

Chapter – III

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

Faith in human life is an exclusive motive power. It is the very essence of human life. Faith is that confidence or trust on a person or thing that is not based on proof; or it may refer to a particular system of religious belief. Broadly, there are six stages of faith development which begins since childhood and continues up to late adulthood – Intuitive, mythic, synthetic, individuative, conjunctive & universalizing faith. The first five stages are easy to acquire and one can choose to be fixed on a certain stage for lifespan. But sixth stage is the highest point of faith development which can be rarely attained by someone. It is the stage of 'enlightenment' where a person is uplifted from all the prevailed system of faith and lives his life on universal principles like love and compassion. Yann Martel's *Life of pi* is a spiritual journey of a young Indian boy whose firm faith in god keeps him alive in ocean on lifeboat with a Bengali tiger for 227 days. The theme of faith is the backbone of this novel. As it is stated by Jonathan Feng that, "Pi's story is a unique, high-seas adventure with many underlying theme. At its core is the idea of religious faith" (Feng, 2007). *Life of Pi* is a postmodern adventure novel which Martel has framed with an assertion that he is going to present "a story that will make you believe in God" (Martel, *Life* XII).

Life of a Pi a story of a young Indian boy named Piscine Molitor Patel (Pi) who lives in Pondicherry with his family. His father is a zookeeper and his mother is a housewife. He is raised with his brother in his father's zoo. Subsequently, because of political disturbance in India his family has to move to Canada in a ship along with zoo animal. Unfortunately this ship wrecks

and sinks and lives Pi in a lifeboat with a 450 pounds Bengali tiger. Bearing all the hardships, Pi still manages to live for 227 day in the ocean and ultimately finds land as Mexican Beach. Martel presents such an implausible story where Pi survives after a series of sufferings and traumas. His inner faith, belief in God and his spiritual become his strength in the adverse circumstances. PBC has reported this story as one of “personal growth through adversity”.

The inner growth of Pi, his religious faith, his spiritual thirst and the understanding of this physical world can be analyzed through three phases of his life. In the first phase of his life, he is shown as a devotee of God who practices three different religions at the same time –Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Though, his faith in these religions is rational not irrational one. The driving force behind following the multi religion is the words of Mahatma Gandhi that “All religions are true” (Martel, Life 69). The second phase is full of adversities, now he sees life, his faith and love of God through the lens of a physical world depicted as wondrous, brutal and deeply mystifying”. (Feng, 2007). In the third phase of his life, he is a man of satisfaction as he has attained a peaceful mind and has understood the meaning of life.

This book can also be divided into three parts. The first part describe Pi’s childhood in Pondicherry, his interaction with animals and with different religious. The second part describes his life in Pacific Ocean with Richard Parker. And the third part about the incidents when he is back to land.

The novel begins with the Author’s note which is an integral part of the novel. Martel has used a unique idea of storytelling which works throughout the novel’s intricate structure. A fictional author has been introduced in the novel who is writing about Pi’s life. The fictional character is very similar to Yann Martel as he is also a Canadian writer. This Martel like writer describes that how after the failure of his two novels he comes to India to do the research work

on his next novel which is set in Portugal. But the idea of this new novel has too soon sputtered and died. The depressed author leaves Bombay and moves to south India, and finally arrives in the town of Pondicherry. There, in a coffee house, he confronts with an elder man named Francis Adirubasamy who offers him a story saying, "I have a story that will make you believe in God" (Martel, *Life* XII). The author, however with suspicion accepts his story to work on and moves back to Canada to meet the Protagonist of the story Mr. Patel. To Martel, Pi's story is "the better story" which is full of faith and shows the reality of life through the lens of imagination where the reality of life which is full of doubts is ascribed as "Dry, yeastless factuality". These two phases are recurring motifs throughout the book.

Back to Canada, Martel meets to Pi who is now a scientist in the department of zoology. He has got his bachelor's degree in religious studies and zoology. His religious studies' thesis is concerned with the cosmogony theory of Isaac Luria, while his zoology thesis is about the functional analysis of the three-toed sloth. These academic studies bring him back to life from the sufferings and pains of his previous events. Pi's story starts with tragic note. The opening line is the first chapter is: "My suffering left me sad and gloomy" (Martel, *Life* 3). His sufferings have much reason behind it. He suffers because he had to leave his country, he detached from his family during his shipwreck and he has to undergo various difficulties on the Pacific Ocean where he is left with an adult tiger. He feels miserable because at the time of departure Richard Parker did not returns back to say goodbye. He suffers of dying hunger. He is surrounded by a sense of guilt as well as grief when he kills his first fish. He suffers because he sees the unnatural death of zebra, orangutan and hyena and he suffers from the fear of his own death by the tiger. Even after coming to Mexico his sufferings do not end. He has nightmare. He says that his

“Pains like an axe that chops at my heart “(Martel, Life 6). Academic studies and his religious faith bring him back to life.

