



One Boy, One Boat, One Tiger - An Exploration on Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

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ABSTRACT:

Literature can be unequivocally defined as the mirror of life. The writers paint a graphic picture by meticulously recording their life experiences. Prolific and acclaimed writers like William Shakespeare endowed literary pieces that appeal to all standards and emotions of human kind. Hence, every literary text engages readers emotionally and intellectually. One such astonishing writer is Yann Martel a Canadian Author, winner of the Man Booker Prize who brought the most fascinating work *Life of Pi*, the novel, into existence. This Exploration of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* examines remarkable elements of this adventurous novel. The aim of research is to visualize the significant symbols and themes of the novel such as belief in God, the illustration of freedom, reliance on religion and Magical Realism, to elaborate on ideas about belief.

Keywords: Illustration of freedom, Reliance on Religion, Magical Realism, Suspension of Disbelief.

“That’s what fiction is about, isn’t it, the selective transforming of reality? The twisting of it to bring out its essence?” (7).

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is the story of a boy named Pi Patel, who gets shipwrecked on a voyage from India to Canada and left out on a life raft with one and only company of a mature Bengal tiger for 227 days. On a wider perspective, the novel exhibits the idea of reliance in an engrossing way. Through the novel one understands that Pi Patel publicly practices three discrete religions and has a curious but captivating visibility of belief in God. *Life of Pi* also conveys a component of the Magical Realism, a popular genre in Literature, which causes the reader and spectator's suspension of disbelief to enervate all over the novel. At the conclusion of the story, the Author through the character Pi notifies one of the factual and doubly horrific narratives of what actually happened after the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*. Yann Martel utilizes Pi Patel's perspective of reliance on religion, the Magical Realism genre, to elaborate on ideas about belief. “A germ of religious exaltation, no bigger than a mustard seed, was left to germinate. It has never stopped growing since that day.” (47).

In the initial part of the novel one gets to know that Pi as a child was truly religious, while in Pondicherry, and throughout his cruise in *Tsimtsum*, Pi expresses his view that faith in religion is belief in the narrative. Unlike other boys Pi is more interested in religion rather than entertainment like sports and games. Pi was born and brought as Hindu, “I am a Hindu because of sculptured cones of red kumkum powder and baskets of yellow turmeric nuggets, variously signified, the same word – faith.” (47)

Later at the age of fourteen Pi got introduced to the life of Jesus Christ. Pi truly had strong faith in Jesus Christ where even at the time of misery during the sea voyage he lifted his eyes upon the sky and sought the help of Christ. “Whoever meets Christ in good faith is a Christian.” (57).

The story put forward several relatedness to Christianity such as Pi's voyage of privation and mystery being similar to Jesus's journey through Israel, Pi being redeemed when he touched down in Mexico just as Jesus was reborn on Easter, and Pi training Richard Parker is like God training humankind as Jesus. The story presents much to grasp about truth, religion, faith, and beliefs. Pi's *Life* is one of victory and glory. The trials and tribulations of his living are alike to Jesus as he went through numerous trials as well. Though Pi Patel practices three religions very piously, but Christianity presents the most to connect with Pi's *Life*, as there were many resemblances between the journey of Jesus to the cross and the journey of Pi Patel on the Pacific Ocean are abundant and fascinating. The young boy pulls through 227 strident and monotonous days at sea with not a thing but a tiger and the presence of God. As Pi says, though, “The presence of God is the finest of rewards” (79).

Less than a year later, Islam was the third religion that Pi had discovered. “I challenge anyone to understand Islam, its spirit, and not to love it. It is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion” (61). By going through the novel one gets to know that Pi holds a photograph of the black-robed Kaaba, that stays in his house even as a mature person. His prayer rug remains in his personal office. To the skepticism of people around him, he is a true-hearted and steadfast practitioner of all three faiths. Initially when his family, priest Imam and sage make an effort to convince him that what he believes is impossible, Pi Patel gives an answer that makes anyone see the logic in his belief. “I just want to love God” (76). According to Pi, God is unlimited; mortals do not have the ability or power to delineate the almighty that, “He believes the belief in religion is simply belief in a story much more exciting than “dry, yeastless factuality” (70). For instance, he believes that belief in anything, even an atheist's faith that there is no celestial power and nothing behind departure from life, needs a visionary leap of faith; however, “If one chooses not to believe, they have “[missed] the better story” (p.70). Pi Patel

