

*Application of Logocentrism to  
Yann Martel's Life of Pi*

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## Chapter IV

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Jacques Derrida is one of the most prominent French philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the third of the five children of Haim Aaron Prosper Charles Derrida and Georgette Sultana Esther Safar in El Biar, French Algeria. In his childhood years he dreamt of becoming a professional football player. During his teenage years, he was inspired by the works of philosophers such as Rousseau, Nietzsche and Gide. He pursued his master's degree in Philosophy. He became associated with a group of intellectuals and philosophical theorists who were collectively known as 'Tel Quel'. He first read his paper *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* at the Johns Hopkins International Colloquium on "*The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*" in October 1966 which projected him to a worldwide prominence. Next he printed the first of his three books which include *Speech and Phenomena* (1967), *Writing and Difference* (1967), *Of Grammatology* (1967) in which he investigated Western Philosophy. He continued to produce a number of influential works such as *Margins of Philosophy* (1972), *Dissemination* (1972), *Glas* (1974) and *The Postcard* (1980). In 1986, he was appointed as the Professor of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, where he served till just before his death. He died of pancreatic cancer on October 9, 2004.

Derrida's *Of Grammatology* deals with the centralization of speech and marginalization of writing. The essay consists of Derrida's reflection on Rousseau's views of writing and language as well as his views on Saussure and Levi-Strauss. Derrida calls this privileging attitude of speech over writing as binary opposition.

Logocentrism is Derrida's neologism and refers to what is centred on 'logos'. The ancient Greek word 'logos' can be translated in various ways that include: language, discourse, knowledge, the word. What Derrida means, in particular, is an approach at the heart of metaphysics according to which truth, knowledge or being are present at some particular moment. (Stocker 265)

Derrida terms this desire for centre as "logocentrism". Logos in Greek means word which is considered as the centre of this world. This centre can be God, reason, origin, being, essence, truth, humanity, beginning, end, and self etc; each concept can serve as a transcendental signified. A transcendental signified is a symbol or meaning that lies beyond all things in the entire world. A fine example is that God's word lies beyond everything else. It is also a belief that God creates everything in this world. Even though God created the world, he is beyond the universe and he is at the central position of all philosophical ideologies. Derrida says:

It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated the constant of a presence- *eidōs, arche, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth. (Structure 353)

The assertion of one centre is based on the rejection of the previous one. Derrida terms this western metaphysics of oppositions as binary oppositions. In such case one centre is considered superior and another one is inferior by the western metaphysics as in

male vs female, presence vs absence, speech vs writing, identity vs difference, truth vs error, mastery vs submission, west vs east. All these hierarchical binaries are the foundation of the western metaphysics. Derrida adopts a new term ‘metaphysics of presence’ coined by Heidegger in the place of the binary opposition of presence and absence. The term ‘metaphysics of presence’ comprises all the ideas of logocentrism, binary oppositions and other ideas of western thinkers, which is related to language and metaphysics.

This chapter is an attempt to envisage the idea of logocentrism in Yann Martel’s booker prize winning novel *Life of Pi*. The text is split into three sections. Part one is entitled ‘Toronto and Pondicherry’, part two, ‘The Pacific Ocean’, and part three, ‘Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomatlan Mexico’. The first part gives the glimpse of the protagonist Piscine, known as Pi, who is living in Canada. The story then moves back in time to Pi’s childhood at Pondicherry in India, where he lived with his family at their zoo. In the second part Pi is left alone on a lifeboat with a zebra, a hyena, an orang-utan and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The ordeal of Pi’s experiences on the lifeboat with the tiger is narrated. The third part of the novel is situated in Mexico. Martel provides multiple ending to the novel. As Stratton suggests, “Perhaps this explains the purpose of Pi’s first story: to provide a means of coping with trauma, to offer a defence against traumatic reality” (17).

Derrida conceptualises that the concept of structure functions within the metaphysical system as ‘logocentrism’. “The entire history of the concept of structure... must be thought of as a series of substitutions of centre... successively, and in a regulated

fashion, the centre receives different forms or names” (Derrida, *Structure* 353). For instance, if philosophy is the structure then its centre is truth, knowledge or logic and in theology, the centre is God.

The novel *Life of Pi* begins with Yann Martel’s note, where an anonymous author explains that he travelled from Canada to India because of his restlessness. There while sipping coffee in a cafe in Pondicherry, he meets an elderly man named Francis Adirubasamy who offers him a story to instil faith in God. The author then tells the story in Pi’s own voice. As Stratton points out, “Might the purpose of the first story’s realism, of all that accumulation of detail, be to trick the listener/reader into believing that Pi’s words correspond with reality?” (17). Pi says, “This was, indeed, a story to make you believe in God. It seemed natural that Mr. Patel’s story should be told mostly in first person-in his voice and through his eyes” (LP XIV).

In western philosophy logocentrism is the tendency to think of meaning as ‘presence’ or ‘logos’. Vincent Leitch explains logocentrism as, “A metaphysical system that spans from Plato and Aristotle to Heidegger and Levi-Strauss.... By Derrida this system is called ‘logocentric’... as it always assigns the origin of truth to logos, to the spoken word or to reason or to the word of God” (58). Philosophical concepts are organized around a centre for instance God, truth, happiness, consciousness, etc. God created the world and rules it. Pi says, “That is God as God should be. With shine and power and might. Such as can rescue and save and put down evil” (LP 55). According to Derrida, words that express God’s presence are central and always involve metaphysics of presence.

Pi undergoes a lot of tribulations during his voyage through the Ocean. He faces extreme situations thus shattering his physical strength and mental acumen. During his ordeals Pi is compelled to give up his vegetarianism and kills animals for food and thus he acts against his religious beliefs. However, Pi is strong enough to overcome his depression and win back his confidence only through his faith in God. Though he practices Christian and Muslim prayers he never forgets his Hindu roots. His voyage in the Pacific Ocean shows both Pi's weakness and strength. Nevertheless, his unendurable suffering, his priorities to God remains unclenched.

Logocentrism believes in a stable centre upon which the structure is established. In *Life of Pi*, God is the logocentric concept because of Pi's belief in the presence of God and he believes God to be the ultimate truth. Pi says, "The presence of God is the finest of rewards" (LP 63). The whole world has been established in this notion of truth throughout the centuries. Everything that happens in this world is considered to happen due to a transcendent cause and this world itself is considered as a transcendental signified.

All the theological ideologies believe that Brahman, the ultimate reality is no different from the atman, the spiritual force or the soul. The well reaches out to the water table below the surface, likewise the individual soul touches upon the Brahman which sustains the universe and the explanation of this ultimate reality is beyond thought and language. Therefore God is the centre of the world and based on this belief our understanding of reality is structured. Yann Martel explains that the ultimate truth or reality that sustains all life in this world is God.

