
UNIT 2 *A TIGER FOR MALGUDI*: DETAILED SUMMARY

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will provide you with a detailed summary of the novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* which will help you to read and analyse the actual text. We must remind you that this summary is in no way a substitute for reading the actual novel. So you must get the novel and read it for yourself. We will also be giving you a detailed biographical sketch of R.K. Narayan, the author of this novel.

By the end of this Unit, you will be able to assess R.K. Narayan's contribution to the Indian novel in English as well as assess him as a novelist. You will also get a fairly good idea about the sequence of events of the novel through the detailed summary that you will read in this Unit.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 of this Block we have already discussed R.K. Narayan as being part of the Big Three Indian writers in English. We shall begin this Unit by giving you a biographical sketch of R.K. Narayan as it is essential to know the background and other details of a writer in order to understand his works. We have already spoken about the rise and development of the Indian novel in English, in Unit 1. The detailed summary that we are giving you in this Unit will help you to read the actual text and understand it better.

2.2 R.K. NARAYAN: LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION

R.K. Narayan – full name Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswamy which he shortened to R.K. Narayanaswami and later, on Graham Greene's suggestion, to R.K. Narayan – was born in 1906 in Madras. He grew up in his grandmother's house in Madras (now Chennai) where he received his early education. On entering his teens, he went to live with his parents in Mysore where his father

worked as a headmaster of a prestigious school. He joined the Maharaja's College in Mysore and got his B.A. degree. He was a voracious reader and spent most of his time in reading and writing. He was also in the habit of taking long walks in the idyllic city, taking in the grandeur of its forts and palaces.

R.K. Narayan's attempts at becoming a school teacher failed as he had neither the inclination nor the aptitude for becoming one. Coming from a large and affectionate family, he did not really feel the necessity to earn a living. He did, however, earn small amounts of money as a reporter for a newspaper in Madras called "The Justice", news hunting for it around law courts, crime scenes, police stations and municipal buildings etc. in Mysore. Occasionally, he sent his writings to various publications, including one to *Punch* a British weekly magazine. Meanwhile, he finished writing his first novel *Swami and Friends* and sent it to England for publication. After being rejected by several British publishers, his friend and neighbour, Purna, who was in Oxford, on an instinct, approached Graham Greene with the manuscript of *Swami and Friends*. Sufficiently impressed by it, Greene recommended it to Hamish Hamilton for publication and it was published in 1935. This also started a life-long friendship between Greene and Narayan. Greene was also responsible for getting his next two novels *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Dark Room* published between 1935 and 1938.

In 1933, Narayan fell in love and married a girl of his choice, Rajam, against family tradition and the dark predictions of astrologers. The couple had a baby girl born to them. However, the marriage lasted only six years as Rajam died of typhoid in 1939. R.K. was completely shattered. Somehow, regaining control of his life, he started writing *The English Teacher* which is entirely auto-biographical and which again Greene got published in 1944. The novel is a watershed in his writing career and there was no going back after that. Narayan started writing novels on a regular basis which were translated into a number of foreign languages—ranging from Hebrew to Japanese establishing beyond doubt that his novels had a universal appeal.

His first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) and its successor *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) are both set in Malgudi—an enchanting fictional town with which R.K. Narayan's name is inextricably associated. Other 'Malgudi novels' are: *The Dark Room* (1938); *The English Teacher* (1945); *Mr. Sampath-The Printer of Malgudi* (1949); *The Financial Expert* (1952); *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962); *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967); *The Painter of Signs* (1976); *A Tiger For Malgudi* (1983); *Talkative Man* (1986); and *The World of Nagaraj* (1990). Other novels include *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955); and *The Guide* (1958). Undoubtedly, the best known of his books is *The Guide* which won him the Sahitya Akademi Award, the country's highest literary award, and was also made into a film—both in Hindi and in English—by the well known producer-director-actor, Dev Anand.

In addition to novels, R.K. Narayan produced five collections of stories *A Horse and Two Goats*, *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories*, *Lawley Road*, *Malgudi Days*, *Grandmother's Tale*, published two travel books, *My Dateless Diary*, *The Emerald Route*; Four collections of Essays: *Next Sunday*, *Reluctant Guru*, *A Writer's Nightmare*, *A Storyteller's World*, also translations of Indian epics and myths *The Ramayana*, and *The Mahabharata*, *Gods, Demons and Others*, and a Memoir: *My Days*.

R.K. Narayan's works brought him international repute as a writer in English. Graham Greene said of him: "Since the death of Evelyn Waugh, Narayan is the novelist I most admire in the English language." Awards and accolades came to Narayan in plenty. The Government of India decorated him with a Padma Bhushan and nominated him as a member of the Rajya Sabha, in 1989, for a term. He was awarded the A.C. Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature in Britain, while in the United States, he received the English Speaking Union's award, and was made a Fellow (an Honorary Member) by the prestigious American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, becoming only one of the two Indians to be so honoured, the other being the sitar maestro—Ravi Shankar.

Narayan settled down in Mysore in a house he had built for himself and his only child, Hema. Meanwhile, his youngest brother, R.K. Laxman, had also become a famous cartoonist in the country. After marrying off his daughter, Narayan travelled extensively in Europe, the U.S.A. and Australia. When in India, he divided his time between Mysore and Chennai. He died in 2001 at the age of 95.

2.2.1 R.K. Narayan's Malgudi

As regards the fictional town of Malgudi, most of his novels and short stories are set in this quiet little backwater inhabited by gentle people with harmless eccentricities. Malgudi is definitely not based on Mysore city as this dusty and small town is a far cry from the regal city of Mysore boasting of innumerable palaces. It is more akin to the sleepy little South Indian towns of those days. Narayan has himself said that the name Malgudi came to his mind in a flash while writing a sentence in his first novel *Swami and Friends*: "the train stopped at Malgudi."

While receiving the award given to him by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, on 18th January, 1982, by the then U.S. Ambassador—Harry S. Barnes – in the American Embassy (as Narayan could not go to the U.S. to receive it personally), Narayan himself commented on the mythical town of Malgudi. Following is an excerpt from his acceptance speech:

"...I am often questioned, 'Where is Malgudi?' which is the background of my novels, and short stories. I'd like to take this occasion to answer it. I didn't consider too long when I invented this little town. It had just occurred to me when I started my first novel *Swami and Friends*.... that it would be safer to have a fictitious name for the background of the novel, which would leave one free to meddle with its geography and details as I pleased, without incurring the wrath of any city-father of any actual town or city. I wanted to be able to put in whatever I liked, and whenever I liked—a little street or school or temple or a bungalow or even a slum, a railway line, at any spot. A minor despot in a little world, I began to like my role, and I began to be fascinated by its possibilities; its river, market-place, and the far-off mountain roads and forests acquired a concrete quality, and have imprisoned me within their boundaries, with the result that I am unable to escape from Malgudi, even if I wished to...."

