

The Portrayal of Baldeo's Valor in Ruskin Bond's, "*The Tiger in the Tunnel.*"

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Abstract

The Tiger in The Tunnel is a short story by Ruskin Bond, one of the most popular Anglo-Indian novelists and a short story writer. It is a simple and heart-touching story of tribal person Baldeo and his son, Tembu. The essence of the story is captured in its simplicity and innocence. Baldeo works as a watchman on the railway, which is inside the Forest. He dies in his encounter with the man-eater tiger. He fights bravely and injures the man-eater tiger. After his death, his son, Tembu, takes responsibility for the family, though he is only 12 years old. He joins the service in place of his father. Thus, the father shows physical courage in fighting with the man eater-tiger, and the son shows moral courage by taking upon himself the responsibility of his mother and sister after his father's death. Baldeo shows his braveness in this story by fighting all alone with the man-eater tiger.

Keywords: Bravery, Khalasi (Watchman), signal-stop, Man-eater, Painful roar, cowcatcher, Sentimental, etc.

The Tiger in the Tunnel by Ruskin Bond is a story of simplicity, courage, and bravery. Baldeo was a tribal man. He had a wife, and two children, Tembu, an elder son of twelve years, and a younger daughter. Baldeo lived in a small tribal village on the border of the Forest. He had a small rice field to maintain his family. But the rice yield was always less than the family needed. And to run his livelihood, he chose and felt lucky to work as a Khalasi. So, Baldeo joined the railway service. A month ago, he was appointed as the Khalasi at the small wayside signal stop at the entrance of the tunnel. His duty was to light the lamp in the tunnel at night and to signal the railway driver that the tunnel was clear from hindrance. He was happy to have got the job because it supported the family. The only difficult thing about the duty was that he was supposed to come to the lonely, surrounded by Forest tunnel

signal spot at night time. But, as Baldeo was a tribal himself, he was used to the jungle, wild animals, and the ways in the jungle. Sometimes, his son Tembu used to give company to him at the tunnel signal spot. On that ill-fated night, Baldeo had gone all alone to signal the overland mail. It was the usual fearful night of the jungle. On his way to the signal spot, Baldeo groped his way and stumbled down something.

He heard the different sounds of the wild animals. But he was not afraid of them. He had his axe, which he could use to protect himself. After reaching his duty spot, he lit the lamp and waited for the train to come. Soon, he sensed the sound of the tiger. He had heard about the man-eater tunnel tiger. Baldeo gathered the courage to protect himself from the possible attack of the tiger. He held his axe tightly in his hand. He saw a brute of a huge body, having brilliant eyes. It was a tiger, a man-eater tiger. The tiger was experienced in attacking men, for it had been preying on them for years. As the tiger attacked Baldeo with its right paw, Baldeo very quickly avoided his stroke and brought his axe to the tiger's shoulder. Being a tribal person, he was brave enough to face the tiger, and usually, he carried a small axe with him for safety. It was seriously injured. It gave a painful roar and attempted to close Baldeo again. This time Baldeo wanted to give a fatal blow to the tiger, but the tiger avoided it, and the axe fell on the leg only. Baldeo's luck was not on his side, the axe remained stuck in the bone, and he was left without a weapon. The wounded, angry tiger sprang upon Baldeo and tore him into pieces. Baldeo counted his last breath. Now the wounded tiger licked his turned leg and roared with pain. But it was caught in the tunnel when the train was coming. Tiger could not save himself due to his limping leg.

The railway engine head cut the tiger into two pieces; one of them was found on the cowcatcher to the railway driver at the next station. Back at home, Tembu, Baldeo's son, waited for his father. At last, he came to see his father at the signal spot and found his father killed by the tiger. His mother, sister, and he mourned the death of Baldeo. But life made them forget the grief and at least earn a living. Tembu joined the railway job as a tunnel signalman in place of his father at an early age. He was bold like his father. Again, he had no fear of the tiger, as it was killed by his father, and he had his father's axe with him and he how to use it. In this way, Baldeo has shown heroism in this story by accepting the difficult job of the signalman in the Forest full of dangerous animals and fighting all alone with the man-eater tiger. It's Indian culture that when a man like Baldeo faces any difficult life-taking situation, he never gives up easily without fighting with it. Similarly, Baldeo fought with the man-eater tiger bravely till his last breath and died only after wounding that tiger fatally.

Conclusion:

The researcher concludes by giving the idea that Baldeo's heroism is the heroism of a **prevalent** man struggling against forces greater than himself and yet not losing faith in himself. Baldeo's heroism is much more universal than it appears from a cursory reading. His heroism is not to any individual act. It is reflected even across the generations. Moreover, Baldeo is not a hero because he killed a tiger. He is a hero because he chose to fight, even when the odds were so deliberately against him.

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