The finite within the infinite, the infinite within the finite. If you ask me how Brahman and atman relate precisely, I would say in the same way the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit relate: mysteriously. But one thing is clear: atman seeks to realize Brahman, to be united with the Absolute, and it travels in this life of a pilgrimage where it is born and dies, and is shed the sheaths that imprison it here below. (LP 49)

Pi thinks that he is the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a much larger one where his atman will coincide with the higher soul. Pi believes in the harmony of order so he finds meaning in his suffering. Pi tries to understand the true purpose of his life and the meaning of his existence by trying to decipher the enigmatic philosophical ideology of various religions. He discusses the Hindu philosophy of life thus: “That which sustains the universe beyond thought and language, and that which is at the core of us and struggles for expression, is the same thing” (LP 48 - 49). This belief that one’s soul will find salvation by uniting with God, the creator is the structure that rules one’s life. Thus human beings are logocentric and their life is structured around the logos, ‘God’.

Derrida says in *Of Grammatology*: “Discourse of knowledge usually refers to a centre, to a point of presence, a fixed origin” (26). He argues that the function of this centre is to provide a focus and allow knowledge to be organized around a certain truth or revelation. The centre of the philosophical structure also functions to limit or delimit the meanings. Meaning is contained within the system of knowledge. Hence the discourse or idea or concept makes or validates its own truth. Derrida terms this metaphysics of presence as logocentrism.

Pi is introduced as a very good student in the University of Toronto and he takes a double major, Bachelor's Degree in Zoology and Theology. His fourth year thesis for religious studies concerned certain aspects of the cosmogony theory of Issac Luria, who is one among the most influential and remarkable Kabbalists from Safed of all time. Cosmogony theory is about the origin and development of the universe. His theory of creation states that God contracted to make room for the universe. This contraction is called Tsimstum, which was followed by light, carried in five vessels. The vessels shattered, causing the sparks of light to sink into matter. God reordered them into five figures which became the dimensions of reality. The name of the cargo ship, in which Pi and his family travel is named as Tsimtsum, which literally means contract. The Kabbalists imagined that before the cosmos could be created, God had to withdraw or contract.

Pi has taken his two majors for his undergraduate degree - Zoology and Theology at the University of Toronto. He sees the world through his knowledge of Zoology and Theology. Pi tells, "Sometimes I got my majors mixed up" (LP 5). Pi's research in theology foreshadows the main event to come; it provides information about Pi's life before and after getting into the heart of the tragedy. Pi's deliberation about various theological believes proves that Pi is not just a victim of circumstances. His Zoology thesis is functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth proved that the less secretion of thyroid gland leads to intellectual disability. He chose sloth because it is important for development or growth of the story. Pi states:

My majors were religious studies and zoology. My fourth-year thesis for religious studies concerned certain aspects of the cosmogony theory of Issac Luria, the great sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed. My zoology



thesis was a functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. I chose the sloth because its demeanour – calm, quiet and introspective- did something to soothe my shattered self. (LP 3)

Though given a brief mention, Pi's reference of his thesis is very important to ascertain the theme to the novel as a whole because the crux of the novel rests upon unravelling the connection between God and his creation. The lifeboat in which Pi drifts in the Ocean has an allegorical reference of the Biblical myth of Noah's Ark. Noah is instructed by God to build an Ark and to take on board his wife and family and two of every other kind of creature in order to save mankind. Later the flood water retreats and they are saved, thus ensuring the survival of the population of the earth. In this novel Pi takes his family, their animals and the other passengers aboard the Tsimtsum in order to escape from the political change prevailing in the state and to make a new life elsewhere. It is particularly significant here to note that the Hindu, Christian and Islamic scriptures have their own versions of a flood myth. Pi sincerely adheres to all three religious beliefs.

Pi was named as Piscine Molitor Patel after the swimming pool in France. He describes the way in which he was teased as a child because of his peculiar name, Piscine, which the other school children called as Pissing. He remembers his school years with sorrow and even compares himself to Christ or to Prophet Muhammad. "I walked in last, wearing my crown of thorns ... But just as he [Muhammad] planned his flight to Medina ... I planned my escape [from school] and the beginning of a new time for me" (LP 20 - 21). He trained his classmates and teachers to call him Pi by writing it on the board during each of his class hours. Rather than pronouncing his name, Pi chooses to write himself

into existence by putting his name on the blackboard. He attempts to change his name to Pi Patel. He explains:

I got up from my desk and hurried to the blackboard. Before the teacher could say a word, I picked up a piece of chalk and said as I wrote: **My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as** – I double underlined the first two letters of my given name – **Pi Patel**. For good measure I added  $\pi = 3.14$  and I drew a large circle, which I then sliced in two with a diameter, to evoke that basic lesson of geometry. (LP 22)

Martel's choice of word *Pi* as his nickname is symbolical because Pi is an irrational number and the real value cannot be represented as a simple fraction. "Pi known to all as Pi Patel...  $\pi = 3.14...$  to escape the cruel slurring of his aquatic name into pissing" (LP 23). He requests his schoolmates to call him by his new name taken from the Greek alphabet 'Pi'. "And so, in that Greek letter ... I found refuge" (LP 24). Students and mathematicians know Pi as an irrational and transcendental number; "It expresses the inability to find a common measure –an exact ratio – between the circumference and the diameter of a circle. It is a number that goes on forever" (Mensch 146). The number  $\pi$  is usually written as 3.14 with more than a trillion digits. Pi says, "I'll tell you, that's one thing I hate about my nickname, the way that number runs on forever" (LP 285). "It is important in life to conclude things properly" (LP 285). The irrational number suggests the irrational problematic elements in life that Pi encounters. Literally, the mathematical symbol of Pi is an impossibly longer number which also symbolizes Pi's long journey. Thus his full name performs two related and yet antithetical functions in the text. First, it emphasized the idea that a strong swimmer like Pi can survive in the ocean after a shipwreck, and

second, it gives Pi the position of a mythic or fabled character. Because of the lack of acceptance among other students Pi is urged to find a new meaning for his name. As a sign Pi becomes the signifier to the symbol  $\pi$ .

Born as a Hindu, he was introduced to the religious rites and rituals in his early age. He went to a temple in Madurai and his interest in spirituality has grown since then. “A germ of religious exaltation, no bigger than a mustard seed, was sown in me and left to germinate. It has never stopped growing since that day” (LP 47). He describes his constant hunger for Prasad, a Hindu offering to God, and the way his hands automatically move into prayer position. He feels at home in a Hindu temple. This sense of belonging to a specific religious place is connected to one’s identity. “I owe to Hinduism the original landscape of my religious imagination” (LP 48).