Though a somewhat tongue-in-cheek explanation, yet one that sufficiently convinces us that Malgudi is indeed the creation of Narayan's own imagination.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Name the first novel of R.K. Narayan and the person who helped him to publish it

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- 2) Write a 100-word note on the town of Malgudi. Is it a real town or a fictional one? Give reasons for your answer.

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2.3 DETAILED SUMMARY OF A *TIGER FOR MALGUDI*

A Tiger for Malgudi was published in 1983. The novel is an unusual one which has a tiger as the narrator. In his introduction, preceding the novel, Narayan explains how the story idea occurred to him. He once read and saw photographs in the newspaper of a hermit moving around with an unusual companion—a tiger—during the Kumbh Mela festival in Allahabad. The tiger was unleashed and followed the swami faithfully, not hurting anybody. This report and some other instances he came across, about lasting friendships between tigers and human beings, offered him a theme for his novel. However, what decided for him to begin writing the novel was a bookmark he saw with the picture of a tiger that said, “I’d love to get into a good book”. (p. 7). Taking a cue from this, Narayan started his novel, addressing the bookmark tiger, “Surely you will get into my book, but the goodness of the book itself I can’t guarantee”. (p. 7). Another possible reason Narayan gives for making a tiger the protagonist in his novel is that fiction-writers have all along written about human beings who consider themselves the centre of creation, attaching little importance to other creatures. By making a tiger the central character in his novel, Narayan wanted to examine what the result would be.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How did R.K. Narayan get the idea of writing a novel with a tiger as its protagonist?

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Following is a detailed summary of the novel that we have divided into four parts, each dealing with a distinct phase in the tiger's life:

2.3.1 Stage One

The first stage describes the tiger's cub hood; his wild days in the jungle; his family life; his escape from the trap set up by the villagers; and his forays into human habitation after his family is killed by hunters in the village.

The novel begins with the narrator, Raja, a circus tiger, who has been brought to a zoo. He is allotted an end-cage, as a special consideration to his Master, who appears later in the novel. The people walking past his cage treat him the same as they do the other caged tigers, not realizing that this special tiger thought of himself as different from the other tigers as he possesses a soul, can think, analyse, judge and remember like humans, only lacking their power of speech. But if people could read his thoughts, the tiger would like to invite them into his cage to listen to the story of his life which he narrates in the following manner:

The tiger spent his early days in the Mempi hills where he dwelt in a cave, near a rivulet, with his mother who protected and fed him. His cubhood was carefree and like humans, he deluded himself that the idyllic days would never end. But when the mother died, he had to fend for himself. Hunger brought him out of his cave but he was bullied by bigger animals. Somehow he managed to keep himself alive and grew into an adult. Due to his stature and strength he started thinking of himself as the "king of the forest," above the lion who did not deserve the title as he was a slothful creature and moved only to hunt for food, whereas he was much stronger than the lion.

Every creature in the jungle trembled at his approach and made way for him, except the monkeys and the birds that lived on trees and didn't fear him as he could not reach them. Like human beings, who can communicate without words, their feelings of sympathy, warning, abuse, insult, love and hate, the jungle animals, too, warned each other when he was approaching. The only difference being that human beings most times communicated with too much unnecessary talk. The jungle community acknowledged his undisputed superiority and animals who thought otherwise were suitably punished by him into submission. His master told him later that this power-game and taming of the recalcitrants, to make them toe the line, was true of human beings too. One creature he took care to avoid was the porcupine, after a nasty experience. He once attacked a porcupine that, in turn, stabbed his body with his quills, making him incapable of hunting for several days. Another animal he disliked to encounter was the owl that, as the self-appointed animal adviser, encouraged those animals who secretly wished for his downfall. On land, however, he most detested the leopard who would sit on a branch at his approach to show off his superiority in climbing a tree which tigers could not do and would often make fun of their stripes which, he said, they had acquired, when an offended forest spirit had branded their smooth coats with a hot coal. The tiger very much wanted to teach the leopard a lesson for undermining his status in the jungle but the leopard was far too swift in speed for him to catch. So he decided to ignore him.

The tiger soon came across a tigress who was to become his mate. Out to hunt deer in a meadow, he saw a tigress sitting in the middle of the road blocking his passage. Despite his loud warning roar, the tigress refused to budge even an inch.

A terribly bloody fight ensued between the two of them in which both were grievously injured and lay inert on the ground. A jackal, who was a witness to the fight, advised them to call a truce. Taking the advice, the tiger went near the wounded tigress and gently ministered to her injured eye. The tigress too was a changed being from then on and followed him quietly. Thus began their friendship. Soon after came their offspring—four cubs—who were a delight to watch, suckling their mother, while the tiger rested in the shade of a bamboo cluster, occasionally catching minor game to feed the cubs. When the cubs grew up and ventured out of the cave, they were constantly guarded by the parents to save them from being harmed by the bears, bisons, eagles and pythons.

One day, the tiger saw his mate go down the river bank and climb up the other. The cubs somehow escaped his watchful eyes and followed their mother. He realized too late what had happened and followed them. When he heard strange noises around him, he roared to call back his family but in vain. Still following his family, he soon reached human habitation and, to his utter horror, saw his mate and cubs lying dead in a cart being pulled by a line of men singing and dancing around it. The tiger was shattered to the core at the loss of his dear ones. His belief that the jungle was impregnable to human beings was shattered. Anyhow, hiding behind a rock, he saw a set of men arrive in a jeep to take away his dead family. Those days he was untamed and wanted to tear and kill every man present there but somehow held back. The death of his family taught him to take revenge from the village folk by stalking and poaching their cattle for food. Every two days, he took away a sheep from the flock. The villagers did not suspect him for their loss and advanced ignorant theories regarding a tiger's hunting habits, which amused him a good deal. He now discovered that hunting in the village was far more easy and untiring than the jungle-hunting where the game was more alert and elusive. The villagers, too, discovered they were losing their cattle more regularly and set up an enclosure, with a door, in the centre of the village to trap the culprit. The tiger one day entered the enclosure but as soon as he nabbed a lamb, its bleating woke up the villagers who ran out with flaming torches, hatchets and crowbars. In his haste to escape, the tiger lost sight of the door and ran in circles inside the stockade, confused and blinded with the fire from the torches and the frenzied shouting of the villagers. He had never imagined that human beings could be so devilish. Fortunately, just then the fence enclosing the stockade caught fire from a torch. The villagers broke open the enclosure to save their sheep and that gave him a chance to escape from the trap. After that misadventure he did not raid the villages concluding that man, who looked small and harmless, was stronger than tigers and held some strange power to control even the fiercest of animals. He decided to return to his cave at Mempi.

