just ten days old, he asked intelligent questions to the astrologers and was told that he would be killed by a tiger. He uttered "Let tigers beware!" No other miracle took place, the child grew like any other royal child drinking white cow's milk, taught by an English tutor, looked after by an English nanny and watched English films. When he turned twenty, he was crowned as the king. It was then the prediction of his death by the tiger reached the Maharaja's ear and he, in turn to safeguard himself, killed a tiger and being thrilled he apprised the astrologer of it. The astrologer replied that he could kill ninety nine tigers but should be careful with the hundredth tiger. From then on, the king started killing tiger and none was allowed to hunt tigers. A high-ranking British officer visited the state. He was fond of hunting tiger but his wish was declined. The officer requested for getting a photograph with a tiger killed by Maharaja but this request too was rejected.



THE TIGER KING



SUMMARY

So, to please the officer's wife he sent fifty diamond rings expecting that she would take one or two; instead she kept all the rings costing three lakh rupees and sent a 'thanks' note to the Maharaja who was happy as state was secured. In ten years, he killed seventy tigers and didn't find any in his own state. So he decided to marry a girl from a royal state which had more tigers to accomplish his target. Whenever he visited his in-laws, he killed tigers. Thus, he killed ninety nine tigers and was feverishly anxious to kill the hundredth but struggled to find it. One day, news about the presence of a tiger near a village proved disappointing. Now the Dewan was warned of this danger so he visited 'People's Park in Madras' and brought an old tiger and placed it in the forest. The Maharaja shot the tiger and left the place with great triumph. However, the bullet did not hit the tiger but it collapsed out of fear. Finally, the staff killed the tiger and carried it to the capital in a grand procession. It was the third birthday of the Maharaja's son and he wanted to buy a present from a toy shop. He bought a wooden tiger which was poorly carved. While playing with the prince, a tiny sliver of the wooden tiger pierced Maharaja's right hand. Later it developed into an infection. Three surgeons performed a surgery but the king died.



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Key-Points & Sequence

The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram

1

- hero of the story
- Identified as His High Highness Jamedar General
- given many other titles
- But Maharaja's name shortened to the 'Tiger King'
- the author humorously says that the tiger king would have to die
- the newly born prince is destined to be the warrior of the warriors and hero of the heroes
- the astrologers predict that one day he will meet his death

A strange happening

- Ten-day old prince speaks and addresses the astrologers
- tells the prophets "all those who are born will one day have to die"
- ridicules their prediction
- asks them to reveal the manner of his death

- astrologer tells him that his death will come from a tiger because he is born in the hour of the Bull and the Bull and the tiger are enemies

2

- the prince arrogantly says, "Let tigers beware"

Upbringing of the Crown Prince and his coronation

- the crown prince brought up like all other princes in India
- given milk of an English cow, brought by an English nanny and tutored in English by an Englishman
- the prince watched English films
- was crowned at the age of twenty

Astrologer's prediction

- everyone talks about astrologer's prediction
- the Maharaja comes to know about it
- the Maharaja kills the first tiger
- thrilled and excited
- arrogantly tells the astrologer about the killing



THE TIGER KING

Key-Points & Sequence



Astrologer reiterates his prediction **3**

- astrologer tells the Maharaja that no harm will come to him till the killing of ninety nine tigers ;
- advises him to be very careful with the hundredth tiger
- tells him that if the king succeeds in killing the hundredth tiger, he will destroy his books on astrology and cut his hair short

King's mission of killing hundred tigers

- tiger killing banned in state
- only the Maharaja will kill tigers
- proclaimed that the defaulter's property would be confiscated
- does not attend to any other matter of the state
- tiger-killing is his main mission
- faces many dangers
- sometimes successfully fights the beasts bare-handed

A British Officer's Visit **4**

- a British officer visits Pratibandapuram
- fond of hunting tigers
- fond of being photographed with the tiger he had shot
- wishes to hunt tigers in Pratibandapuram
- the Maharaja refuses permission
- even the officer's request to be photographed with a tiger killed by Maharaja turned down
- refuses permission because he thinks that other officers would turn up for tiger-hunts

The King's dilemma

- refuses permission to British officer ; afraid of losing his kingdom
- Maharaja and the Dewan hold consultations
- decide to bribe the officer by sending expensive diamond rings to the officer's wife



THE TIGER KING

Key-Points & Sequence



- Maharaja sends fifty rings and expects that the officer's wife will select one or two **5**
- the greedy lady keeps all the rings and sends 'thanks' to the Maharaja
- the Maharaja pays three lakh of rupees for the rings but saves his kingdom