Pi states that he has always been and will always be a Hindu. Pi says, “I have been a Hindu all my life. With its notions in mind I see my place in the universe. But we should not cling! A plague upon fundamentalists and literalists!” (LP 49). The universe makes sense to him through the perspective of Hinduism.

I am a Hindu because of sculptured cones of red kumkum powder and baskets 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 patter of bare feet against stone floors down dark corridors pierced by shafts of sunlight, because of the fragrance of incense, because of flames of arati lamps circling in the darkness, because of bhajans being 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.

(LP 47)

Though Pi considers himself a devoted Hindu, he is open-minded and accepts the relations between his own and two other religions namely Christianity and Islam. Pi explains the events that led him to accept Islam at the age of fifteen. Pi's interest in Islam began when Pi met a Muslim baker Mr. Kumar who explained that Islam is about the Beloved. Pi began to pray with Mr. Kumar and started to visit a local mosque. He wonders, "Why, Islam is nothing but an easy sort of exercise, I thought. Hot – weather yoga for the Bedouins. Asanas without sweat, heaven without strain" (LP 60). Pi comments, about Islam thus: "... anyone to understand Islam, its spirit, and not to love it. It is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion" (LP 61).

At the age of fourteen he meets a Christian priest who tells him the story of Jesus from Nazareth. Enchanted by the story, he decides to become a Christian while still remaining a Hindu. "I entered the church, without fear this time, for it was now my house too. I offered prayers to Christ ... Then I raced down the hill ... to offer thanks to Lord Krishna for having put Jesus of Nazareth ... in my way" (LP 58). Pi considers all religions to be just different paths to reach the same destination. Pi says, "If Hinduism flows placidly like the Ganges, then Christianity bustles like Toronto at rush hour. It is a religion as swift as a swallow, as urgent as an ambulance" (LP 57)

Pi's parents come to know about his secret practice of praying to all three Gods. One day while Pi was walking along the seashore with his parents, the priest, imam and the pundit come to know that Pi was not just a Hindu, Christian, or Muslim, but all three

simultaneously. Pi's understanding of life is shaped by the three religions. He can identify himself as a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim at the same time. His philosophical religiousness is because of his constant search for the ultimate truth; to ascertain the secret of his presence in the world.

Pi's parents were also surprised to learn about Pi's secret of practicing three religions simultaneously. They warned and demanded him to choose a single religion. Pi said that he wanted to love God and he was in search of the ultimate reality that makes the world function. Pi is a unique character as he practices three religions at the same time with equal devotion. Pi's ethical belief is influenced by all the three major religions.

The feeling, a paradoxical mix of pulsing energy and profound peace, was intense and blissful.... Every element lived in harmonious relation with its neighbour, and all was kith and kin. I knelt a mortal; I rose an immortal. I felt like the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a much larger one. Atman met Allah. (LP 62)

The structure of Pi's life centers upon his belief in God because no structure is possible without the idea of the centre. At the same time the idea of structure involves stability and the idea of a centre involves order and organization. Derrida remarks that logocentrism is the desire to find a fixed and stable meaning to philosophy.

Pi thinks that the best reward of a devotee's devotion is to intuitively feel the presence of God. Pi explains that the centre of every religion is love and by following three religions simultaneously, he is able to surround himself in layers of affection, acceptance, understanding and affirmation. Pi strives to unravel mysteries surrounding his existence, and so he analyses more versions of reality. He tells, "Surely this religion

had more than one story in its bag- religions abound with stories” (LP 53). Each faith has its own myths and fables, its own rituals and customs and its own way of worshipping God and its own version of reality.

Pi considers God who is the centre of existence is more important than religious difference. Pi during his ordeal in the unending voyage in the Pacific Ocean, realises that religion is just a means to reach God. Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam all together help Pi to find comfort and the union with God. Pi’s unstinted faith in God helps him overcome the feeling of despair during his ordeal. Union with God can be attained only when one feels the divine consciousness within oneself. Divine consciousness is the feeling that God is around and protecting, thus he retains peace and hope in a difficult situation of disappointment. Pi has a communion with God, and he records his feelings thus:

*Words of divine consciousness: moral exaltation; lasting feelings of elevation, elation, joy; a quickening of the moral sense, which strikes one as more important than an intellectual understanding of things; an alignment of the universe along moral lines, not intellectual ones; a realization that the founding principle of existence is what we call love, which works itself out sometimes not clearly, not cleanly, not immediately, nonetheless ineluctably. (LP 63)*

People fail to realize that God is within us and not outside our existence. Pi remarks: “To me, religion is about our dignity, not our depravity” (LP 71). He was a Hindu, Christian as well as a Muslim. For Pi, “All religions are true. I just want to love God. I blurted out, and looked down, red in the face” (LP 69). Pi tries to convince his mother that it is

possible to adopt more than one faith. He says if a person can have more than one passport it is also acceptable to follow three religions at a time.

I don't see why I can't be all three. Mamaji has two passports. He's Indian and French. Why can't I be a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim?" "That's different. France and India are nations on earth." "How many nations are there in the sky?" She thought for a second, "One. That's the point. One nation, one passport." "One nation in the sky?" "If there's only one nation in the sky, shouldn't all passports be valid for it?" A cloud of uncertainty came over her face. (LP 73-74)

Derrida talks about the problem of instability of centre or logos of a structure as there are many centres that can be substituted for an existing structure. In doing so, they ignore, repress or marginalize the existing centre. This longing for centre is termed as binary opposition in which one term of the opposition is central and the other marginal. Philosophy understands the ideology in terms of the binary opposition of presence versus absence. Any idea which is made on the basis of its proximity to a presence becomes logos.

The zoo occupies an important place in Pi's childhood memory. It shaped his belief system, taught him about animal nature, and imbued in him many significant lessons. Pi changes his perception of the zoo when his father Mr. Santosh Patel calls him and his brother to teach a lesson about tigers. The children saw a starved Bengal tiger kill a defenceless goat. "Tigers are very dangerous," Father shouted. "I want to understand that you are never- under any circumstances- to touch a tiger, to pet a tiger, to put your hands through the bars of a cage, even to get close to a cage" (LP 34). Pi learnt about the eternal law of nature which supports survival of the fittest. Since that day onwards Pi has

been aware of the laws of nature that cannot be ignored in the human world. “It was enough to scare the living vegetarian daylights out of me” (LP 36).