The villagers also had learnt a lesson from this episode. Henceforth, they not only guarded their sheep better but also decided to approach the authorities for help. Their spokesmen met the Collector and gave him exaggerated accounts of how the tiger was killing both men and their sheep. On being questioned by the Collector, they gave confused and different versions about the size of the tiger, the number of tigers seen and the identity of the hunters who had shot the tiger's family. The Collector told them to submit a written petition on a stamp – paper without which he could neither fix a date for inspection of their village nor take any action. Confused by it all, the villagers had to visit the Collector's office once a week, spending both time and money, and then too managed to meet only the Collector's clerk who always directed them to undergo more official formalities. In the meanwhile, the tiger had perfected his system of snatching cattle at night

without being caught. The villagers too adopted defensive measures against him like lighting bonfires, posting vigilant guards with weapons and scattering poisoned meat to kill him.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Who is the narrator in the novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* and to whom does he want to narrate the story of his life?

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- 2) Who killed the tiger's family and how did the tiger try to avenge the killing?

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2.3.2 Stage Two

The second phase describes the capture of the tiger by a circus owner; the life he spends in the circus where he is cruelly trained and treated by his ringmaster and is made to perform in the circus and on a film set; and his subsequent escape from there.

A certain man in Malgudi, called Captain, had once bought a yellow monkey and a parrot (that could pick up numbers and alphabets from a pack of cards) from an Irishman who earned his living by displaying them in public. Being more ambitious, Captain thought about joining a circus and approached an old man, Dadhaji, who owned "Dadhaji's Grand Circus" in Poona. Dadhaji wanted to know how much knowledge he had about animals. Captain told him that he had not encountered many animals in his life except the alley cats and mongrels in his street in Malgudi. He disclosed that he had come to Dadhaji to learn about animals and how they were trained. Dadhaji took him in but told him to get rid of the monkey and the parrot that were fit only for street corner shows and not meant for his circus which had around 150 large animals. He told Captain to take charge of cleaning the stables and attending to the horses in return for food, shelter and pocket money. Captain readily accepted the offer and started his circus career under the tutelage of Dadhaji who taught him all about training animals and the business of running a circus, often telling him that there was no wild animal that could not be tamed or trained. When the old man died, Captain inherited the circus with its property, assets and animals. He soon shifted to his native Malgudi where he set up the "Grand Malgudi Circus" by bribing the authorities in order to overcome their objections to his venture.

Malgudi soon became famous for its circus—with its animals, scores of acrobats and performers of all kinds—due to the hard work put in by Captain. Getting up daily at five in the morning he took rounds of the camps to know the welfare of his animals, often making fun of his wife by taunting "...they are tended better than your family." (p. 37). He told her that it was the animals who brought in all the money needed to look after his family. His wife, Rita, who was the lead performer of his trapeze team, often grumbled about the boring circus life and its

tent-living and Captain would think to himself: “Women are impossible. Worse than twenty untamed jungle creatures on one’s hand at a time...” (p. 38). The wife would mutter behind his back that he had no sense of humour left and “Only animals seem to be fit for his company.” (p. 38).

One day, while at the Collector’s office, Captain hears some villagers complaining to the clerk about the delay in catching the tiger which was fast devouring their cattle. The clerk loses his temper and threatens to call in the police. The villagers walk out of the office followed by Captain who recalls Dadhaji’s injunction that one must ferret out all information if one hears a tiger being mentioned. On being asked by him, the villagers are only too glad to talk to him about the tiger. He promises to help them catch the tiger and, on the appointed day, reaches the village where his arrival generates great excitement among the villagers who offer lavish hospitality to the one who has come to kill the tiger. Captain tells them he is there not to kill but to rid them of the tiger by taking it away, and asks them for their help. The villagers are unable to pinpoint the tiger’s hideout but direct him to two men in the next village who had recently been mauled by the tiger. The men are reluctant to help Captain directly, so he contacts and bribes the forest guards to help him. Camouflaging himself with foliage, he waits all night for the tiger to appear, sitting on a tree along with the forest guards. A cage with a goat inside as bait is placed to attract the unsuspecting animal.

The tiger had so far cautiously avoided all traps laid for him. But on that particular day, his greed for a fresh kill overpowers him. He emerges from his lair tempted by the goat, pounces on it and is instantly trapped in the iron cage. Captain, tells his companions that the trapped tiger is a magnificent beast whom he would soon train for his circus. The tiger feels cramped in the small cage which is wheeled by bullocks through many villages and towns where the chattering of humans prove most distressing for him after the grand silence of the jungle. It is only later, after his Master’s (his Guru’s) lessons, that he realizes that he too was like human beings and like them could not enjoy a moment’s silence or stillness of mind, either talking in his inaudible way or listening like them and thus was fully qualified to enter their society.

When the cage reaches the circus grounds, the tiger is amazed to see so many bipeds—human creatures. Captain pokes him with a staff that makes him roar and jump in protest, and then orders him to be transferred to another cage that is to be his new home. A noise is created on his cage bars with a staff, that drives him in circles with irritation, then his sides are jabbed with the staff which leaves him with no option but to jump into another cage. This is his first act of obedience to the ring-master.

Initially, the tiger has no idea why he has been brought to that new place with a huge circus top surrounded by smaller tents and filled with voices of jungle fellows and men. The tiger finds the cramped space of the cage unbearable after the vastness and freedom of jungle life. He can do nothing more than lie down or get up or pace up and down in despair. He feels helpless and hopeless, subdued by the iron cage designed by men to serve their evil ends. This suffering, as his Master would tell him later, is a result of his past birth. He must have put his fellow beings behind bars and was now paying for it in this birth. It is a natural law, he said, that one must find one’s reward or retribution, sooner or later, for one’s actions of a previous life.

For many days, Captain makes him suffer loneliness, immobility, and hunger, perhaps to break his spirit. When he loses all his strength, his cage is moved into a large enclosure and he is set free from the cage. He sees Captain standing there with a long whip in one hand and a chair in the other. He uses the whip to lash the tiger's face repeatedly, not letting him lie down to rest, and uses the chair as a shield between them. He pokes the tiger with the chair and commands him to "Run, run, come on!" (p. 50). The tiger feels dismayed and ashamed as this event is being watched by other animals, most of whom he has seen for the first time. There is a camel, a hippo, a horse, a donkey, but no deer who perhaps escaped being in this cursed place because of its past good karmas. He can recognize only a chimp. An animal advises him to perform as demanded by the ringmaster, and in return he would get something to eat and drink. The tiger asks them why they tolerate their ring-master when any one of them could stamp him out easily, and is told that once they did try it but Captain proved too strong for them. Fortunately, this conversation is carried on in animal language in the form of grunts, hissings or sighing which the "foolish" humans interpreted only as being signs of the animals' illness. The chimp, who is the happiest animal in the circus and goes around chattering, grinning and behaving like human beings, also advises him to obey Captain and run round and round for the time being and wait for the day when they all would wield the whip and the ring-master would do the running. But for now, Captain should be obeyed so that he would continue to feed and protect them and spare them the trouble of seeking their food and fending off their enemies in the forests. According to the chimp, Captain is a fool but thinks of himself as the Lord of the Universe. The tiger remembers that he too had once thought the same about himself.