Further story goes in flashback. It goes continue in Pi’s voice. His name Pi is the short form of Piscine Molitor which is the name of a swimming pool. So, he is name after a swimming pool by Francis Adirubasamy whom he calls mamaji. Hence, Pi is not his technical name; he himself changes his name from Piscine to Pi because every now and then he has been teasing by other children who often call him “Pissing” instead of “piscine”. So, he settles a plan of an action that he will be “known to all as...Pi Patel... $\pi=3.14$ ” to resolve the problem of similar pronunciation of Piscine and pissing. (Martel, Life 22-23). In another incident, he is again ridiculed when living in Montreal in his university days, he orders a pizza. Escaping telling his real name he says to the pizza boy that his name is “I am who I am”. Half an hour later two pizzas arrived for “Ian Hoolihan” (Martel, Life 20). His nickname is presented as a symbol as it is a mathematical term and a Greek letter. In mathematics, it is an irrational and unending number to be used for reason. In the words of Mensch, Morse explains that this irrational number, “expresses the inability to find a common measure – an exact ratio – between the circumstances and the diameter of a circle. It is a number that goes on forever” (12). Therefore, Pi also takes over this irrational number as his nickname for a reason when he says,” in that Greek letter that looks like a shake with a corrugated tin roof, in that elusive, irrational number with which scientists try to understand the universe, I found refuge” (Martel, Life 24). Hence, both the names ‘Ian Hoolihan’ and ‘ π ’ are the mixture of contrary things. “I am who I am, Ian Hoolihan” blends religious allusion into reality the same way as “ π ” blends the irrational with the rational” (Morse 12). Pi has to do a lot of struggle to make his teachers and classmates accept his nickname. He compares humans to animals while making them understand about his new name.

He says, “Repetition is important in the training not only of animals but also of human” (Martel, Life 23)

Martel subtly balance to show the human’s animal kind of nature and the humanly nature of animals. In the beginning of the 8th chapter he says that “the most dangerous animal in a zoo is man” (Martel, Life 29). The zoo visitors as well as the zookeepers have injured and tortured animals in much heinous way, sometimes even more wired ways. His father had put a question on a wall: DO YOU KNOW WHICH IS THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMAL IN THE ZOO?” (Martel, Life 31). An arrow instructed people towards a curtain and behind the curtain there is a mirror which obviously proves that the answer is ‘MAN’. But Pi’s realizes it later that this saying is not completely true. Human himself is not dangerous for them but it is his way to see animals through human eyes which is called *Animalus anthropomorphicus*. Pi too sees animals through his innocent humanly eyes. His father decides to make it visible the wilderness of dangerous animals. He chooses a Bengali tiger for this. He puts a goat before the tiger and the tiger cruelly kills it. Both Pi and his brother Ravi are horrified with this sight. Pi learns a lesson for lifetime that “an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us, twice: once with father and once with Richard Parker.” (Martel, Life 31).

Further, in the novel, Martel moves from animal rituals to humans religious rituals. At a very early age, Pi has grown his interest in religion and theology. Pi is a strong religious believer as he is a following Hinduism, Christianity and Islam simultaneously. This surprising interest and belief and these three religious is inspect by one wish that he wants to love God. He throws a question to the pursuers that “We are all born like Catholics, aren’t we – in Limbo. Without religion, until some figure introduced us to God?” (Martel, Life 47). He is also introduced to

Hinduism by his mother and aunt. He is raised as a Hindu. He glorifies the rituals of Hindu religion. It has been give the first position among all other religions. Pi says,

I am a Hindu because of sculptured cones of red kumkum powder and basket of yellow turmeric nuggets, because of garlands of flowers and pieces of broken coconut, because of the clanging of bells to announce one's arrival to God, because of the whine of the reedy nadaswaram and the beating of drums, because of the patter of bare feet against stone floor down dark corridors pierced by shaft of sunlight, because of the fragrance of incense, because of flames of aratilamps circling in the darkness, because of bhajansbeing sweetly sung, because of elephants standing around to bless, because of colourful murals telling colourful stories, because of foreheads carrying, variously signified, the same word-faith (Martel, Life 47).

With the passage of time, he is deeply rooted with Hinduism and asserts that "I feel at home in a Hindu temple... My heart still skips a beat when I catch sight of the murit, of God Residing, in the inner sanctum of the temple" (Martel, Life 48). To him, "Religion is more than rite and ritual" (Martel, Life 48). The principles of Hinduism have inspired him very much. He says, "Truth of life is that Brahman is no different from Atman, the spiritual force within us, what you might call the soul" (Martel, Life 48). The ultimate truth of Reality in Hinduism is Brahman, the infinite, and knowing this ultimate truth is the sole purpose of a man. As Radhakrishnan remarks, "Brahman denotes the ritual and so is regarded as omnipotent. He who knows Brahman knows and controls the universe. Brahman becomes the primal principle and guiding spirit of the universe. There is nothing more ancient or brighter than this Brahman" (Radhakrishnan, Basic 115). Now the universe makes sense via Hindu eyes to him. He is touched by the universality of Hindu Gods. "There is Brahman, the world soul, the sustaining frame upon

which is woven, warp and weft, the cloth of being, with all its decorative elements of space and time” (Martel, Life 48). And it is through the Hindu religion Pi learns the importance of Karma and believes that Hinduism can land anyone towards liberation. He states, “The Paths of liberation are numerous, but the bank along the way is always same, the bank of Karma, where the liberation accounts of each of us is credited or debited depending on our actions” (Martel, Life 49). Hence, it is his unshakable faith in God which strengthens him in the Pacific Ocean and eventually saves his life.