Pi spends his first sixteen years of life in the zoo town of Pondicherry Botanical Garden. The zoo consists of almost all kinds of animals which live peacefully with each other as well as with human beings who take care of them. This place can be compared with the Garden of Eden where God’s creativity is evident. “You must imagine a hot and humid place, bathed in sunshine and bright colours. The riot of flowers is incessant. There are trees, shrubs and climbing plants in profusion” (LP 12). He says, “To me, it was paradise on earth” (LP 14). His childhood is filled with the fondest memories of growing up in a zoo.

Pi wonders at the ritualistic habits of zoo creatures. He remembers the alarm-clock precision of the roaring lions and the howler monkeys, the songs that birds’ recites daily in the morning. They are his alarm clock. Even the breakfast time of Pi will be announced by monkeys, mynahs and other animals. While he is going to school, it is not only his mother who observes him, but also otters, orang-utans and other animals will be watching him. He leads the life of a prince among animals in the zoo. “What maharaja’s son had such vast, luxuriant grounds to play about? What palace had such a menagerie?” (LP 14). The zoo was a playground for him and also a miniature world in itself representing most species of God’s creation.

Pi also discusses territorial attitude of the animals. Within the limits of their nature, they live with what they have. Pi is not defending zoos, but the animals should get what is left of the natural world. Pi expresses:



Don't we say, "There's no place like home"? That's certainly what animals feel. Animals are territorial. That is the key to their minds. Only a familiar territory will allow them to fulfil the two relentless imperatives of the wild: the avoidance of enemies and the getting of food and water. A biologically sound zoo enclosure - whether cage, pit, moated, island, corral, terrarium, aviary or aquarium - is just another territory, peculiar only in its size and in its proximity to human territory. (LP 17)

Animals in the wild will not disturb humans until they are disturbed. The key aim of a zoo keeper is to diminish an animal's flight distance at which an animal wants to keep a perceived enemy. Pi states: "So you see, if you fall into a lion's pit, the reason the lion will tear you to pieces is not because it's hungry-be assured, zoo animals are amply fed- or because it's bloodthirsty, but because you've invaded its territory" (LP 43). Getting animals used to feel the presence of humans is at the heart of the art and science of zoo keeping. Yann Martel points out: "A flamingo in the wild won't mind you if you stay more than three hundred yards away. Cross that limit and it becomes tense" (LP 39).

According to Pi, the most dangerous animal in a zoo is man. Zoo animals are tortured by human beings to the core. A monkey's arm was broken while it reached out for nuts. A zebra was stabbed with a sword. Human beings attack animals with walking sticks, umbrellas, hairpins, knitting needles, scissor etc.

There is the case of the chimpanzee whose cage door left unlocked and had swung open. Increasingly anxious, the chimp began to shriek and to slam the door shut repeatedly-with a deafening clang each time-until the keeper, notified by a visitor, hurried over to remedy the situation. (LP 19)

Animals prefer the consistency of zoo life just as humans get to adapt themselves to the rituals and profusion of modern society. Pi argues that wild creatures are at the mercy of nature, while zoo creatures live a life of luxury. There is no meaning of freedom for the animals in the zoo when animals in the wild lead a life of compulsion and necessity where fear is high and the supply of food is low. Animals in the wild lead its life within an unforgiving social hierarchy.

If you went to a home, kicked down the front door, chased the people who lived there out into the street and said, “Go! You are free! Free as a bird! Go! Go!- Do you think they would shout and dance for joy? They wouldn’t. Birds are not free. The people you’ve just evicted would sputter, “With what right do you throw us out”? This is our home. We own it. We have lived here for years. (LP 17)

Aggressive behavior is the common expression of an animal’s social insecurity. Socially superior animal does not always depend on a fight. Social rank is central not only to human beings but also to animals. “When two creatures meet, the one that is able to intimidate its opponent is recognized as socially superior, so that a social decision does not always depend on a fight; an encounter in some circumstances may be enough. ...The nature of the circus trainer’s ascendancy is psychological” (LP 44).

Both human as well as animals face difficulty and yet life continually surprises by producing alternative solutions. Life is a constant battle for animals in the wild. They can be attacked any time by other animals. Death is a constant presence and possibility for the wild animals.

I have heard nearly as much nonsense about zoos as I have about God and religion. Well-meaning but misinformed people think animals in the wild are “happy” because they are “free”... The life of the wild animal is simple, noble and meaningful, they imagine ... Then it is captured by wicked men and thrown into tiny jails. Its “happiness” is dashed. It yearns mightily for “freedom” and does all it can to escape. Being denied its “freedom” for too long, the animal becomes a shadow of itself, its spirit broken. (LP 15-16)

Social hierarchy exists within the ship. There are officers of the highest rank and the passengers, whose physical containment are at the bottom of the ship which indicates their social position. Hierarchy also determines one’s significance and worth. Pi’s parents have decided to settle in Canada as a result of their dire financial situation.

Pi goes back up to the main deck where the three Chinese crewmen put a life jacket on him and throw him over the side of the ship. He survives after his forty-foot fall through the air. He lands unharmed on the lifeboat’s tarpaulin cover. A zebra survives after a much less graceful fall and a broken leg. The tiger, Richard Parker is in a state of shock and panic, swims through turbulent ocean to board the lifeboat. The orang-utan appears out of nowhere to join the group of survivors. The lifeboat falls into the water as the ship continues to sink. There are no other human survivors. Pi climbs up the lifeboat’s tarpaulin cover, under which he sees Richard Parker, a Bengal tiger. Pi is frightened expecting the tiger to attack him at any moment. Next a hyena appears from the other side. Pi realizes that both a tiger and hyena could not be on the lifeboat at the same time. Next joins an Orang-utan named Orange Juice, the star animal at the Pondicherry Zoo.

The Orang-utan floats up to the lifeboat on a raft of bananas tangled up in a net. In retrospect, Pi says:

I was alone and orphaned, in the middle of the Pacific, hanging on to an oar, an adult tiger in front of me, sharks beneath me, a storm raging about me. Had I considered my prospects in light of reason, I surely would have given up and let go of the oar, hoping that I might drown before being eaten. But I don't recall that I had a single thought during those first minutes of relative safety. I didn't even notice daybreak. I held on to the oar, I just held on, God only knows why. (LP 107)

Pi's sheer will to live outweighs logical thought and so he clings to the oar and to life. He remembers about a zoo enclosure in which orang-utans and hyenas live together peacefully and contentedly. The Orang-utan named Orange Juice sits quietly and looks around at the open water. Pi realizes that she looks for her two sons in the same way Pi has been searching the horizon for his family. At the end of the day Pi finds blood everywhere and he cries.

