



READING WITH INSIGHT

Q1. 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?

Ans: On surface level, 'The Tiger King' seems to be a simple story about a royal prince, his growth and exploits as a king. The prophecies at his birth about the manner of his death make the story interesting by introducing the element of surprise and suspense.

On a deeper level, the story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. It is usually seen that those in power have too much pride in themselves and what they do. Two such specimens in the story are the Tiger King and the British officer. The author employs dramatic irony and humour to show their faults and weaknesses. The words of these characters carry an extra meaning. They do not know what is going to happen. The Tiger King resolves to hunt a hundred tigers to disprove the prediction of the astrologer. In his stubbornness, he falls prey to a wooden tiger. The high-ranking British officer is equally vain. He is more interested in photograph with carcass than hunting itself. The Tiger King offers to organise any other hunt except tiger-hunt. It may be a boar-hunt, mouse-hunt or a mosquito-hunt. He has to lose three lakh of rupees for his refusal. The ego of the British officer is satisfied when his wife is pleased to get diamond rings sent by the Maharaja.

Q2. What is the author's indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the willfulness of human beings?

Ans: For centuries innocent animals have been subjected to the willfulness of human beings. Man has been killing animals for sport, meat or organs of body. The author does not make any direct comment about it in the story. Man advances strange logic to defend even his unlawful and cruel acts. The Maharaja quotes an old saying, "You may kill even a cow in self-defence". Hence, he finds no objection to kill tigers in self-defence. It reveals not only the callousness of human beings towards wildlife but their disregard for maintaining ecological balance. The extinction of tiger species in Pratibandapuram state and the state ruled by the Maharaja's father-in-law amply illustrates the result of man's cruelty towards wild animals. An old tiger has to be brought from the People's Park in Madras to satisfy the king's whim to kill one hundred tigers.

Q3. 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?

Ans: A minion is an unimportant person in an organisation who has to obey orders. The Maharaja has many minions or servants. Most of them fear the Maharaja and obey his orders faithfully. They dare not disobey him or contradict him. The Maharaja's displeasure means loss of job or even loss of life. Only a few of them are truly sincere towards him. One such person is the chief astrologer. He is willing to burn his books of astrology, cut off his tuft and crop his hair short if his prediction proves untrue. The others try to keep the Maharaja in good humour. Even the dewan is no exception. Many officers lose their jobs when the Maharaja's fury and obstinacy

mount higher. The king's bullet misses the hundredth tiger. It faints from the shock and falls as a crumpled heap. The hunters realise the truth, but they decide not to reveal it to the king. They fear that they might lose their jobs.

In today's political order, subordinates serve their superior bosses as deaf and dumb creatures who see only what their masters want them to see. Their self-interests and fear of elimination make them faithful servants.

Q4. Can you relate instances of game-hunting among the rich and the powerful in the present times that illustrate the callousness of human beings towards wildlife?

Ans: In our times, big game-hunting has been banned by law as so many species of wildlife have been declared endangered species. Sanctuaries, national parks and games reserves have been established to preserve wildlife from extinction and maintain ecological balance in nature. Even then sporadic cases of game-hunting are reported in newspapers now and then. It is generally noticed that the erstwhile rulers—kings or nawabs or the rich and powerful persons or famous film stars indulge in game-hunting. The cases against late M.A.K. Pataudi and Salman Khan are still pending in courts. Poachers and smugglers too destroy wildlife for skin, meat or for various organs of body and escape scot-free.

Q5. We need a new system for the age of ecology—a system which is embedded in the care of all people and also in the care of the Earth and all life upon it. Discuss.

Ans: Modern age is the age of ecology. A new consciousness has arisen among human beings. Animals and birds are as much part of nature as human beings. The destruction or haphazard killing of one species may not only lead to its extinction, but it will adversely affect the ecological balance. Those animals which serve as food for the wild animals will increase in large number, if the beasts of prey are wiped out. Each species, howsoever fierce, deadly, ferocious or poisonous has its own role in the scheme of things. We must devise a new system. It must focus on the care of all living beings on the Earth as well as the Earth itself and all life—vegetative or animal living on it. Steps have to be taken to preserve ecological balance in nature and prevent environmental pollution. Unpolluted air, water and food can make all living beings healthy and enable them to enjoy longer lives.

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