However, Pi praises Hinduism for its pantheistic facets and describes it as such a religion which can bring liberation from the birth cycle to human and he mentions that he will be a Hindu all his life as through Hindu he sees his “place in the universe” (Martel, Life 49). Yet he does not stick only to Hindu religion. It is the only truth. He comes into connective with Christianity when he is fourteen year old visiting Munnar. His prior knowledge about Christianity is bit cynical as “It had a reputation for few gods and great violence” (Martel, Life 51). It is for first time, he steps into a Church where he is moved by the loving nature of father Martin. He is the true representation of “good schools” as he is “open, patient –in case someone, anyone, should want to talk to him; a problem of the soul, a heaviness of the heart a darkness of the conscience he would listen with love and he would offer comfort and guidance to the best of his ability.” (Martel, Life 52). Next day, when he visits to father Martin again he has been told a story which places him in disbelief and he reacts: “What? Humanity sins but its God’s Son who pays the price?” (Martel, Life 53). Unsatisfied and disbelieved Pi asks for any other story because he “had never heard of a Hindu God dying” (Martel, Life 54). He believes that “the world soul cannot die, even in one contained part of it. (Martel, Life 54). But father Martin makes him understand that “Their religion had one story, and to it they come back again and again, over and

over” (Martel, Life 53). Pi feels restless to know that why God took death upon himself; why he did not leave it to the mortals. Father Martin answers him in just one word and that is “Love”.

The stains of Hinduism in him emerged in the form of comparison which he makes in between of Christ and different Hindu Gods. In one of the stories, he tells about Krishna who is scolded by his mother for eating dirt. When his mother Yashoda asks him to open his mouth she sees “the whole complete entire timeless universe” (Martel, Life 55). Next he tells the story of Vishnu, the dwarf. Vishnu asks for three strides land to the demon King Bali and as he gets permission he reintroduced his “full cosmic size” and “with one stride he covers the earth, with the second the heavens, and with the third he boots Bali into the netherworld” (Martel, Life 55).

In his next story, he makes comparison between Christ and Lord Rama who are the most human of avatars. To get his wife back, Rama fights with the evil King of Lanka. He had immense strength which “no man could have and weapons no man could handle” and says, “That is God as God should be” (Martel, Life 55). Pi’s love and affection for Hindu religion can clearly be seen through these fables. But his curiosity for Christianity takes him again and again to Father Martin. After a series of interrogation about Brahman he says to him “Every day I burned with greater indignation against Him, found more flaws to Him” (Martel, Life 56). However, later on, he accepts that “The more He bothered me, the less I could forget Him. And the more I learned about Him, the less I wanted to leave Him” (Martel, Life 57). He opens up his feelings to Father Martin that he wishes to be a Christian. Father Martin replies him with a smile, “You already are, Piscine – in your heart” (Martel, Life 57). Overwhelmed with happiness he offers “thanks to Lord Krishna for having put Jesus of Nazareth whose humanity [he] found so compelling, in [his] way” (Martel, Life 58). So now Pi is a follower of Hindu religion and Christianity as well.

It is hardly after a year when Pi adopts one more religion and that is Islam. Initially, his notion about Islam is like an outsider. To him, it is a worse religion. "Islam had a reputation worse than Christianity's – fewer gods, greater violence, and [he] had never heard anyone say good things about Muslim schools" (Martel, Life 58). Co-incidentally, he comes across with a Muslim named Satish Kumar who is a baker. When they talk about the recipe of bread, Mr. Kumar asks him to excuse him. He does prayer before Pi. Pi is mesmerized by the sight of his prayer and he asks him about his religion. In his reply Mr. Kumar says, "It is about the Beloved" (Martel, Life 60). This very explanation draws his attention towards Muslim religion and he throws a challenge towards readers: "I challenge anyone to understand Islam, and not to love it. It is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion" (Martel, Life 61). Leaving behind the stereotypes, Pi decides to follow one more religion. Now he is follower of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. He feels deeply religious contact in the way Muslims prayer. Under the instructions of Mr. Kumar, he practices Islam. Here it is interesting to know the fact that Pi's life is extremely influenced by two Kumars and both are Satish Kumar. The first Satish Kumar motivates him to study zoology and the second Satish Kumar becomes his inspiration for studying theology. Martel has deliberately used the strategy of same name. "Names are a crucial means by which Martel suggests an interrelationship between science and religion" (Stephen 49).

The reason behind Pi's being multi religious person is the element of "Love". Love is the touchstone on which he examines religion true. The loving and gracious Krishna introduces him to Jesus Christ who pays for humanity sins and dies because of his love for people. Love is at the heart of Christianity according to Father Martin. Before adopting Islam too he is told by Mr. Kumar that Islam is about the "Beloved". Therefore, it is not shocking to see Pi following three religions and also loving his companion on the lifeboat Richard Parker because according to

pantheistic approach of Hinduism Atman or Brahman or “God is universal” (Martel, Life 68). It is in every atom of this universe. So his love for Richard Parker is driven from his religious faith.