When the sun slipped below the horizon, it was not only the day that died and the poor zebra, but my family as well. With that second sunset, disbelief gave way to pain and grief. They were dead; I could no longer deny it. What a thing to acknowledge in your heart! To lose a brother is to lose someone with whom you can share the experience of growing old, who is supposed to bring you a sister-in-law and nieces and nephews, creatures to people the tree of your life and give it new branches. To lose your father is to lose the one whose guidance and help you seek, who

supports you like a tree trunk supports its branches. To lose your mother, well, that is like losing the sun above you. (LP 127)

Yann Martel uses the symbol of orange which is the colour of survival, hope, confidence and joy to suggest hope amidst devastation. While his family was planning a journey to Canada, Pi used to get up every morning and marked the route on the map with an orange-tipped pin. Even when his life is saved by crewmen, they put a life jacket into his arms with the dangling orange whistle which becomes a symbol of hope for survival. Pi comments about orange colour thus: “It seems orange- such a nice Hindu colour-is the colour of survival because the whole inside of the boat and the tarpaulin and the life jackets and the lifebuoy and the oars and most every other significant object aboard was orange. Even the plastic, beadless whistles were orange” (LP 138).

The colour orange gives various meaning at various occasions. Hence the fixed meaning does not exist. Only the trace of meaning can be accepted. Pi expects an incidental turn of events after seeing Orange Juice, the orang-utan floating in the water. And at once he feels joy as well as pain. The appearance of Orange Juice, the Orang-utan who is the most human like of all the creatures is compared to Pi’s mother. Moreover the Orang-utan gave birth to two boys at the Pondicherry Zoo which reminds Pi of his brother. The loss of his family leaves Pi inconsolable and unsure of his future. However life goes on with muscle aches to match emotional pain and he must figure out how to fend for himself in a lonely, confusing and violent world. Pi calls out to Orange Juice,

She came floating on an island of bananas in a halo of light, as lovely as the Virgin Mary. The rising sun was behind her. Her flaming hair looked stunning. I cried, “Oh blessed Great Mother, Pondicherry fertility goddess,

provider of milk and love, wondrous arm spread of comfort, terror of ticks, picker-up of crying ones, are you to witness this tragedy too? ... you bring joy and pain in equal measure. Joy because you are with me, but pain because it won't be for long. What do you know about the sea? Nothing. What do I know about the sea? Nothing. Without a driver this bus is lost. ... it was Orange Juice-so called because she tended to drool-our prize Borneo Orang-utan matriarch, zoo star and mother of two fine boys, surrounded by a mass of black spiders that crawled around her like malevolent worshippers. (LP 111-12)

The same orange colour which is represented as hope in the beginning later resulted in pain and loss. Pi becomes pale when he lost Orange Juice. Pi remarks: "What was orange became whitish orange" (LP 238). As he continues to drift in the Ocean the objects were of same colour, there will not be any words like orange or green.

Daylight begins to fade and he contemplates the coming night with horror. In the dark, the animals might attack him and a rescue ship won't be able to spot him. Pi hears snarls coming from the hyena and barks from the zebra. He hears sounds from under the boat and notices that the animals in the boat are also battling for life. After that first night in the lifeboat, the sun rises and Pi thinks about opportunities of being rescued and hopes to see his family again. When he looks into the lifeboat, he sees an appalling sight: the hyena has bitten off the zebra's broken leg and is eating it. The zebra is alive, still silent but grinding its teeth. He sees Orange Juice panting with seasickness and remains unhurt by the hyena. Pi has never before seen Orange Juice with so much of aggression while she fights with the hyena. He had assumed her nature as sweet and her disposition even

and benevolent. Now he understands that personality is something separate and distinct from instinct. Pi comes to know the fact that life has to continue in the face of unimaginable pain. Though he lives in the face of great mental anguish, he endures it. Pi says:

Everything about Orange Juice at that moment spelled one word: seasickness. The image of a new species popped into my head: the rare seafaring green orang-utan. I returned to my sitting position. The poor dear looked so humanly sick! It is a particularly funny thing to read human traits in animals, especially in apes and monkeys, where it is so easy. Simians are the clearest mirrors we have in the animal world...and Orange Juice had not only cheered me up; she had also taken on both our feelings of seasickness. I was feeling fine now. (LP 122)

Wild animals are set to adapt to a new environment and reconstruct their subjective world when the necessity arises. But animals in zoos have never known the wild, perfectly adapt to their enclosures and feel no tension in the presence of human beings. But those animals captured from the wild will have moments of excitement that push them to seek escape. Pi says, "All living things contain a measure of madness that moves them in strange, sometimes inexplicable ways. This madness can be saving; it is part and parcel of the ability to adapt. Without it, no species would survive (LP 41).

Life is a presence that is foreshadowed by the absence of death. The binary opposition life versus death is extended throughout the novel. Death consistently excites Pi's emotions, as he constantly contemplates whether life is safe or fleeing as life is always threatened and precocious. Pi compares his life to a *mori* painting:

My life is like a *momento mori* painting from European art: there is always a grinning skull at my side to remind me of the folly of human ambition. I mock this skull. I look at it and I say, “you’ve got the wrong fellow. You may not believe in life, but I don’t believe in death. Move on!” The skull snickers and moves ever closer, but that doesn’t surprise me. (LP 5)

Pi realizes that things do not turn out the way they are supposed to be. Life impinges upon adjustments in order to survive and one has to find happiness amidst disappointment. Pi feels like being at the bottom of hell, yet has a smile on the face and feels the luckiest person on earth. Pi has taken his life the way it comes to him and made the best of it. “The answer is the same the world over: people move in the hope of a better life” (LP 77). Life on a lifeboat is extraordinarily laborious and morally it is killing. He grows weary physically and psychologically. The rest of his life is nothing but grief, ache and endurance, and he turns to God. He tells: “I tell you, if you were in such dire straits as I was, you too would elevate your thoughts. The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar. It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God” (LP 284).

Pi’s struggle for survival makes him forget even the very notion of time and time becomes an illusion for him. He busies himself with new activities to lighten the monotony of daily life. He says he survived only because he managed to forget the very notion of time. He keeps a diary, writing down mostly practical observations and carries out religious rituals. Pi retains faith in the supernatural power guiding his life.



