



FRAMING  
FEARFUL  
SYMMETRIES

# INTRODUCTION

Whilst this book includes scientific information about tigers and suggests innovative techniques for their conservation, its tigers roam far beyond physical jungles, and the reader is invited to track these tigers through personal, psychological and philosophical terrain. This book does not cover the standard 'tiger topics' of geographical distribution, life-history, size and weight, fossils, art and advertising etc. – assuming the reader interested in tigers has access to this information many times over.

Perhaps 'interested in tigers' sounds too tepid – tigers are usually associated with higher temperatures and burn brightly beyond Blake's forests of the night. Finding the exact words to describe your reaction to, or the impression made by a tiger, might be difficult and, even if found, they probably can't quite capture the tiger, or your feelings. For now 'passion for' might be preferable to 'interest in'.

Yet, passion cannot be seen from a scientific perspective and you might see a tiger in terms of biology, ecology and genetics, and what some scientists see as a refined product of aeons of evolutionary blindness and natural selection.

You possibly stand somewhere between the romantic and the scientist, somewhere between mysticism and reason, recognising functionality at the same time as aesthetic beauty and sensing something of mystery and unanswered questions. Even from a purely romantic viewpoint, you may still see ecological connections and the tiger's role in a greater scheme while, at the other extreme, a scientific view might see something silently challenging any claim that a tiger can only be form and function.

All these views can be seen from trails leading through the following chapters. Some of our questions and the difficulties we have defining our reactions to a tiger, might be answered or resolved along the way. However, complementing these, you might find that we can learn as much from questions that remain unanswered, such as those of William Blake's. Poems in addition to Blake's have relevance for our journey and, rather than relegate apt verses of poetry to decorate chapter headings, they feature in the text where they convey meanings more effectively than prose.

From wherever you view the tiger, there should be something in this book to interest you and, perhaps, something tempting you to try another viewpoint. For readers wanting to read about tiger biology, chapter II offers content which, to this author's knowledge, has not been published before, and should therefore be of fresh interest. Readers not particularly interested in tiger biology could omit most of chapter II, picking up at subsection 'Notes on Innate v. Reasoned Behaviour'. Jim Corbett is the main topic of chapter III, and we rest at his place for a while, taking a break from the exclusive rule of reason. This marks the mid-point of our journey and from there onward we consider points of view not completely constrained by logic and reason - without dismissing those that are.

In chapter IV we look into some of nature's mysterious mirrors and in Chapter V learn of conservation programmes and their importance for us all. However, trying to halt and reverse the decline of tigers, or any other species, without addressing our other environmental problems is of limited value or a waste of time, comparable to trying to save a leaf on a tree while the trunk is being sawn through. Although there seems to be an endless array of problems to address (environmentally and otherwise) many of them, when examined, do reveal common connections. In terms of the analogy just used; tracing sufficient 'leaves' backward leads us to branches, boughs and then a trunk. These interconnections cover a wide breadth of topics, not allowing an in-depth analysis of any particular one. Hence, experts on 'leaves and branches' may note much that is missing or mistaken but, hopefully, the main connections are illustrated clearly enough for readers to make their own investigations and subsequently fill in and correct as necessary.

Examination reveals many of our problems to be as old as humanity. However, unlike previous generations, the scale of these problems is now global and critical and, as we have nowhere else to go, we need to finally address them and do so without further delay. Although the most important of the solutions are of equal vintage, the suggestions presented here offer some fresh perspectives and, if these new labels on old bottles prove appealing and prompt an active response, their contents will bring benefits to the tiger, the environment, and the reader.

END OF BOOK PREVIEW