As the days pass, the tiger begins to understand what Captain wants of him. His continuous lashings teach him to run round and round, without there being a reason for running, after which he is put back in the cage and given pieces of meat and a trough of water. Thereafter, he is made to learn all sorts of new tricks—he is made to jump over obstacles of all kinds put in his way; he is forced to jump through a ring of fire although he dreads the fire after his past experience when he was nearly roasted by the flaming torches of the villagers; he is made to sit on a stool and sip milk from a saucer placed on a table before him, although the taste of milk nauseates him as he is basically a meat-eater and not a milk-drinker and would gladly have devoured the cow than drink its milk, as he confides to the chimp. Every time the tiger fails to perform a new trick, he is mercilessly lashed with the whip by Captain. As a punishment, he is isolated from other animals and starved for days together till he grows weak and is ready to obey his ring-master. Sometimes he thinks of attacking Captain but the Chair always shields the man. At that time the chair appears like a powerful engine of destruction to the tiger but later when he sees chairs lying still in the schoolroom at Malgudi he realizes that a chair is nothing but a harmless piece of furniture that he could smash in a second, with his paw.

The tiger gradually becomes an established member of the circus and is not isolated any more. From the animal gossip, especially from the chimp, he gathers a good deal about their ring-master who successfully manages a vast army of people working for him—trainers of different animals, workers managing stage properties, trapeze artistes, clowns and many more. Looking after all of them, feeding them, creating new acts and tricks for the circus artists and animals, appearing on stage and looking after the finances requires a tremendous amount

of energy, power and creativeness, all of which Captain possesses in abundance and which the tiger appreciates much later in retrospect.

The most complex and extraordinary act of the tiger's training is when he is made to sit opposite a goat with a saucer of milk placed between them. In the beginning, thinking that goat is there for him to eat, he lunges forward but is whipped back into his seat and the goat is withdrawn. This is repeated for many days till he understands that this jugglery is meant to make him ignore the goat while it drinks the milk. In the climax of the act, he too has to bring his mouth close to the saucer and pretend to enjoy the milk in the goat's company, although it is a trying moment for him as the goat's proximity and its flavor makes his mouth water. This is a special act that Captain has reserved for his Jubilee Show.

Captain has his own ways to publicize his circus. A team of men and women, in fancy costumes, riding in a wagon painted in tiger stripes, used to go around villages beating the drums and advertising the circus through megaphones. He presents his shows six months in a year in Malgudi. On holidays and festivals, circus patrons flock to the town in all modes of transport for this exciting event. At every show, the galleries and the wooden benches and chairs, the squatting spaces on the ground near the stage and the V.I.P seats in the front row are filled to capacity. During every show, he used to make a flamboyant speech that was sometimes autobiographical, in English, Hindi and Tamil and used to end it by paying homage to Dadhaji, his dead mentor and master. The tiger finally gathered that Captain had his distinct way of running the circus. He had prepared a timetable for all his animals, assigned them individual names (just as he christened him Raja), gave them periods of rest in between shows and allowed them to graze in the Mempi range on their off days. The tiger's act was always introduced in a special way that made his wife grumble that the trapeze artistes were never introduced to the public. During their bickering, Captain always remarked that perhaps their horoscopes didn't match, to which Rita would retort, "your horoscope and the tiger's seem to be better matched." (p. 68). The tiger often wondered why the couple always wrangled over him. Much later he was to learn from his Master that human relationships could not be easily defined as being either full of love, or full of hatred. Sometimes couples loved each other deeply but did not show it, like Captain and his wife whose deep love for each other was proved when Captain, in the last flicker of consciousness after the tiger had inadvertently hit him, is only worried about how Rita would cope without him. While she, after he dies, climbs onto a trapeze, swings it to the ceiling and lets go her hand, falling to her death below.

The Jubilee show of the circus was publicised in a big way. Huge posters, displaying Rita's death-defying trapeze acts, the chimp riding a motorcycle, the elephant with the chimp on his back etc., were pasted on all walls in Malgudi, especially on walls that prohibited sticking of bills and posters. People everywhere read about the Jubilee show and, consequently, on the opening day, and for all three shows each day, every inch of the circus top was packed to capacity. Raja's act was reserved for the night shows when he was let out in the circus-ring and an enclosure was erected around it. At every show, the ring-master introduced his act as a four-in-one act which ended with the tiger and the goat sipping milk together, demonstrating India's dedication to nonviolence, as he put it. The Jubilee show went on for a long time.

One evening, when the goat was fearlessly drinking the milk, Raja is overwhelmed by his forest memories and his raging hunger, and he shoots forward and rips off the goat's head. He is whipped back into the cage by an enraged Captain and the dead goat is hastily removed from the spot, depriving him of his fresh kill. Not many noticed what had happened, excepting a few dignitaries in the front row (among whom a film producer who is secretly filming the act), as the stage is hurriedly cleared and the next items of clowns and their juggling is put up without delay. The tiger is now out of favour with Captain and his act is completely dropped from the show as a new goat can not be trained so soon for the act. He is put in isolation, only the chimp sneaks near his cage one day and admonishes him for killing a friend whom he was on milk-drinking terms with and then informs him that Captain is thinking of closing the Jubilee show to take a break.

One day, as the tiger lays half-dead with starvation, Captain brings a visitor to his cage who is all praise for the tiger's surgical attack on the goat which he had filmed. He proposes to make a film with Raja, the tiger. The visitor is a film producer and director named Madhusudan (he likes to be called Madan). As he wants Captain's approval for his proposal, he often visits the camp. He tells Captain that he had written the outline of his film's story on the same night that he had seen Raja slicing the goat's head at the Jubilee Show. To Captain's comment that the scene would not go down well with women, Madan remarks that women were by nature squeamish and that was the reason why he preferred male panelists on the Censor Board, who passed films carrying sex and violence without fuss, rather than women panelists. He also informs Captain that he has already lined up a gigantic wrestler, Jaggu, for a role in his tiger-movie in which Jaggu would be shown fighting off the tiger with his bare hands to save his pet goat, after which he would capture the tiger and train him to live in peace with the goat. The director narrates to Captain how he had found Jaggu. While on his way to Madras, he had come across Jaggu wrestling in a market place, taking on four adversaries at a time and defeating them all, after which he performed many feats of strength. He offered him Rs. 500 per month to play a role in his film which Jaggu readily accepted. Captain agrees to spare Raja for two weeks in the beginning for a hefty sum and tells him that any re-takes of shots would be charged extra. Madan immediately presents a cheque to him but, like a seasoned businessman, Captain settles for cash instead. Madan prepares an agreement of terms and conditions required for the making of his film but Captain finds fault with one clause or another and tells him to re-draft it. Another objection Captain raises is that he would not lend his tiger unless a location for shooting the film is finalized. Ultimately, he approves one of the three locations suggested by Madan which lay in the woods near a highway. Madan immediately gets the location called "Ginger Field" levelled and prepared into a film studio, with a canteen for refreshments for his unit hands, a makeup and costume section, a village street with two-dimensional homes, and platforms for mounting lights, reflectors and cameras.