I practiced religious rituals that I adapted to the circumstances-solitary Masses without priest or consecrated Communion hosts, darshans without murtis, and pujas with turtle meat for Prasad, acts of devotion to Allah not knowing where Mecca was and getting my Arabic wrong. They brought me comfort that is certain. But it was hard, oh, it was hard. Faith in God is an opening up, a letting go, a deep trust, a free act of love-but sometimes it was so hard to love. (LP 208)

While Pi was floating in the lifeboat in a vast Ocean, a terrific storm rolls over and sends Pi to the other end of the lifeboat. The storm rages for a day and night taking away the raft. Pi expresses his anguish thus:

Despair was a heavy blackness that let no light in or out. It was a hell beyond expression. I thank God it always passed. A school of fish appeared around the net or a knot cried out to be reknotted. Or I thought of my family, of how they were spared this terrible agony. The blackness would stir and eventually go away, and God would remain, a shining point of light in my heart. I would go on loving. (LP 20)

Pi was awaiting death but still he retained hope and kept a positive attitude. Pi thought: "Today I would be rescued. To think that, to string those words together in my mind, was itself a source of hope. Hope fed on hope. As the horizon became a neat, sharp line, I scanned it eagerly. The day was clear again and visibility was perfect" (LP 119 - 20).

Pi hears noises from beneath the tarpaulin, from the water with flapping and swishing sounds instantly. Hearing all these swishing and flapping sounds he comes to the conclusion that the battle for life is taking place under the water. He also accepts that

he is also an animal that has lost everything and is vowed to death, yet life holds on to him and life prolongs with uncertainties.

Pi prepares a training manual for taming a wild creature in a lifeboat at sea to keep himself occupied. This proves ironical for Richard Parker is the one who scared him in the beginning and the same Richard Parker brings him peace. “It was Richard Parker who calmed me down. It is the irony of this story that the one who scared me witless to start with was the very same who brought me peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness” (LP 162). With all the courage in his mind he trains the tiger. Earlier his inclination was to run far away from Richard Parker and later he reconsiders boarding and not confining himself to his raft. Though Richard Parker knocked Pi into the water during the first training practice, he was able to dominate Richard Parker by blowing the whistle. He says: “Repetition is important in the training not only of animals but also of humans (LP 23). The wild animal Richard Parker is dominated by the human trainer.

Pi uses the survivor manual and solar stills to produce drinking water in order to save his life. Pi decides to survive alone, with his companion the tiger Richard Parker. He is so certain that the tiger would kill him if he didn't give anything to it. He starts observing the details of the boat, its benches and oarlocks, its bright orange colour, its twenty six feet long and eight feet wide dimensions. He also discovers a locker containing emergency supplies under the tarpaulin, where Richard Parker has made his den. He opens the locker and assesses the contents, which has thirty one cartons of rations and hundred and twenty four cans of water. Greedily he drinks some canned water and eagerly eats emergency rations.

Pi builds a raft to put some distance between himself and the tiger. He creates a raft using oars, a lifebuoy and life jackets. The raft is seaworthy and he knows he is floating just above a vast ocean, with sharks all around. Pi uses a rain catcher to trap fresh rain water. He often checks the knots in the ropes holding together the parts of the raft. He trains the tiger with courage. He realizes that he needs to fish to feed himself and the tiger. He creates a shelter to keep him safe from the elements of nature. He discovers twelve solar stills which are used to transform salt water into fresh water through the process of evaporation and sets them up to distil sea water. He carves an oar and turns it into a mast, hangs a blanket as a canopy. Now Pi looks at the ocean as a repository of many forms of life. He tries to fish using a leather shoe as bait in the beginning but it doesn't work well. So he climbs aboard the lifeboat in search of better bait and was interrupted by a school of flying fish from the ocean.

Hunger is not just a word to describe our physical need for nourishment; it also describes our psychological as well as our spiritual hunger. The novel opens with the statement that "This book was born as I was hungry" (LP vii). The whole book is about Pi's hunger for survival. In Yann Martel's words Pi says: "When your own life is threatened, your sense of empathy is blunted by a terrible, selfish hunger for survival" (LP 120). It leads Pi to the level of savagery. It urges him to tame the tiger, Richard Parker. It makes him to stay on the algae island for a long time. When hunger is compared to thirst, thirst is crucial for survival. Pi feels thirsty even though he was surrounded by water. Pi says, "Of hunger and thirst, thirst is the greater imperative" (LP 133). He gives reference to Christ: "Look: Christ on the Cross died of suffocation, but His only complaint was of

thirst. If thirst can be so taxing that even God Incarnate complains about it, imagine the effect on a regular human” (LP 135).

Nature has its own balance and it holds surprises forever. The unforgiving laws of nature should be allowed to run its course. Pi is a strict vegetarian. He says: “I was a puny, feeble, vegetarian life form” (LP 158). He remembers when he was a child he always felt disgusted to open a banana because it sounded to him like the breaking of an animal’s neck. He would never have imagined descending to a level of savagery when he sucked the fluid and drank the blood of fish and turtle. His religious belief stands between him and the fish. He prays to God expressing his anguish for having become a non-vegetarian. “I was sixteen years old, a harmless boy, bookish and religious, and now I had blood on my hands. It’s a terrible burden to carry. All sentient life is sacred. I never forget to include this fish in my prayers” (LP 183).

Pi is faithful to his religious belief throughout the novel. “This, in a holy nutshell, is Hinduism, and I have been a Hindu all my life. With its notions in mind I see my place in the universe” (LP 49). His sense of belonging to Hinduism and its religious duty does not allow him to eat meat as Hinduism not allowed to hurt any living creature directly or indirectly. In spite of all difficulties, Pi strongly felt that God is still present. “I felt like the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a much larger one” (LP 62). His family members made his world stable and safe. His parents who were broad-minded let their son practice any religion that he chooses.

A lifelong vegetarian, Pi hesitates in the beginning and then cries when he finally breaks the fish’s neck with his hands. Though he is a strict vegetarian, he soon finds

himself drinking turtle blood, skinning birds, and eating eyes and brains. The binary opposition nature versus culture is the evidence when Pi starts killing fish to stay alive. Pi shares his inner conflict, because of nature versus culture opposition operating in his psyche.

I took hold of a hatchet and brought it down on the turtle's neck, gashing it. Bright red blood shot out. I grabbed the beaker and collected about three hundred milliliters, a pop can's worth. I might have got much more, a litre I would guess, but the turtle's beak sharp and its front flippers were long and powerful, with two claws on each. The blood I managed to collect gave off no particular smell. I took a sip. It tasted warm and animal, if my memory is right. It's hard to remember first impressions. I drank the blood to the last drop. (LP 201)

Thus it proves that the necessity for survival makes a person can get used to anything even to the extent killing animals. When Pi does not bother about any set of rules and regulations, his only focus was just to survive. Pi feels that it is impossible to feel some warmth for the fish or turtle when his own life has been given a reprieve.