In 1977, political turmoil arises in India and government declares ‘The Emergency’. His father decides to leave the country as it is not profitable to do business in such political conditions. They decide to move to Canada along with the zoo animals. They were as displaced from their place as an animal is displaced from his territory. On the Cargo ship, Martel presents the two different worlds and the connection between them. These two worlds are – human world and animal world. To Pi his zoo is the “paradise on earth” and he enjoys the company of zoo animals a lot (Martel, Life 14). He has learnt zoo keeping also from his father which he utilizes on the lifeboat.

With the leaving of the Pi’s family for Canada, we jump towards the second part of the book which is entitled as “The Pacific Ocean”. In the first part, where Martel has revealed the happy and joyful face of life, now he is all set to reveal the sorrowful and somewhat horrifying face of life. His struggle for survival starts with the sinking of the ship. He is left alone on the lifeboat. He sees Richard Parker swimming in the ocean; he gives him lifebuoy by which he is boarded on the lifeboat. It is for the first time readers are introduced with the real image of Richard Parker who is an adult Bengali tiger. Though Pi himself helps him to reach by the boat but soon he realizes his mistake and senses the danger having a tiger on his lifeboat. Besides tiger, there is zebra, an orangutan and a hyena also on the boat. Though, he is with the animals yet he feels the emptiness within him and becomes silent because he has lost his family and is surrounded by the hardships. “[he] was alone and orphaned, in the middle of the Pacific, hanging onto an oar, an adult tiger in front of [him], shark beneath [him], a storm raging about [him]”

(Martel, Life 107). It is his will to survive which keeps him clinging to the oar and out of Richard Parker's reach. Tarpaulin becomes the boundary between him and the animals.

Not only human beings but animals also show their will to survive. Though the zebra falls from forty feet his strong will keeps him alive. An old female orangutan named Orange Juice also presents the power of strong will when "She came floating on an island of bananas" (Martel, Life 111). She reminds him of his mother. Pi consoles himself that he will be soon rescued because people might have got the news of sinking of Tsimtsum. People start imagining happy moments very soon even before vanishing the sufferings. So is with Pi, he too dreams about the reunion with his family. But the whining hyena brings him back to senses.

Danger keeps a person more attentive. Pi too becomes very alert. He keeps one eye on the horizon and other on the lifeboat's end. The presence of the animals on the boat represents Martel's faith in the wonders of life. He presents these animals as the symbol of Pi's religious faith. In the words of Cooper, Feng quotes, "In the novel, the marvelous body of the animal becomes both the image of God and a sign of the inexplicable cruelty of the world" (Feng 2007). Zebra is an image of love and patience which is a feature of Christianity. Richard Parker can be seen in both images of peaceful face of God and the cruel side of the world. Orange juice is the symbol of love whereas hyena is the symbol of violence.

Time moves slowly, Pi and animals they all struggle to survive. There were animals' sounds as well as he notices the sounds the ocean too. For animals, it is the "battle for life" and there is one more battle which has been taking place beneath him "From the water, sudden flapping sounds and swishing sounds that were over and done with in an instant. The battle for life was taking place there too" (Martel, Life 119). With every new day, he wishes to be rescued but soon he leaves this hope too and tries to focus on his survival. The hyena has bitten off the

zebra's leg but zebra remains still alive. People care less about others when their own life is full of struggle; they better think to focus on their own life. When zebra is in pain he "didn't have pity to spare for long [his] sense of empathy is blunted by a terrible, selfish hunger for survival" then how could he be worried by an animal. (Martel, Life 120). Ultimately, the zebra is killed by the hyena. Pi again becomes the witness of brutality of animals. This incident makes even Orange Juice a danger animal that is by the way a peaceful creature. She fights with hyena till her last breath. Her death symbolizes the death of Christ. Pi explains that "She looked like a simian Christ on the Cross. Except for her head. She was beheaded. The neck wound was still bleeding. It was a sight horrible to the eyes and killing to the spirit" (Martel, Life 132). Her death leaves Pi in the state of delirium. Now he is left with two beasts on the lifeboat, one is hyena and the other is Richard Parker. But now the reason of his sufferings is not these two animals but something else is. The fear of hyena does not bother him any more as he comes to know that there is a "greater beast" in the lifeboat. "But the great beast was not behaving like a great beast" (Martel, Life 137). Because Parker too is suffering from sedation and seasickness. Pi has been also dying of hunger and thirst.

Hunger and thirst, these two words are not used simply by Yann Martel and it is not like that these two words have to do only with human physicality, but these words explores the spirituality too. Martel used the word hunger in the very first line of "Author's Note" as "This book was born as I was hungry" (Martel, Life ix). Martel himself, in the beginning of his career, is also hungry for success and "beyond literary success, Martel, the author –author was hungering for a meaningful legacy, a life with a family or a career that was worth something. Just before meeting Adirubasamy, the real and fictional authors were wandering through restless uncertainty" (Morse 16). The reason why Pi does not take stand against hyena is the "lack of

strength and stick, not lack of heart” (Martel, Life 136). It is Pi’s hunger which drags him to the “level of savagery [he] never imagined possible” (Martel, Life 197). Thirst does not let him think anything else. He describes the sufferings created by thirst by giving the exempt of Jesus Christ. “Look: Christ on the cross died of suffocation, but his only complains was of thirst”. So, “ If thirst can be so taxing that even God Incarnate complains about it, imagine the effect on a regular human”.(Martel, Life 135). Hunger restores his faith in religion. “It seems orange- such a nice Hindu colour- is the colour of survival”. (Martel, Life 138). His dire hunger changes his perspective towards the lifeboat which is earlier not less than a death boat.