The tiger-hunt continues

- kills seventy tigers in ten years
- tiger population becomes extinct in the forests of the kingdom
- Maharaja tells the Dewan that thirty tigers still remain to be killed
- wishes to marry a princess
- asks the Dewan to find a suitable princess in the neighbouring kingdom with a large tiger population

The Dewan obeys the order

- finds the right girl
- Maharaja marries the girl

- kills five or six tigers each time he visits his father-in-law **6**
- succeeds in killing ninety-nine tigers
- ninety-nine tiger skins adorn the reception hall of the palace

Maharaja's anxiety to kill the 100th tiger

- Maharaja anxious to kill the 100th tiger
- tiger farms run dry even in his father-in-law's kingdom
- remembers astrologer's warning, "Maharaja should beware of the hundredth tiger"
- decides to give up hunting after completing the target

Maharaja disturbed at not finding the hundredth tiger

- Maharaja informed that there was a tiger near a village
- gives exemption from all taxes to the village
- sets out on the hunt at once
- unable to locate the tiger



THE TIGER KING

Key-Points & Sequence



- gets angry and terminates the services of many officers **7**
- calls the Dewan and asks him to punish the villagers by doubling the land tax
- Dewan warns him of the dangers involved in it

Dewan plans to bring the 100th tiger

- king angry ; asks Dewan to find the 100th tiger or resign
- Dewan gets worried and upset
- thinks of the tiger brought from the People's Park in Madras and kept hidden in his house
- plans to take this tiger to the forest
- Dewan and his aged wife drag the tiger into the car
- drives the car straight to the forest where the king is hunting
- initially the tiger refuses to get out of the car

- then the tiger wanders into the Maharaja's presence
- the tiger shot at, and falls down **8**
- the elated king orders the staff to bring the tiger to the capital in a grand procession

The hundredth tiger not dead

- the weak tiger has actually fainted from the shock of the bullet-shot
- the tiger wakes up
- the hunters present there do not know what to do
- afraid of telling the king that he has missed the target
- so they kill the tiger and take back the dead tiger to the capital in a procession
- the tiger is buried and tomb erected over it

Maharaja's birthday gift for his three year old son

- Maharaja relieved after killing the hundredth tiger



THE TIGER KING



Key-Points & Sequence

- pays his attention to his son
- celebrates his son's third birthday **9**
- buys a wooden tiger from a toyshop and presents it to his son
- the toy tiger is carved by an unskilled carpenter
- it has rough surface and tiny slivers of wood stand up like quills all over it
- The Maharaja plays with his son and gets hurt when a tiny sliver pierces the Maharaja's right hand
- pulls it out with his left hand and ignores the injury

Astrologer's prediction proves true

- infection flares in Maharaja's right hand
- pus spreads all over the arm
- three famous surgeons summoned from Madras
- surgeons perform operation but fail to save the king's life
- the hundredth tiger takes its final revenge upon the Tiger King.

Vocabulary

<i>strategic</i>	= done as a part of a plan that is meant to achieve a particular purpose
<i>vital</i>	= necessary or essential
<i>imperative</i>	= very important, vital
<i>indomitable</i>	= not willing to accept defeat
<i>abode</i>	= place where somebody lives
<i>foretold</i>	= predicted
<i>stupefaction</i>	= state of being surprised
<i>enunciated</i>	= said or pronounced words clearly
<i>squeaky voice</i>	= short high sound voice
<i>The Bull</i>	= Taurus, the second sign of the Zodiac
<i>The Tiger</i>	= Leo, the fifth sign of the Zodiac
<i>quake</i>	= tremble
<i>rife</i>	= widespread
<i>hindsight</i>	= the understanding that you have of a situation only after it has happened
<i>drawled</i>	= spoke slowly
<i>tuft</i>	= bunch of hair



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Vocabulary

<i>incoherent</i>	= unintelligible
<i>confiscated</i>	= seized
<i>durai</i>	= (here) it refers to the British lords
<i>duraisani</i>	= (here) it refers to the wife of the British officer
<i>carcass</i>	= dead body
<i>relented</i>	= gave in
<i>deliberations</i>	= the process of discussing something
<i>harakiri</i>	= the act of killing yourself by cutting open your stomach with a sword
<i>brandishing</i>	= holding or waving
<i>shuddering</i>	= trembling
<i>babble</i>	= talk in a confused way
<i>fever pitch</i>	= excitement