Derrida draws a parallel between the history of ethnology and the history of the concept of structure. Derrida's concept of structure emerged as a science when European culture or ethnocentrism lost its control over Western culture. He points out: "The ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he denounces them" (Structure 354).

Derrida brings up the opposition between nature and culture, which is an ancient philosophical issue. He uses Claude Levi-Strauss's ethnological writings as an example.

Levi-Strauss discovered a scandalous paradox inherent in the nature vs culture opposition. Levi Strauss in his book *Elementary Structures* mentions: “Nature as universal, spontaneous, not dependant on any particular culture or any particular rule or norm. On the other hand, culture depends on a system of rules regulating society” (qtd in Kottiswari 132).

Truth is associated with nature and faith is associated with culture. Truth is dynamic, like a sculpture that can be viewed from different angles. Reader’s perspectives contribute meaning to the text. There are multiple perspectives about the novel. In one aspect it is a story of a boy on a lifeboat, in another aspect it is a story of a Bengal tiger co-existing with a boy in the lifeboat. Religious practices bring comfort to him as it insists the presence of God. It is hard to have faith in God amidst all sorts of physical and mental ailments. Pi says, “Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer. What is your problem with hard to believe?” (LP 297).

Pi says it is hard to believe that he lives with utmost peace and understanding with the tiger, Richard Parker. The moment he sees Richard Parker he imagines it to be the happiest moment of his life. He leaves the rest of the matters in the hands of God. Pi tells:

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! (LP 236)

Pi tames the tiger, eventhough he is afraid of Richard Parker in the beginning. Later he looks upon the tiger as an object that makes him find a necessity to live. When

he sees Richard Parker coming towards the boat he calls out: “Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu, how good to see you, Richard Parker! ... Mother, my tender guardian angel of wisdom, where are you? And you, Father, my loving worrywart? ... Vishnu preserve me, Allah protect me, Christ save me, I can't bear it!” (LP 98)

Pi is uncertain whether he would live or die. Pi's instincts does not allow Richard Parker to die, because if Richard Parker dies he will be left alone with despair that is even more critical than living with a tiger. Richard Parker, the companion of his torment keeps him alive. Even though he knows that the tiger he invites onto his lifeboat is death itself and the fear of the carnivore has been instilled in him from his childhood days. He feels that fear does not leave him until the end of his journey. “Truly I was to be the next goat” (LP 99). Pi finds the strength to decide not to give up and not to die. “Some of us give up on life with only a resigned sigh. Others fight a little, then lose hope. Still others- and I am one of those- never give up. We fight and fight and fight” (LP 148). Pi's aim is to survive. The strength to survive is found in the tiger's presence.

Reason is the sole arbiter of truth or reality. During his stay in a lifeboat he applied his reason at every moment. Reason is the best tool kit. Pi was excessively reasonable; in order to save his life he manages to survive his ordeal mainly because he devotes his time to look after Richard Parker. The only true opponent of reason is fear which can defeat life. Pi says,

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...doubt meets disbelief and disbelief tries to push it out. But disbelief is a poorly armed

foot soldier. Doubt does away with it with little trouble. You become anxious. Reason comes to do battle for you. You are reassured. Reason is fully equipped with the latest weapons technology. (LP 161)

Pi tries to kill Richard Parker in order to save his life. During this time fear fought over reason. Richard Parker was a fierce 450 pound carnivore. When Pi takes one step front, Richard Parker might bounce back upon him. Each of his claws was as sharp as a knife. But reason pointed out that the tarpaulin was sturdy canvas, not a Japanese paper wall. Pi expresses his fears thus: “There’s nothing like extreme need to give you resolve. Knowledge? Was I not a zookeeper’s son? Reward? Was there any reward greater than life? Any punishment worse than death? I looked at Richard Parker. My panic was gone. My fear was dominated. Survival was at hand” (LP 165).

Pi has to convince himself to keep Richard Parker alive. His zoological knowledge helps him to gain authority over the animal. He also remembers Hediger’s theory of the super-alpha. Hediger says, “When two creatures meet, the one that is able to intimidate its opponent is recognized as socially superior, so that a social decision does not always depend on a fight” (LP 44). Pi never exhibits his fear, rather he tries to train and control the tiger. He uses a whistle to teach and control the tiger. “I had an effect on Richard Parker. At the very first blow of the whistle he cringed and he snarled. Ha!” (LP 165).

Pi’s killing of a fish in the Pacific Ocean is the only act of violence. Once flying fish appeared suddenly and fell into his boat. Pi killed the fish after a number of attempts. He finally finds enough mental strength to break the neck of the fish. His empathy is expressed thus: “I imagined what it would feel like if I were wrapped in a blanket and someone were trying to break my neck. I was appalled” (LP 183). Pi feels that he has



committed an unforgivable sin at the moment he kills a fish. “I was as guilty as Cain. I was sixteen years old, a harmless boy, bookish and religious and now I had blood on my hands” (LP 183). It is also important for Pi to retain his religiousness that has always been present in him. Pi’s unstinted faith in God enabled him to surmount the trials and tribulations that he encounters.

Yann Martel provides another version of the story in the conclusion. Human beings are replaced for animal characters. The cook symbolizes Orangutan. Pi retells the story to make the authorities to believe his story. Pi takes on the cannibalistic role himself, by killing the cook and removing and consuming his vital organs.

I stabbed him in the stomach. He grimaced but remained standing. I pulled the knife out and stabbed him again ... he dropped like a stone. And died ... I stabbed him repeatedly. His blood soothed my chapped hands. His heart was a struggle – all those tubes that connected it. I managed to get it out. It tasted delicious ... I ate his liver. I cut off great pieces of his flesh.

(LP 310 - 11)

Pi is not troubled by God’s absence; he is troubled by God’s silence, though the difference is slight. Pi’s faith in God enabled him to survive all odds and keeps him alive. “God preserve me!” (LP 140). He considers the finest reward in this world is to understand the presence of God. His awareness of God is not at the personal level but at a broader perspective. Pi feels that he is truly alone, orphaned not only from his family but also from God. He realizes that he should turn to God. His very presence in the lifeboat as a single human survivor proves that God is with him. He says: “Thank God I’ve found

you” (LP 104). There is no scripture in the lifeboat, yet he was devoted and spiritual.