It’s been only few day in the ocean but Pi has collected all the necessary things of survival. But he has not been overcome by the fear of tiger. He becomes so busy and joyful as well in collating the survival material that he has forgotten about the tiger. Suddenly he awakes “to the reality of Richard Parker. There was a tiger in the lifeboat. I could hardly believe it, yet I knew I had to. And I had to save myself” (Martel, Life 147). Pi’s acknowledgement about his inevitable death allows him to act freely without any kind of fear. It is said in Bhagavad Gita too that only a disillusions free intellectual can be indifferent towards the consequences of his action. His inner voice and his faith in God direct him. “The voice said, “I will not die. I refuse it. I will make it through this nightmare. I will beat the odds, as great as they are. I have surprised so far, miraculously. Now I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day. I will put all the hard work necessary. Yes, so long a God is with me, I will not die. Amen” (Martel, Life 148). His determined hope helps him to organize his survival.

Meanwhile, Richard Parker kill the hyena: “A massive paw landed on its shoulders. Richard Parker’s jaws closed on the side of the hyena’s neck. Its glazed eyes widened. There was a noise of organic crunching as windpipe and spinal cord were crushed. The hyena shook. Its

eyes went dull. It was over” (Martel, Life 150-151). After a series of killings, Richard Parker is only alive animal remains with Pi. Though, Richard Parker’s presence is overwhelming him yet he is an animal after all who can become aggressive any time. But Pi once again starts hoping to survive and he starts to tame the tiger. He offers a rat to the tiger which satisfies him. Animals do not like someone entering in their territory, that’s why Pi makes a small raft and keep it off the lifeboat. Next day it rains all the night which makes Pi restless and he has a sleepless night. In that dark and cold night, he plans to get rid of Richard Parker. He makes several plans of his killing:

Plan Number One: Push Him Off the Lifeboat.

Plan Number Two: Kill Him with the six Morphines.

Plan Number Three: Attack Him with all available weaponry. Plan Number Four: Choke Him.

Plan Number Five: Poison Him

Plan Number Six: Wage a war of Attrition. (Martel, Life 157-158)

Anyhow the night passes. But plan number six repeatedly strikes in his mind but later he realizes that it is the worst plan because hungry tiger can swim to him and can eat him. Fear prevails in his mind as he thinks about this fact.

I must say a word about fear. It is life’s only true opponent. Only Fear can Defeat life. It is a Clever, treacherous adversary, how well I know. It has no decency, respects no law or convention, shows no mercy. It goes for your weakest spot, which it finds with unerring ease. It begins in your mind, always... fear next turns something terrible wrong is going on (Martel, Life 161).

Besides Richard Parker's Physical and visual impression of brutality and spirituality, he brings faith and hope of survival to Pi. Pi admits: "It was Richard Parker who calmed me down. It is the irony of this story that the one who scared me witness to start with was the very some who brought me peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness"(Martel, Life 162). Though Richard Parker is a regular threat for him but his presence keeps him alert every moment. His presence revives his desire to live that is the reason why Pi starts taming him. He is very grateful to him because he keeps him away about the tragic circumstances. He says "If he dies I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living...I was grateful. I *am* grateful" (Martel, Life 164). He tells to the author that without Richard Parker, he would not be living today to tell him the story. He starts training him and follows his final plan about Richard Parker: "Plan Number Seven: Keep Him Alive" (Martel, Life 166). He finds it less difficult to train Richard Parker because he has seen it so many times in zoo in Pondicherry. He even uses scientific methods like he splashes urine to mark their territory.

One day, they are troubled by a school of fish. Parker get mouthful food and Pi also keeps some fish so that he can use them as bait. He is extremely happy. Still the sense of humanity has not left him as he has not killed any species even he has been starving of hunger. (But later on hunger wins). He does thank to Lord Vishnu for the Fishes: "Thank you, Lord Vishnu, thankyou...once you saved the world by taking the form of fish. Now you have saved me by taking the form of a fish. Thankyou, thankyou" (Martel, Life 185). Pi keeps himself busy in the activity so that he can remain away of the despair and depression. His routine includes feeding Richard Parker and himself, fishing, raft maintenance and prayer. Pi used to be a strict

vegetarian but soon he converts into non-vegetarian as he starts eating raw meat. His hunger had made him animal-like but his stickiness with the religion shows a very human of him. He longs to have a scripture to read. But in the name of book, he has only a survival manual which he reads ten thousand times during his whole journey. His life on the boat is not much of a life. He compares it with “an end game in chess a game with few pieces” (Martel, Life 217).

Martel takes a move from ordinary or low ideas to sublime idea. He came out with the secret of happy life. He says that a person enjoys his happiness more feels no pain if he has contract over his sense and mind. Time and place are just illusion. As John Milton has said that it is man’s mind which “Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (225). Martel too remarks, “You get your happiness where you can. You reach a point where you’re at the bottom of hell.