On the day of the shoot, Jaggu is given a Tarzan like look—his body is covered with a leopard-skin cloth held up by a strap across his shoulder and his hair is tousled up to stand up like an aura around his face. He is given a moustache which is immediately ordered off by Madan as that would make him look like a pirate and lose him the sympathy of the audience. Even though Madan himself acts out each detail for Jaggu, of how he was to enact the role—climb up the steps to a house, turn around, when half-way up, at the cry of 'Tiger! Tiger!', then

spring forward with a war-cry to grapple with the tiger—Jaggu misses the cue every time and during the final shot, when someone shouts that the “Tiger” from the circus has arrived, Jaggu mistakes it as his cue and messes up the shot.

“Ginger Field” reminds the tiger of his old home in the woods and he becomes restless in his cage. The film crew, too, are getting restive specially to hear Captain and Madan arguing endlessly over whether the tiger should retreat after Jaggu’s knock-off blow, with his tail between his legs. Captain is deadly against it as that is a dog’s habit and not a lion’s. Another argument crops up, replacing the tail controversy, when Madan explains the scene where Raja is to stand on his hind legs and place his forelegs on Jaggu’s shoulders who would then knock him off. Captain points out that the tiger’s paws would tear the flesh off Jaggu’s shoulders. Madan then suggests a few safety measures, to prevent any injury to the wrestler like pulling out the tiger’s nails and even teeth or stitching up his lips as was done in Hollywood movies. Captain would have none of it as he wants his tiger back unscathed and in one piece. However, he offers a way out. Madan is to fake both the scenes—Raja standing with his paws on Jaggu who would not be there and Jaggu wrestling with an imaginary tiger—and join the two scenes through an optical printer. Madan agrees to the suggestions. Since Captain wants Jaggu to acquaint himself with his adversary, Raja, he takes him near his cage. As the tiger roars and lunges towards him, the gigantic wrestler, although safe outside the protective fence, runs away with a howl: *Amma! Save me!*” (p. 104), and is not to be found anywhere. Finally Madan brings him back from a shrine where he had hidden himself. Jaggu refuses to act with the ferocious beast and after much coercion and many rehearsals, he is made to go through the motions of wrestling with an unseen tiger.

In the meantime, Madan shows an electronic gadget to Captain which, when pressed, shoots out a metal tongue that can deliver an electric shock. He asks Captain to use it on Raja who is being difficult while learning the new act specially designed for the film. Though Captain refuses to use the gadget as he says his whip is enough to tame his animals, his wife advises him to use the device. As a temptation, Madan asks Captain to extend the shooting by several weeks and promises to pay him a big amount for the extensions. Normally not a money-minded man, Captain is now becoming greedy after his contact with the film people. The thought of making more money over-powers him especially when his wife says that the extra money could help them start a new venture, different from the boring and dusty circus business.

Day after day, with his whip and the chair, Captain makes the tiger learn the new act, surrounded by men who are always shouting to each other, specially the cameraman who even orders Captain around. Soon, Captain becomes submissive and loses his self-respect. Even after countless rehearsals, the tiger finds it difficult and very painful to lift his forelegs and at the same time tilt back on his hind legs. Each time he falls either backward or forward. Not one to give up easily, Captain devises a new method to make him stand on his hind legs. He dangles a lamb as bait before him and when he reaches out, Captain pulls the lamb, higher. The act is repeated from morning till night, sometimes in the blinding lights at night, which makes the tiger feel sick and desperate.

One day, when the tiger refuses to notice the lamb dangling before him, despite the repeated whippings and yelling by Captain, he sees Captain take out a new object from his pocket with which he touches him. The tiger is blinded with pain

and helplessness. Taking advantage, Captain hits him again and again on his eyes and nose and once again brings out the gadget from his pocket to give another shock to the tiger. But this time the tiger growls and raises his paw to fend off the gadget. Captain takes the gesture as an affront to his authority and rushes at him with the vicious device. Just as he stops to touch him, the tiger raises a forepaw and, taking care to retract his claws so as not to hurt the master, knocks the gadget out of his hand. The blow is strong enough to tear off Captain's head. It greatly surprises the tiger that such a flimsy creature as Captain had held him in fear for so long.

There is total chaos after the mishap. The film crew at first tries to save their equipment but then abandons it and flee to save their lives. Jaggu makes a dash for the empty tiger-cage, and entering it pulls down the door, refusing to let in the others. Madan shouts to someone to fetch a gun. While escaping the pandemonium, the tiger brushes past the camera which topples down with a bang, eliciting loud cries from Madan that he is totally and completely ruined!

Check Your Progress 4

1) What did Captain call his circus?

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2) How did Captain catch the tiger?

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3) What two things did Captain use to train the tiger?

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4) Match the characters given in List A with their respective occupations in list B:

- | A | B |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| i) Jaggu | i) Film producer and director |
| ii) Reeta | ii) wrestler |
| iii) Madhusudan | iii) Ring-master/Circus Manager |
| iv) Captain | iv) Circus tiger |
| v) Raja | v) Trapezeartiste |

5) What two things reveal that the tiger did not mean to kill Captain?

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2.3.3 Stage Three

The third phase of the tiger's life describes his creating a sensation in Malgudi where he takes refuge in a school, resulting in great confusion and commotion; his meeting with an ascetic who saves him from being shot by the terror-stricken public, and who leads him out of the town towards the hills.

The tiger's arrival in Malgudi from the film set, creates a commotion in the town. The people run to save their lives, hiding behind trees and pillars, and shutting and bolting all windows and doors of their homes. A tailor even shuts himself in a cupboard, while a murder convict escapes, along with his handcuffs, when the constables escorting him flee to save themselves. People, who had appeared dignified, sitting placidly outside the circus-ring, now flee from the tiger, displaying a very different aspect of human behaviour though the tiger means them no harm. He stops at the entrance restaurant, terrorizing the patrons. He wants to assure them that he is not there to kill them, as he has already had his fill on the way here and that tigers attack only when they are hungry, unlike human beings who slaughter one another without purpose or hunger. However, the behavior of the children delights him. They run up and down the streets, shouting and screaming, happy to have been let off easily from school due to his presence in the town. Seeing him bounding out of the restaurant, they run back to the school, shutting themselves up in the school hall. He follows them to the school and takes refuge in the headmaster's room. At his sight, the dignified gentleman jumps up on his table and heaves himself up into the loft with the greatest of speed. The tiger flings himself onto the cool stone floor with his head under a large desk and dozes off, only half-hearing the door of the room being bolted and locked from the outside.