<i>wary</i>	= careful, cautious
<i>dispelled</i>	= removed
<i>wantonly</i>	= causing harm or damage deliberately
<i>rage</i>	= anger
<i>shoved</i>	= pushed in a rough way
<i>haul</i>	= to pull with a lot of efforts
<i>crumpled</i>	= fell down in an uncontrolled manner, collapsed
<i>supplication</i>	= prayer, humble request
<i>elation</i>	= feeling of great happiness and excitement
<i>bafflement</i>	= confusion
<i>quills</i>	= long sharp stiff spines
<i>suppurating sore</i>	= wound containing pus



THE TIGER KING



CHARACTERS SKETCH

The Tiger King

The Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, known as the Tiger King, is an intelligent and determined king. His intelligent questions, when he is just an infant of ten days, come as a miracle to the astrologers. When he grows up, he takes a vow to kill hundred tigers to escape the predicted death from a tiger. He is callous and inhuman towards the wild animals. In order to escape death he starts a massive tiger hunt. He kills ninety-nine tigers, and almost wipes out the entire population in the forests of his kingdom and the nearby area. He is moody and whimsical. At one time, he needs one tiger to kill to fulfill his vow. When some villagers inform him about a tiger, he gets elated. He announces a three year exemption from all taxes for their village but when he finds no tiger there, he becomes furious and asks his Dewan to double the land tax forthwith. He is quite tactful and clever and can handle the situation cleverly. He refuses permission for the tiger hunt to a British officer. In order to save his kingdom from the possible risk, he sends in expensive diamond rings to the officer's wife. When tigers become extinct in his own kingdom, he marries the princess of a state with a large tiger population. He is too eccentric and a selfish individual who tried to defy death and overlooked the welfare of his state till he accomplished his mission. But in spite of his cleverness and tactfulness, he fails to evade his death. He falls a prey not to a real tiger but to a tiny, wooden tiger.



THE TIGER KING

CHARACTERS SKETCH



The Dewan

The dewan who holds the seniormost position in the kingdom wields no authority. He is at the mercy of the king. He is the most fearful of the Maharaja's employees. He loses his balance of mind, and begins to babble when the Maharaja asks him something, brandishing his gun. He comes easily under pressure. In order to placate the king, he arranges for the ultimate kill by bringing a harmless tiger from a zoo in Madras. But the dewan is an intelligent and a wise person too. Whenever the king faces a difficult situation, he comes to his help. When the king refuses permission for the tiger hunt to a British officer, he annoys him. He is in danger of losing his kingdom. The dewan holds consultation with the king and advises him to please the officer's wife by bribing her with expensive diamond rings. When the king decides to penalise the villagers, the dewan suggests him not to do so. That helps the king. The dewan is very pragmatic in his approach to life. He is convinced that if the Maharaja does not find the hundredth tiger soon, the result could be tragic. So he brings a harmless tiger from the People's Park in Madras. He and his aged wife carry this weak tiger to the forest. The old and weak tiger wanders into the Maharaja's presence. The Maharaja shoots the tiger and feels elated that he has killed the hundredth tiger. In this way the dewan saves his position.

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Literary Device



Dramatic irony:

A theatrical effect in which the true meaning of a situation is understood by the audience/readers, but not by the characters in the play/story

- In the story 'The Tiger King' we know the fate of the king that some day or the other he has to die because death is an inevitability. However, the king defies it.





THE TIGER KING



Humour in 'The Tiger King'

- The instance of the Stuka bomber
- The king's offer of mouse hunt etc
- The incoherent blabbering by the Dewan and the Chief Astrologer
- The Dewan procuring an old tiger from People's Park and its stubborn refusal to get off the car and the description of its waiting in humble supplication to be shot.



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Irony

The story is replete with irony that reveals the follies of autocratic and willful rulers who flout all laws and bend them to suit their selfish interests. The dramatic irony in the story is sharp when the Tiger King alone is unaware that his bullet had not killed the hundredth tiger. The other characters and the readers anticipate his doom as he celebrates his triumph over his destiny. We realise how misplaced the King's pride at killing the first tiger was. The astrologers had prophesied, "You may kill ninety nine tigers like this, but your death will be brought on by the hundredth tiger." The King wanted to prove the astrologer wrong and to save his life. Ironically, to avert death he actually invites it. The lofty titles used to introduce the Tiger King, suggesting an invincible ferocity are indeed ironic for he is finally killed by a cheap, crudely made wooden toy tiger which became the tool of Nature's revenge. He had killed a hundred tigers in vain and must be punished for it. Irony is indeed sharp when the surgeons announce the operation successful and declare the king dead. The king who killed ninety nine tigers was finally killed by a mere wooden tiger.



