

### **Depiction of Baldeo's Heroism 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, an Indian writer in English. It is the story of Baldeo and his son, Tembu. Baldeo is a railway watch-man. He dies in his encounter with the man-eater tiger. He fights very bravely and injures the man-eater tiger. After his death, the son, Tembu takes the responsibility of the family, though only of 12 years of age. He joins the service in place of his father. Thus, the father shows the physical courage fighting with the man eater tiger and the son shows the moral courage taking upon himself the responsibility of his mother and sister after his father's death. Baldeo shows heroism in this story by fighting all alone with the man-eater tiger.

**Keywords :** bravery, khalasi, signal-stop, man-eater, painful roar, cowcatcher, etc.

*The Tiger in the Tunnel* by Ruskin Bond is a story of 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 small rice fields to maintain his family. But, the rice yield was always less than the family needed. So, Baldeo had 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 very happy to have got the job, because, it supported the family. The only difficult thing of 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 at his duty spot, he lighted the lamp and was waiting for the train to come. Soon, he sensed the sound of the tiger. He had heard about the man-eater tunnel tiger. Baldeo gathered courage to protect himself from the possible attack of the tiger. He held his axe tightly in his hand. He saw a brute of the huge body, having brilliant eyes. It was a tiger a man-eater tiger. The tiger was experienced to attack 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 on the tiger's shoulder. It was injured seriously 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 lag 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 in to 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, the life made them to forget the grief and at least to earn living. Tembu, joined the railway job of a tunnel signal-man in place of his father, at his 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 the heroism in this story by accepting the difficult job of the signal man in the forest full with the dangerous animals and fighting all alone with the man-eater tiger. Its 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.

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