While he sleeps, there is a long consultation among the crowd that has gathered outside the school, of which he comes to know later from his new Master—the Holyman—who has been one of the crowd. When someone in the crowd refers to the tiger as 'brute', the Master rebukes him for using the ugly word that has been coined by man out of arrogance. Annoyed at his unsolicited advice, the people ask him who he is. The Master says that all his life he has been trying to find the answer to that profound question but has not succeeded and asks them if they know who they are. The officiating headmaster asks him to go away and the Master withdraws to a far corner to watch them tackle the situation. The Mathematics teacher suggests calling in the police, while another says that the situation does not warrant it as no law has been broken. Blaming the ring-master for the messy situation is useless as he is dead; holding the film producer responsible for it is also of no use as he has disappeared along with his film crew without a trace, or perhaps they have all been eaten up by the tiger. The Master shouts from his corner that the tiger is no man-eater. The acting headmaster, losing his cool, turns him out of the school premises. The Master withdraws to sit on a culvert outside the gate from where he can watch and hear them. Someone amongst them suggests calling the S.P. who possesses a gun but another counters the suggestion as the Superintendent of Police can not use it without the magistrate's order. Someone is all for calling the hunter, Alphonse, who possesses a double-barrelled gun and is a good shot but someone else points out that his gun has been confiscated and he has been declared a poacher. As they fail to reach a practical solution, the Master walks up to them and offers to dash up to the room and let the tiger out so that it can escape from there. Horrified at the idea, they shout him down. Just then some parents come looking for their children and berate the

school authorities for endangering the lives of the children in their tiger-infested school. Luckily, a group overhears the shouts of the children in the hall and forces open the door to let them out.

A man with a gun arrives on the scene just then. He is the famed *shikari*—Alphonse. He orders people to get out of his way, otherwise, he says, he would not be responsible if anyone is hurt. The Master advises him not to use the uncharitable word ‘beast’ for the tiger. But Alphonse promptly shuts up this half-naked and bearded *sadhu*. As the tiger can be shot only if the door to the room is opened, which would be a dangerous move, Alphonse asks for a ladder to climb to the roof where he would remove a few tiles and take aim at the tiger. The ladder does not come for a long time and the irritated Alphonse asks for the school incharge to step forward. The acting headmaster tries to slink away but the people seize him and tell Alphonse that he is incharge when the headmaster is away. The acting headmaster tries to get out of the situation by reasoning that the headmaster is not away but very much in the room with the tiger. Alphonse tells him not to act smart. He then orders him to get a ladder but the acting headmaster informs him that the school has no ladder although one had been requisitioned the previous year but the money to buy it has not yet been sanctioned. Alphonse finds this procedure rather silly and some other teachers agree with him as they too have been unable to procure a single cane since long. Alphonse promises to thrash them if they dare to use the canes to beat the school children and the teachers hastily assure him that the canes are used only to chase away stray cattle from the school. Just then two boys appear with a ladder which they have stolen from a house, unseen by the owners. Alphonse praises them for their resourcefulness and promises to gift them an air gun. Happy at the offer, the boys place the ladder against the wall and climb up, with Alphonse in the lead. Removing a few tiles gives Alphonse a clear sight of the full grown tiger which according to him, measures upto eleven and a half feet, from tip to tail. Getting the Headmaster out from the narrow attic requires sawing off the rafters. The Master, who has followed them to the roof, says that the old teak beams would not yield to a saw. Seeing the swami behind him, the angry Alphonse orders him off the ladder and turns to speak to the headmaster telling him to lie low when he shoots at the tiger from the gap in the roof.

At that very moment a jeep arrives carrying the “Save Tiger Committee” whom the Master has sent for to prevent Alphonse from killing the tiger. They inform Alphonse that the Committee has been formed to prohibit the shooting of tigers, in any part of India, to conserve their dwindling population and that they are empowered to prosecute and penalize anyone violating the ban. Alphonse reminds them that a tiger could be killed if it is established that he is a man-eater. The Committee asks him to apply for a permit and submit photographs of the tiger to establish that he is indeed a man-eater before they allow Alphonse to shoot it. Alphonse retorts that by the time this is done, the headmaster would be inside the tiger’s belly!

Meanwhile, the tiger wakes up from his refreshing slumber, stretches himself and growls with satisfaction. He sees the headmaster cowering in the attic and feels sorry for him. Wanting to assure the headmaster that he means him no harm, he puts his forelegs on the wallscratching it and growling softly. This further frightens the headmaster so much that he loses control over his bowels and bladder. Outside in the school compound, the Master sees Alphonse and the Chairman of the “Save Tiger Committee” talking in whispers, after which the Chairman consults

with his Committee members who sign some papers and hands them over to Alphonse. The papers declare that the tiger is indeed a man-eater and Alphonse is permitted to kill him. The Master suspects that Alphonse has offered a good bribe to the Committee to get the permit as he is carrying on a flourishing trade exporting tiger skins!

Armed with the permit to shoot the man-eater, Alphonse announces to the crowd to clear the place and move a hundred yards to the school gate which would give them a head-start if the tiger chased them. He allows the Committee members to bolt themselves up in an adjacent classroom. In order to steady his shaking hands, Alphonse takes out a flask from his hip pocket and takes a long swig out of it. Repeating the action every other minute, he soon empties the flask. As he is still feeling shaky, he puts the blame on the diluted rum he has taken. The Master approaches the now drunk and abusive Alphonse, who has forgotten all about his mission to kill the tiger and to save the headmaster. With his power of suggestion, the Master makes Alphonse fall asleep and proceeds to unlock the door to let the tiger out. The Chairman from the adjacent room stops him from entering the headmaster's room unarmed, as it amounts to committing suicide, and taking one's life is unlawful. The Master persists in his design and quoting the Gita that says that life and death are in no one's hand; he unlocks the door but not before the Committee has made him write and sign an affidavit holding none of them responsible for his death. Unfortunately for them, the Master had written the undertaking in Sanskrit which none of them know.

The tiger feels annoyed when he hears a key turn in the lock of his door, as he wants no one to disturb his newly-found freedom after his long suffering at the hands of the cruel ring-master. And suspecting that the visitor is someone who wants to send him back to the circus life, he dashes forward to kill him but falls back against the door. He loses all his energy to harm the now invisible visitor who speaks to him asking him to forget his outward appearance. The voice is that of the Master who further tells him that every creature from birth possesses aggressiveness but as old age overtakes it, it loses its faculties; and so would he lose his ferocity with time. In some mysterious way, he begins to understand what the voice is saying. He longs to go back to his jungle life and forget all about human beings and their ways. Reading his thoughts, the voice tells him that there is no going back to his old life now, as he is to start a new one. He is then ordered to sit aside without stirring so that he, the Master, could bring down the headmaster from the attic. The tiger can not make out the features of the Master, which seem to exist in a haze which persists all through their future association. Nevertheless, he obeys the Master and sits in a corner while the Master, by placing a chair and a stool atop a table, manages to reach the loft and brings down the badly shaken headmaster, after great persuasion, but not before the chair and the stool give way and the headmaster lands on the floor with a mighty thud. The Master pushes the headmaster out of the room.