believes that religious credence is belief in a finer story, nonetheless what one believes may not be true to life, it's assured to be extra exhilarating. With regard to Christianity, Pi expresses that "the first thing that drew [him] in was disbelief" (58). This is what makes the reader and the spectator believe in Pi's story, even as it becomes progressively beyond belief.

Magical Realism is Literary genre with unique characteristics. Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi* sets out to be a prominent example for the genre Magical Realism with wondrous and breathtaking elements. Martel's utilization of Magical Realism becomes increasingly clear during Pi Patel's challenging time amidst the Pacific Ocean. There are three conflicting angles in Magical Realism, i) Logical View ii) Mystical and iii) Supernatural. One can understand that the storyline is set in the usual world, contemporary world and contains actual elucidation of humankind, but has supernatural aspects that we accept to be real, everyday life. Yaan Martel keeps the reader's near to their suspension of disbelief, which progressively diminish as the story progresses and Pi goes profound into his story. The reader of the story can factually understand that Pi may be untruthful when he and Richard Parker go visually impaired and then encounter the Frenchman; "He wailed again. I was struck dumb. I had met another blind man on another lifeboat in the Pacific!"(227).

The Algae Island appears to be the last straw that shatters the readers' suspension of disbelief. The concept of bringing a cannibalistic island is uttermost for our sensible mind. "it's part of the story" (284). At this point, one begins to wonder about the representation of Frenchman and the Island in the mind of Pi. conceivably the description of the Frenchman is a way for him to relieve some culpability that he had for perpetrate murder and cannibalism. Perhaps the Algae Island figuratively represents Pi's sin that would ultimately eat him up. These are the examples of Magical Realism that enables the reader to question his belief in Pi's story.

Literary novels contain numerous virtuous teachings, including the development of mortals, progressing into a finer person because of unquestionable circumstances, experienced during development of the plot. The Boy, Piscine Molitor Patel in Yan Martell's *The Life of Pi* had to survive for 277 days in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with a hungry tiger. By employing close study, it is disclosed that Piscine Molitor Patel was revealed as a peculiar, bright, fierce, sympathetic, compliant, affectionate, and humble character. These delineations were disclosed straight through Yaan Martel's illustration and secondarily through thought, words, and deeds. From these character disclosures, it can be concluded that the evolution of Pi's peculiar, bright, fierce, sympathetic, compliant, affectionate, and humble character had assisted Pi survive the Pacific Ocean and continued living as a better person.

The Tiger -Richard Parker is an adult Bengal tiger who is abandoned on the raft with Pi when the ship sinks. Richard Parker thrives on a relationship with Pi that enables them to exist side-by-side in their wrestle. Richard Parker played a significant role in keeping Pi living in contrast to his faith in his religions. During the time in which Pi was helpless on the raft, Richard Parker kept Pi aware, helped Pi make the correct conclusion, and was Pi's sub-consciousness.

The Boat that is The lifeboat represents a sheltered safe refuge and aspiration for Pi as he strives hard to pull through. The lifeboat also embodies the voyage Pi takes as a self, developing in strength and surveillance. The sea that encircles the life saving existence and the challenges we one face on their journey.

Thus, the concept of belief in the novel *Life of Pi* is evident all over the novel. Pi's individual view of faith in religion, as being belief in a finer story, is exactly connected to why Pi would like us to believe in his initial part of the story than the later part. The utilization of Magical Realism in the storyline retains the reader involved in the story and exceptionally aware of their suspension of disbelief. The use of the genre Magical Realism is effective in leading the reader and spectator towards representing the meaning beyond the story. The captivating concept of *Life of Pi's* allows the readers to believe in a world where the line between actuality and imagination is persistently blurred.

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