Yet you have your arms crossed and a smile on your face, and you feel you are the luckiest person on earth” (Martel, Life 217). That’s why, in spite of being surrounded by dangerous sharks and other sea animals as well as Richard Parker, he finds sharks his “old friends” and finds them attractive (Martel, Life 218).

It is the climax of his sufferings when he gets stuck into a storm. He bursts into tears when he sees the sorry state of his raft and boat. He has lost almost everything in the storm. His “little marine town” has vanished (Martel ,Life 228). But happiness returns when he notices a ship coming closer to them. He thanks to Lord Ganesha. But unfortunately they don’t get noticed by the ship and the ship passes away. But he does not let his hope down whereas Richard Parker fills with grief. He just utters a cranky meow. When Pi sees Richard Parker’s hurt, longing, anguish and loneliness eyes, his emotions comes out with an assertion. He says

I love you! The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The feeling flooded my chest. “Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker. If I didn’t have you now, I don’t know

what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No, I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness. Don't give up Richard Parker, don't give up. I'll get you to land, I promise, I promise!" (Martel, *Life* 236).

With the extreme dehydration both Richard Parker and Pi go blind. He encounters with another blind man who is known as the blind Frenchman in the novel. His clash with the Frenchman represents the effects of hazardous sufferings and maximum hunger. They both exchange their survival story with each other. During their conversation the Frenchman tells Pi that a human being is "The very definition of an animal" and it is a truth because later we come to know that the Frenchman is a cannibal. He also tries to kill Pi to eat his flesh. But again Pi is saved by Richard Parker because he kills that castaway. "The Frenchman is the symbol of the death man's spirit through his complete regression into the most evil senses of his animality" (Morse 22). Now Pi lives a life at the price of another human's life. Though he himself is saved but his brother's (Frenchman) death scattered him from inside: "Something in me died then that has never come back to life" (Martel, *Life* 255). The cannibalistic nature of Frenchman shows the reality of that scary truth which says that a person can get use to anything, no matter it is evil or what.

Martel's use of surrealistic elements makes this novel exceptionally adventurous. The bitter and cannibal Frenchman's episode is followed by an another carnivorous algae island which he defines as "an exceptional botanical discovery" (Martel, *Life* 256). It seems to be his hallucination first but as he steps onto the island, he it is not his hallucination but a pleasant reality. The island is full of vegetation and fresh water. He is soon back to his senses. But the pleasure that he gets from this mysterious island is short timed. He soon realizes its murderous capacity. Firstly, he notices Richard Parker's strange behavior and when he finds a human tooth,

he gets confirmed and out of grim he takes decision: "I prefer to set off and perish in search of my own kind than to live a lonely half-life of physical comfort and spiritual death on this murderous island" (Martel, Life 282-283). It is not possible for him to stay on this island just for the sake of pseudo safety. The episode of this mysterious island is as unbelievable as the episode of blind Frenchman is. Pi states, "I know my survival is hard to believe. When I think back, I can hardly believe it myself" (Martel, Life 223). "The island of comfort privileges a philosophical worldview that is only concerned with maximum pleasure and mitigating pain" (Morse 23). The island symbolizes the spiritual death.

Pi has been totally scattered by these extreme sufferings and pains. Now he leaves everything on God. Finally his faith on God works and they reach on the land of Mexico. But very soon his joy converts into big pain when he sees that Richard Parker, companion of his torment, leaves him awfully and doesn't turn to him once. "I wept like a child. It was not because I was overcome at having survived my ordeal, though I was. Nor was it the presence of my brothers and sisters, though that too was very moving. I was weeping because Richard Parker left me so unceremoniously. What a terrible thing it is to botch a farewell" (Martel, Life 285). He wants to express his extreme gratitude towards him because it is because of Richard Parker he survived. Even after years he feels melancholy for not to bid farewell properly. 'It's important in life to conclude things properly. Only then can you let go. Otherwise you are left with words you should have said but never did, and your heart is heavy with remorse" (Martel, Life 285). On one hand, where Pi's life is transformed by a formative experience, other hand he is full of remorse losing his companion.

The last and the final part of the novel is entitled as "Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomatlan, Mexico". In this part, Pi is investigated by two Japanese officers named Tomohiro Okamoto and

Atsuro Chiba. They conduct an interview segment with Pi. After listening whole story they say that his story is “very interesting”, but they show the expressions of disbelief and give many scientific reasons not to believe his story. Pi also defends their every objecting point nicely and even asks them to improve their learning. When they say that his island is “botanically impossible’ and they believe what they see. In counter attack, Pi says that if it is about mere believability, then “Love is hard to believe ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer” (Martel, Life 297). Then what’s hard for them to believe his story.

The Japanese officers repeatedly force him to be rationalist and talk to them with reason because his story is extremely hard to believe. Pi covers up their point saying “Reason is excellent for getting food, clothing and shelter. Reason is the very best tool kit. Nothing beats reason for keeping tigers away” (Martel, Life 298). But still the officers remain unconvinced. Pi again reinforces: “Tigers exist, lifeboats exist, and oceans exist. Because the three have never come together in your narrow, limited experience, you refuse to believe that they might” (Martel, Life 299). But still the officers ask him to present the “straight fact” and then Pi comes up with new story.