With reference to Derrida’s concept of metaphysics, Barbara Johnson writes:

Not only the western philosophical tradition but “everyday” thought and language as well. Western thought, says Derrida, has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing. These polar opposites do not, however, stand as independent and equal entities. The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. hence, absence is the lack of presence, evil is the fall from the good, error is a distortion of truth etc. in other words, the two terms are not simply opposed in their meanings, but are arranged in a hierarchical order which gives the first term priority, in both the temporal and the qualitative sense of the word.... In its search for the answer to the question of Being, western philosophy has indeed always determined Being as *presence*. (viii)

Pi compares his status to a discontent Arjuna in a battered chariot without the benefit of Krishna’s words. He thanks Lord Vishnu, who once saved the world by taking the form of a fish, has saved him by taking the form of a fish and thereby providing him nourishment. He would have given up his life if the divine consciousness did not make itself felt through the voice he heard in his heart.

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 survived so far, miraculously. Now

I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day. I will put in all the hard work necessary. Yes, so long as God is with me, I will not die. Amen. (LP 148)

It is noteworthy to observe the ability of Pi to keep faith and not to lose his belief in God for seven long months. Pi lacks a compass and the stars mean nothing to him. “I couldn’t name a single constellation.... I hadn’t the faintest idea the night sky might serve me as a road map. How could the stars, sparkle as they might, help me find my way if they kept moving?” (LP 193). He often expresses his lack of hope during his wandering. “You might think I lost all hope at that point. I did ... with a tiger aboard, my life was over” (LP 134-35). “I buried my face in my crossed arms and sobbed. My situation was patently hopeless” (LP 169).

The two officials from the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport, Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba meet Pi, the lone survivor of the Japanese ship *Tsimtsum*, to come out with the reason for the disaster. The interview begins on February 19, 1978. Chiba has turned on the tape recorder to record the interview. Pi tells the first story of his Pacific journey on a lifeboat with a Zebra, a hyena, an orang-utan and a tiger. After hearing his story of surviving in the lifeboat for 227 days, with a tiger they tell him that it is impossible as it contradicts the laws of nature.

Frustrated with the disbelief of Japanese men who are interviewing him, Pi tells a fictional story, by substituting human characters in the place of animals; a Cook instead of the hyena, his Mother instead of the orang-utan, a Sailor instead of the zebra, and himself instead of Richard Parker. The Sailor had broken his leg jumping into the lifeboat and the cook cuts the leg for bait. The Sailor dies and the cook butchers and eats him. Seeing this

Pi and his Mother are horrified and try to stop him. The Cook kills Pi's Mother and throws her head in Pi's direction. Soon after this incident Pi fights with the Cook and kills him. The officials consider the story without animals fictitious yet they consider it as a better story. Thus the reversal of hierarchy of fact over fiction takes place. People give importance to fiction rather than the facts.

Pi asks officials which story they preferred: the one with animals or the one without animal characters. Pi's life is conveyed to the Japanese investigators with human characters. At the end the story told by Pi indicates that narrative, like religion, renders the cruelties of survival more tolerable. Pi then puts a question to the investigators:

So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?" when both officials choose the story with animals, Pi replies, "Thank you. And so it goes with God. (LP 352)

The novel offers no resolution and doesn't prove which story is true and which is not. "The first version of the story, however, may be invented. Just like the second version of it" (Boyagoda 71). It is not revealed to the readers that which version of the story is the correct one. The readers are left with their own choice to resolve the conflict.

The narrator of the novel meets Pi in his apartment in Toronto many years after the shipwreck in the Pacific. During that time he notices that Pi is still a believer of the three religions. His house is filled with the statue of Shiva, picture of Ganesha, the Virgin Mary and the wooden cross is on the wall. The author also notices the Bible and a green prayer rug. Pi's house in Toronto is described thus: "A temple filled with a range of

devotional artefacts from a variety of faiths and places. These include a “brass statue of Shiva,” pictures of “Ganesha,” “a plain wooden cross” and “the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe” ... “A wooden Christ on the Cross from Brazil” (LP 45 - 46).

Though Pi is devoutly religious he is torn between belief and despair. “They brought me comfort, that is certain. But it was hard, oh, it was hard. Faith in God is an opening up, a letting go, a deep trust, a free act of love- but sometimes it was so hard to love” (LP 208). Pi often loses his hope on the face of his obstacles. “Despair was a heavy blackness that let no light in or out. It was a hell beyond expression” (LP 209). Though he faces the darkest moment of hopelessness during his journey, he returns to his faith in God. “The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar. It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God” (LP 283). He is such a strong believer that he always finds refuge in God. Being religious is the foremost feature of Pi’s character. Though God is the creator, He is beyond the world and He is the central position structuring and guiding one’s life.

In *Life of Pi*, God is a logocentric word because of the presence of God is considered as the essence of being or ultimate truth. The book *Life of Pi* has been established in this notion of truth. Truth manifests itself through multiple perspectives. In one perspective it is a story of a boy on a lifeboat, in another perspective it is about overcoming despair through faith in God. Pi’s belief in God made him to survive 227 days on a lifeboat with a terrific 450 pound Royal Bengal tiger. Yann Martel’s remarks about Pi’s religious practices from his childhood to prove that both Yann Martel as well as Pi’s philosophy of life is logocentric that their life is centred upon firm belief in God. “I suppose that’s what we’re all trying to do – love God” (LP 69). Pi shares his experience in the lifeboat as: “To be a castaway is to be a point perpetually at the centre of a circle” (LP 215).

Pi evolves a unique religious belief by following three major religions at the same time. He believes that all the three religions are the three different ways to reach the same destination. He overcomes his sudden orphaning, his new grief, loneliness, seasickness, endless waves, persistent storms, starvation, thirst, burning sun, salt water, skin sores, desolation and violence of animals with his unconquerable faith in God. “Religion will save us,” I said. Since when I could remember, religion had been very close to my heart” (LP 27). “I will beat the odds, as great as they are ... The amazing will be seen every day. I will put in all the hard work necessary. Yes, so long as God is with me, I will not die. Amen” (LP 148). Fagan observes, “The fascination with the peculiarly human gives much of the energy to Martel’s writing and makes it genuinely touching” (22).

Undaunted faith in God will always give us strength to overcome the difficulties in life. To relish His blessing fully one has to withstand all the hurdles that a person comes across in life’s journey. Life is not a straight tangent but a series of zig-zag lines and it is always an enigmatic one. In Martel’s words, “The answer is the same the world over: people move in the hope of a better life” (LP 77). To cross over the bridge of unexpected, unwarranted and unwanted accidents in life, true and honest faith is absolutely needed. Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* instils this everlasting truth in the hearts of the Indian boy whose extra-ordinary ordeal renders a short warning to the readers not to scatter their hopes but to have absolute faith upon the Creator. Originality is the essential mark of a devoted writer and Yann Martel’s works are a testimony to it.