Alone in the room, the Master tells the tiger that he is going to lead him out of the room but he should make no eye-contact with the people who are by nature timid and panicky and might feel terrorized at his sight. The Master also wants him to keep his head bowed and notice nothing, lest he be distracted by the crowds on the streets. Then he cautions the people outside to move out of the way as he is bringing the tiger out. When they both come out, the crowd has vanished and only their voices are heard from where they are hiding themselves. As they leave the school gate, people on the streets stand petrified when they see

a holyman moving calmly out of the town towards the mountains and a tiger following him tamely.

Soon after, the restaurant, which was the tiger's first stop in the town, is doing brisk business, filled with patrons who are excitedly discussing the antecedents of the tiger-tamer, who had walked out of the school with a tiger in tow. Some think he is a yogi from the Himalayas. However, Jayaraj, a photo-framer, happens to know the identity of the tiger-man. He tells his company that when the man had passed near him and asked him not to fear the tiger, he had immediately recognized him from his voice and from the shape of his eyes and features, even though his body had shrunk and his face was covered with hair. He couldn't recall his name but remembered him as a young boy who had once been arrested for being associated with the Independence Movement. Later, he had seen him driving a car, with his family and he appeared quite well-off. He had once come to him to get his passport photo taken which he never collected. But one day Jayaraj heard that the man had abandoned his family and vanished. Jayaraj wanted to forget all about the man and his tiger just like Alphonse who, after coming out of his stupor, had forgotten all about the tiger that had come to Malgudi.

Check Your Progress 5

1) Name the town that the tiger reached after his escape from the filmset.

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2) What did the headmaster do to save himself from the tiger?

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3) Who is the Master in the story and how does he save the tiger from being killed by Alphonse?

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2.3.4 Stage Four

The last phase describes the tiger's life in the ashram of the holy man who becomes his Master or Guru; the philosophical discourses of his Master about life and death, about God and self-realization; his spiritual transformation under his Guru's influence and guidance; his reaching old age and his subsequent transfer to a zoo to spend his remaining life in peace.

The Master and the tiger pass through many villages and everywhere people stare at them dumbstruck. So quiet are they at the sight of this strange duo that the Master remarks that every town and village must have a tiger to maintain discipline. The tiger looks at no one, as ordered by his Master, who tells him that all mischief starts with the eyes. The eyes pick out objects indiscriminately which the mind follows, and the body, in its turn, is conditioned by the mind and performs the actions. This chain of activity leads man into many troubles. So one should not look indiscriminately at objects. Consequently, the tiger starts feeling guilty to look at cattle or other creatures as his rightful food.

As they descend a hill, they see a flower – decked chariot being pulled by men playing pipes and drums and scattering flowers on the chariot which carries the image of God. The place is swarming with children and vendors selling their wares. At the sight of the tiger, the men abandon the holy chariot in the middle of the road and run for safety. The Master runs after them and coaxes them back telling them that his tiger is godly and loves to hear music. Perforce the men resume playing their pipes and drums. In another village, they come across two groups of men engaged in a bloody fight. As soon as they see the tiger, they quickly disperse and the Master sadly remarks that people should not need a tiger to maintain peace!

On reaching the Mempi range, the Master finds a ledge, with a rock jutting above it, and chooses the place as his shelter. There is a spring that bubbles up from a cavity in the rocks a little farther. The Master tells the tiger that he can drink at the spring but that he must find his own food as he cannot force him to eat roots and greens, adding that he feels responsible only for his friend's mind and soul but has no power over his body. The tiger accepts the advice and makes his own arrangements to catch his food. The whole day he sits at the entrance to the shelter while the Master sits in meditation. In the evenings, he talks to the tiger to help him understand the concepts of life and death and the existence of God whom he calls the Creator of everything and the ultimate source of power and strength. When he asks the tiger later to define God, the tiger answers that God must be an enormous tiger with great strength. The master laughs but gives him credit for thinking of God as one made in his —the tiger's image. He further explains that "He may be everything we imagine and more. In Bhagawad Gita, He reveals himself in a mighty terrifying form... He is within every one of us and we derive our strength from Him." (p 158). The Master does not treat the tiger as an animal, but in some secret way he tries to transform him.

The daily routine of the Master was simple. Getting up at dawn, he used to bathe in the spring, wash his loin cloth, pray and meditate and collect roots and herbs from the forest for his food. He spoke little and often meditated deeply. In his benign company the tiger too senses a change coming over him. The keenness of his hunger was gone. When hungry he still went to the jungle to hunt game but would feel remorseful afterwards. He now killed only to satisfy his hunger and not his gluttony. He even went without food on consecutive days, as he thought this penance would make him worthy of his Master's grace. At night he slept behind a screen of creepers and bushes, quite close to his Master and chose another stream to drink water from so as not to sully the spring his Master used. He found this phase of life most elevating and longed to shed his ferocious appearance, and live on air and dry grass. Sensing his feelings, the Master told him to stop brooding on what was impossible. It was enough that he had started realizing himself and could feel and express his thoughts, although understood only by his Master. One thing the Guru did not teach him, however, was the art of reckoning numbers and figures and a sense of time. It was necessary only for human beings,

he said, and then too it made them miserable as they lived more in the past and the future, losing the power to appreciate the present living moment.

One day, the Master inadvertently mentions his past and senses that the tiger wants to know, more. He tells the tiger that the knowledge of his past was unnecessary to him. “Knowledge, like food, must be taken within limits” (p 161) otherwise the mind is overburdened with facts and information that, like fetters, pull down the rising soul. Therefore, he would recount only the bare facts of his life that his companion, the tiger, needed to know. He narrates how he once lived a worldly life, busy and active, living by the clock, wanting people to respect him. But a day came when all this seemed senseless and like Siddhartha, the Buddha, he fled his home, leaving his wife, children and wealth behind. They searched for him in vain and concluded that he must have been washed off in the flooded Sarayu river that flowed behind his house.

The news of them living in the Mempi hills somehow reaches the villages and brings a group of peasants, bearing baskets of flowers and fruits, to their ashram. They address the Master as *Swamiji*, prostrate before him and say that they have come for his *darshan* despite being afraid of his tiger. The Master tells them to prostrate only before God and have only His *darshan* and not to call him *Swamiji* as he is one of them. He accepts only a token from their offerings, returning the rest. The group confesses that they are the ones the *Swamiji* had seen fighting among themselves once and promise never to fight again. They beg him to forgive them but he tells them to ask God to forgive them. They want to tell him about the cause of their quarrel but he cuts them short and says if there is hatred in the heart of man, the smallest reason is enough to spark off a fight. He advises them to shed all hatred and live peacefully with each other.