In the new story, he introduces three more human characters except him. One is his mother who comes to lifeboat on bananas, and the other two are cook and sailor who are already on the boat. Firstly, the officers find themselves unable to understand the difference between two stories. They are left puzzled and could not understand what really happened. Pi puts some questions before the investigators which are the key questions in the novel. He asks them: “Doesn’t the telling of something always become a story?” and “Isn’t telling about something already something of invention?” (Martel, Life 302). Here, Pi gives a shape to Martel’s opinion

that the true reality is immanently not possible to transfer or to communicate to others. So any kind of realistic and faithful telling is actually a story in some other words.

Though, the other story seems more believable. In human story, Richard Parker is replaced by Pi himself that represents the cruel side of Pi's self though he is less strong to him. In both the stories, Pi is non-vegetarian. The series of murders which Pi does for his survival makes this human story more horrible than the animal version. But the way Pi describes these horrors in the human story, it seems that either he himself is creating this human story or tries to place all his faith in the animal story in a subtle way. The investigators now find no factual differences in both the stories. The last scene presents the pinnacle of novel's theme when Pi asks them "Which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with the animals or the story without the animals?" (Martel, *Life* 317). Both the officers agree that "the story with animals" is the "better story" (Martel, *Life* 317). Pi reacts to them with "And so it goes with God" and starts crying (Martel, *Life* 317). So, for Pi, a world with God is the better world and this is how, the animal version of the story is the 'better story'.

Pi's better story is not just about faith in God but about relativity between science and religion too. In the very beginning of the novel, Pi gets it notified that he has received a double major Bachelor's degree in religious studies and zoology. The parallel approach of science and religion is used as leitmotif by Martel. It can again be seen when Pi introduces his teachers Mr. and Mr. Kumar. Both Kumars carry him towards the parallel paths of science and religion: "Mr. and Mr. Kumar taught me biology and Islam. Mr. and Mr. Kumar led me to study zoology and religious studies at the University of Toronto. Mr. and Mr. Kumar were the prophet of my Indian youth" (Martel, *Life* 61). Pi's idea of freedom also indicated by both science and religion: "I have heard nearly as much nonsense about zoo as I have about God and religion. Well meaning

but misinformed people think animals in the wild are “happy” because they are “free” (Martel, Life 15). Though an animal is territorial he has desires for comfort like human beings but if a zoo provides him those comforts then he has no desire to escape. But still people consider zoo as a cage: “I know zoos are no longer people’s good grace. Religion faces the same problem. Certain illusions about freedom plague them both” (Martel, Life 19). Both Pi and Martel enthralled by the criss- cross of science and religion.

After the shipwreck, Pi is the only human left behind as a sole survivor. When he sees Richard Parker struggling at the surface of water, his religious instincts make him shout with happiness: “Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu, how good to see you Richard Parker!”

(Martel, Life 97). But as he realizes the risk of being with a fully grown Bengali tiger, he returns back to his religious prayer: “Vishnu preserve me, Allah protect me, Christ save me, I can’t bear it” (Martel, Life 98). In the beginning of his sea journey, he is encouraged by his religious faith, but the circumstances put him in scientific thinking. As a son of zookeeper, he knows much about animals and their psychology that’s why he uses whistle to train or direct Richard Parker.

Thus, the combination of whistle and human intelligence or knowledge turns out to be a tool of authority or mastery or an illusion of authority. Because most of the people think that animal are to serve human beings. But because a man cannot fully control them, he confines animals within controlled space to give himself the illusion of authority. In the beginning, Richard Parker is the master as he controls the life of Pi because with the fear of him Pi has to live on a raft. For few days, the tiger remains passive towards him as he has enough food on the lifeboat in form of the dead bodies of hyena and zebra. But as his food is finished, he starts responding Pi.

When Richard Parker’s ember eyes met with mine, the stare was intense, cold and unflinching, not flighty and friendly, and spoke of self possession on the point of

exploding with rage. His ears twitched and swiveled right around. One of the lips began to rise and fall. The yellow canine thus coyly revealed was as long as my longest finger. Every hair on me was standing up, shrinking with fear (Martel, *Life* 152).

Pi makes every possible effort to get rid of Richard Parker and to control him but soon all plans fail. The goal is attained when Pi finally decides to “Keep Him Alive”. Thus, instead of being his master, Pi becomes a servant of him. Although Pi is not a practitioner of Buddhism or it can be said that he is quite unaware of this very religion, yet this novel is rich with Buddhist philosophy. Buddha, in his teachings, mainly talks about the human sufferings and shows the path to get liberated from these sufferings. This path is known as the Middle Way and the end of man’s sufferings is nirvana. Pi’s life also symbolizes his journey which goes through a series of sufferings. The Pacific Ocean symbolizes ‘samsara’ or the world of sufferings whereas land symbolizes nirvana or salvation. The Pacific Ocean on which novel’s main incident takes place is a sphere of pain and sorrow. Pi is accidentally imprisoned in this sphere where he is powerless to do anything. He confronts with lots of problems and does every possible thing for his survival. Not only Pi, but the animals on the lifeboat also have to fight for their survival. The shipwreck shows the temporariness of life. It shows the idea that nothing is permanent but everything has to change some or other day. The lifeboat or the raft, these become the instruments that enable Pi to be saved.

