



TDC Part III Eng Hons. Teaching Material to be Updated on College Site

Shailendra Kr Mukul <skmukul2002@yahoo.co.in>
 Reply-To: "skmukul2002@yahoo.co.in" <skmukul2002@yahoo.co.in>
 To: LANGAT SINGH COLLEGE <lscollegeprincipal@gmail.com>

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III Part

The Critical Appreciation of "The Tiger and the Deer"

/kaikrta/ Born in Calcutta and educated at King's College, Cambridge, Aurobindo Ghose is a versatile genius of India. He is a poet, prophet, playwright, thinker and translator whose creative output spreads over a period of sixty years from 1890 to 1950. Besides his famous epics, Urvasi (1896) and Savitri (1946), he has a large number of lyrics and sonnets to his credit. Among his lyrics, "The Tiger and the Deer" is a vision of good and evil, innocence and experience in free quantitative verse.

The poem is a superb description of the tiger — its features, gait, terror and killing. The tiger is a bright and burning beast with "mighty chest", "gleaming eyes" and murderous "paws". It is slouching with grandeur and terror in the green heart of the forest. The terror of the tiger is felt even by the inanimate wind that slips through the leaves to keep silence and avoid disturbance to it. It crouches and creeps and creeps and crouches, waiting to pounce on its prey. This is its characteristic way in which it attacked the beautiful wild deer drinking water from a pool in the shade of a forest. The deer fell down and died, leaving its mate alone in the midst of the thick forest. The killing of the deer by the tiger symbolizes the destruction of the wild by the civil and the beautiful by the heart.

the weaker, of the meaner by the meaner.

"Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature."

But, all of a sudden, there is a shift in the mood of the poet. The poet is hardly moved by the death of "the mild harmless beauty". What concerns him much is the gradual decrease in the population of the tigers in India. They seem to be threatened by the

danger of extinction. A day may come in future when there will be no tigers crouching and creeping in the dangerous heart of the forest. There will be no killing and the beautiful deer will drink from the pool in the forest without fear. The tiger symbolizing the mighty dies while the deer symbolizing the slain survives. Here the poet has

made excellent use of a paradox in which the mighty perish on account of their terror and cruelty. The meek, on the other hand, suffer but do not perish. Consequently, the weak survive the strong:

"The mighty perish in their might;
The slain survive the slayer."

The poem, as the very title suggests, is built on the contrast between the ferocious tiger and the meek deer. Though both of them to the poet are beautiful, they stand in sharp contrast with each other. While one is strong and cruel, the other is mild and harmless. However terrifying and cruel the tiger may be, it has "petiless splendour" that marks the forest. The whole poem is written in free quantitative verse that enables the poet to describe "the bright and burning terror of the forest" in a vivid and eloquent style. "Brilliant, crouching, slouching" with the verb 'crept' forms an internal rhythm in the free verse helping the poet in his task.

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