Irony – Additional Notes



The story is a satirical comment on the foibles and weakness of the bureaucracy that rules the nation. Kalki exposes the hollowness and false pride of those in power through irony. The first example of irony takes place when the Tiger King takes careful aim at the old tiger and pulls the trigger. The tiger falls down and the Tiger King thinks he has finally shot dead his hundredth tiger! But the bullet missed its mark and the tiger fell down out of shock on hearing the loud report of the gun. The incident proves that the Tiger King has his weakness and is quite vulnerable. Another example of irony lies in the surgeons' announcement about the success of the operation! The manner of the Tiger King's death is ironical enough. A splinter from a poorly made wooden tiger pricks his hand and it develops into a suppurating sore. Three famous surgeons from Madras are called and they decide to operate on him. When they come out of the operating theatre, they announce, "The operation was successful. The Maharaja is dead." The manner in which the hundredth tiger took its revenge is quite ironical. The statement made by the surgeons indicated that the operation was meant to end the Maharaja's life! Was the state involved in some conspiracy to kill the Tiger King? The surgery that was meant to heal him ends up killing him. The surgery was ironically meant to heal the state of Pratibandapuram by ridding it of a King who was obsessed with tiger hunting, a King who was somewhat immature. The king who killed ninety nine tigers was finally killed by a mere wooden tiger.



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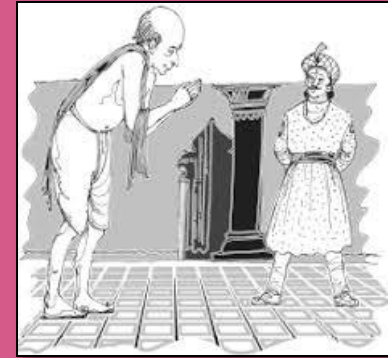
Satire in 'The Tiger King'

Satire employs irony, sarcasm, ridicule, etc. in exposing and criticising follies and vices in men. The author employs humour to criticise self-seeking Kings who willfully exploit both nature and their subjects for selfish interests. When the Maharaja of Pratibandapuram was told that he would be killed by a tiger, he could never imagine the twist in fate where a toy tiger could be fatal. Because of his conceit, he was unprepared for such surprises flung by life at him. The grandeur associated with a king's life proves a mockery. The news of the king's ailment invited not one, but three surgeons. The story also satirises the influence of power. Just because the Tiger King had power, he felt he could browbeat his subjects and even defeat fate. He neglected his responsibility as a ruler. He neglected the welfare of his subjects, his family, increased and reduced taxes at will and sacked his officers. They feared him or else he would have learnt the truth. When we see the king gloating over his bravery after killing the hundredth old, weak tiger, we notice that Kalki is satirising the notions of cowardice and bravery. There is no heroism in fighting an unequal battle. The King's cowardice was obvious when he justifies that one may kill even a cow in self defence. The author also criticises the King's men and subjects who pander to his whims out of fear.

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POINTS TO PONDER

- How the Tiger King got his name
- Prediction made by the astrologers
- Amazing articulation of the protagonist
- Challenging the prediction
- Tiger King's mission of killing tigers
- The challenges before the king
- Episode of saving his throne-
- Decision behind marrying a princess
- Character portrayal – the Dewan
- Killing of the last tiger
- How the Dewan saved his job
- Whims and fancies of the Tiger King – exemption and doubling the tax
- Killing of the last tiger
- Death of the king and the dramatic irony
- Use of humour, irony, dramatic irony and satire
- Conceit of those in power
- Abuse of power and killing of innocent wild lives for selfish motive
- Astrologers' prediction and defying the inevitabilities
- Significance of the title



THE TIGER KING

ASSIGNMENT : QUESTIONS TO TEST COMPREHENSION

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words)

1. Who was the tiger king? How did he get that name?
2. What did the astrologer predict?
3. What did the astrologer say he would do if his prophecy was disproved?
4. What was the attitude of the Maharaja's minions towards him?
5. Mention the dramatic irony in the story?
6. What did the king do to achieve his tally of killing hundred tigers?
7. Why wasn't the British official granted permission to take photograph with the carcass of a tiger?
8. How did the king save his throne?
9. How did the king finally meet his death?

Long Answer Questions (100-125 words) :

1. What is Kalki's indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the wilfulness of human beings?
2. The story is a conceit of those in power. Discuss.
3. Draw a character sketch of the tiger king.
4. Draw a character sketch of the Dewan.
5. The story is a blend of humour, satire and irony. Elucidate.
6. The story is satire on those who abuse the administrative machinery and power to fulfil their selfish motive. Discuss.