One day, as the tiger sits by his meditating Master, he too feels his mind rise to a sublime level. He forgets about his physical self, his vision became clearer and he is filled with pure joy at the sight of the beautiful nature around him. The Master, sensing the change in him, tells him that it is difficult to imagine that a tiger could have so much poetic joy and that he must have been a poet in his previous life because “whatever one had thought or felt is never lost, but is buried in one’s personality and carried from birth to birth.” (p. 166). Cutting short his discourse, the Master cautions him to go behind the shrubs as he has seen a woman coming towards the ashram. Through the foliage, the tiger sees the woman whom he can not make out till the Master describes her to him— as a middle aged woman, over fifty years old, dark, with grey hair and of medium height. The lady approaches the master and prostrates before him. She tells him that she has heard about him from a neighbour who had recounted to her how a bare-bodied sadhu had helped her find her lost son the day the tiger had come to Malgudi. She has also heard from people about a sadhu living in the Mempi hills and had come to meet him, even at the risk of her life as she had been robbed by three men in the jungle. But they had only robbed her and gone away and had not been guilty of deserting their families and home. The Master is briefly disconcerted at this and recognises her to be his wife but refuses to admit that he is the same sadhu her neighbor had seen. As he rubs a finger over his brow, the woman insists that he is the same sadhu, as the neighbour had also told her of this peculiar gesture of his and she also had always noticed her husband do the same when he was thinking or solving family problems. She is now sure that he is her husband with whom she had spent so many years of her life. She begs him to either return to his family or else allow her to live with him at the ashram, but he turns down both suggestions. He tells her that to attain this state he has gone through great hardship and it is unthinkable to slide back now. The wife berates him for his callousness, without affecting the

Master's equanimity, and at last she leaves the ashram wiping her tears. The tiger who had watched and heard everything, is much moved. He goes without food that night and stays away from his Master who sits in deep meditation for many days.

The tiger has no reckoning of time but, as the days pass, he becomes less inclined to get up and move, lying behind the shrubs for long hours. He finds it a strain to go hunting. His teeth have fallen and he takes a long time in eating. Consequently, he is underfed and his skin now hangs loose over his emaciated body. His hearing too is impaired and he can not hear when his Master calls. It is old age that had overtaken him. In this age, the Master explains, "faculties are dimmed one by one so that we may be restful...before one goes to sleep." (p. 174). The tiger may live for another five years but he does not want him to starve or be attacked by other creatures without his friend, the Master, to protect him. He elaborates that he too is going to attain *samadhi* and wants to free himself of all bondage. His bond with the tiger therefore soon will be over. The Master concludes: "No relationship, human or other, or any association of any kind can last for ever. Separation is the law of life right from the mother's womb. One has to accept it if one has to live in God's plan". Therefore, he had asked the head of a zoo in the town to take his friend in so that he would spend the rest of his years in the company of other animals and be safe in a cage where he would be fed often and move freely in an enclosure. The tiger accepts the plan of his Master without questioning, like he has always done.

The zoo manager arrives in a few days to take away Raja. He looks a kind man and holds no whip in his hand like the ring-master. He tells the Master that his tiger is the most magnificent animal he has ever seen. The tiger likes the man who seems to be fond of animals, as he pats his head without fear. The Master tells him that Raja only looks like a tiger but is a sensitive soul who can think and feel like a human. He requests the zoo head to treat him kindly and not to put him with rough animals. He then leads Raja to the cage and asks him to enter it, telling him that he was beginning a new life in the zoo where he would make all who see him very happy. His parting whisper to the tiger is, "Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? So goodbye for the present." (p. 176).

This is how Raja, a circus tiger possessing the soul of an enlightened human being, now grown old and lying in his cage in a zoo, ruminates on his past and narrates the story of his life to us.

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) Which two incidents make the Master comment that every town and village needed a tiger to maintain peace and discipline?

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- 2) Why did the Master hand over Raja the tiger, to the head of a zoo?

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2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you learnt that R.K. Narayan takes a tiger as the protagonist of his novel who narrates the story of his life in the first person. The story develops through four distinct stages of the tiger's life — the tiger's cub hood; his life in a circus; his sojourn to Malgudi town; his life with a holy man in an ashram in the hills from where he is sent to a zoo.

2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. *Swami and Friends*: Graham Greene.
2. Refer to the last few paragraphs of 2.2.1:R.K. Narayan's Malgudi.

Check Your Progress 2

1. He once saw a hermit moving around with a tiger during the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad. He also came across a picture of a tiger on a bookmark with the caption "I'd love to get into a good book. These incidents triggered the idea in his mind.

Check Your Progress 3

1. The narrator in the novel is Raja, a circus tiger, who wants to narrate his life story to the people who visit the zoo where he has come to live out his old age.
2. Some hunters killed the tiger's family with the help of the villagers. The tiger tried to avenge the killings by stalking and poaching the villagers' cattle.

Check Your Progress 4

1. "Grand Malgudi Circus"
2. Captain, with the help of forest guards, placed an iron cage with a live goat inside it as a bait to catch the tiger. He camouflaged himself and sat on a tree-branch, waiting for the tiger to come. Tempted by the bleating goat, the tiger soon appeared but just as he pounced on the goat, he was trapped in the cage.
3. A long whip and a chair.
4.

A	B
i) Jaggu	i) Wrestler
ii) Reeta	ii) Trapeze artiste
iii) Madhusudan	iii) Film producer and director
iv) Captain	iv) Ring-master/Circus Manager
v) Raja	v) Circus tiger
5. He first growled to warn Captain; when he raised his paw to fend off the electric gadget in Captain's hand, he took care to retract his claws so as not to hurt Captain.

Check Your Progress 5

1. Malgudi
2. He jumped on his table and speedily lifted himself into the loft.
3. He is the sadhu, the yogi, who befriends the tiger. The Master calls in the “Save Tiger Committee” to prevent the tiger from being shot by Alphonse, the hunter. But when Alphonse gives a substantial bribe to the Committee members to get from them the permit to kill the tiger, the Master with his power of suggestion makes the drunk Alphonse go to sleep. He, then unlocks the door to let the tiger out of the headmaster’s room and leads him out of Malgudi towards the distant hills.

Check Your Progress 6

1. As the Master and the tiger passed through villages and towns, the people were dumbstruck to see them and were subdued into silence. At one place, two groups of men, engaged in a bloody fight, dispersed as soon as they saw the tiger. These two incidents made the Master comment that a tiger’s presence was a must in every town and village to maintain peace and discipline.
2. The Master intended to attain *Samadhi* and as he would not be around to protect Raja, now grown old and weak, from being attacked by the other creatures of the jungle, nor prevent him from starving to death, as he could no longer hunt for his food, the Master thought it best to put him in a zoo where he would be fed and taken care of for the rest of his remaining life.