Human life cycle is started with the birth which initiates the journey of joy as well as sorrows. The novel represents birth in its symbolic meaning, not in its factual sense. In the novel, birth takes place when the lifeboat drops onto the sea from the cargo ship. As a fetus is preserved in its mother’s womb, likewise the lifeboat is also safe and protected in the big cargo ship. Sudden changes become the reason of dropping the lifeboat into the sea. Birth does not only

mean the physical detachment from its mother, but it brings all the happiness and despair to life.

Pi's life also takes turn when he is detached from the ship. The falling of the boat into the ocean is the outset of Pi's trial. The birth cycle is not completed until or unless it is accompanied by maturity, disorder and death. Once a cycle is completed another begins. And this cycle keeps continue until an individual gets into the state of enlightenment and attains salvation. Pi learns it through Hinduism that life is a never ending cycle and this cycle is full of temporariness and sufferings. Evil and death, these are the inevitable parts of human life. Pi's sufferings are the example of this. He extremely suffers from his body weakness, sunburned and his cloths are torn and even he becomes partially blind. His sufferings indicate the upcoming end of his life. But as he reaches on Mexican coast, his sufferings ends and it symbolizes the death of a life which is full of pain and despair.

Pi is transferred from pleasant to unpleasant. The chain starts when he leaves India and is separated from loved ones and the zoo and his loving country. He is departed from his family also when the ship sinks and he is left orphan. Death is the ultimate truth and it can come in any form and at any time. Pi sees his death in the form of Richard Parker. He describes his pain of death:

Oncoming death is terrible enough, but worse still is oncoming death with time to spare, time in which all the happiness that was yours and all the happiness that might have been yours becomes clear to you. You see with utter lucidity all that you are losing. The sight brings on an oppressive sadness that no car about to hit you or water about to drawn you can match. The feeling is truly unbearable. (Martel, Life 147-148)

Death is so horrifying that it snatches all the pleasant things from life which we love. Pi states that "Life is so beautiful that death has fallen in love with it" (Martel, Life 6). Pi is the sole

survivor who finally finds land. This is the attaining of nirvana according to Buddhist philosophy. After bearing all the sufferings he reaches to the land. He is the only being on the board that does not lose his religious temperament. His faith becomes the invisible vehicle that brings him back to land. “The ongoing miracle of his existence at sea is also foreshadowed by his spiritual life on land. Pi is a creature of faith (or faiths) who sees eternally renewed wonder in God and his creation” (Jordon 2002). His liberation is the result of his inner faith instead of any supernatural help. During his ordeal, Pi’s routine includes religious prayers too. He finds solace in religious rituals which converts his pain into something sublime. “But sometimes it was hard to love” (Martel, Life 208). He feels distorted. At that moment, he would motivate himself and points out his shirt and calls it

THIS IS GOD’S HAT!”

[He] would pat [his] pants and say aloud, “THIS IS GOD’S ATTIRE!”

[He] would point to Richard Parker and say aloud, “THIS IS GOD’S CAT!”

[He] would point to lifeboat and say aloud, “THIS IS GOD’S ARK!”

... [He] would point at the sky and say aloud, “THIS IS GOD’S EAR!”

And in this way [he] would remind [himself] of creation and of [his] place in it (Martel, Life 209).

Prayers purify his mind and soul and fill him with vibrant energy. This very feature of his character brings him toward the happy ending. God, to Pi, is the sole power who commands this universe. The concept of God can be extended to the various levels of abstractions. According to Pi,

There is Brahman nirguna, without qualities, which lies beyond understanding, beyond description, beyond approach; with our poor words we sew a suit for it ... But there is

also Brahman saguna, with qualities, where the suit fits. Now we call it Shiva, Krishna, Shakti, Ganesha; we can approach it with some understanding; we can discern certain attributes – loving, merciful, and frightening – and we feel a gentle pull of relationship. (Martel, Life 48).

In Hinduism, where is God is referred to ‘nirguna brahman’ and ‘saguna brahman’ and has thousands of gods and goddesses. In Islam and Christianity, people believe in one God only known as Allah and Jesus respectively. But ultimately all the religions believe in monotheism that believes in one true God. But it is not necessary to prove God as God is always questionable. “According to Advaita Vedanta, the reality of Brahman the Supreme Being does not need to be proved since it is a datum of consciousness, bound up with the consciousness of man’s own existence” (Radhakrishnan, Religion 92). Hence it is upon one’s consciousness whether there is the presence of God in the universe or not.

Thus, the story of Piscine Molitor Patel aka Pi Patel is an amazing story of courage. Throughout the novel, his life has been interrogated with different circumstances but his faith remains at the core. Daily mail describes about this novel: “An inventive, shocking and ultimately uplifting story”. Martel himself has summarized this novel in three statements: “Life is a story ... You can choose your story ... A story with God is the better story” (Jennie 2013). Thus Pi’s “better story” with animal “goes with God”. He has finally got the goal his life. His spiritual quest of knowing the ultimate truth is fulfilled at climax when he is safely landed on the Mexican coast.

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