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Human Animal Nexus in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*

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Letter of Recommendation

Sagar Maharjan has completed his thesis entitled " Human Animal Nexus in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pie*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from May 2019 to July 2019. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Human Animal Nexus in Yann Martel’s novel *Life of Pie* ”
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Abstract

This research makes an attempt to explore human animal nexus, the perspective of man in the observation of natural phenomena, marine life and the world of animals, in Yann Martel's Life of Pi by. This study analyzes how the narrator Pi knowingly and unknowingly makes use of his subjective, affectionate and humane feelings while understanding and analyzing the world of animals, animal instinct, innate violence and violence as such. Pi is of the opinion that tiger does not attack him till he provides eating stuff to it. Generally, it is believed that animals act on brutal and beastly instinct. It is also believed that humans must stay away from the fierce and beastly animals in that it is difficult to guess what they do in a moment of hunger. But the perception and observation of Pi flatly denies this sort of assumption. Though objective fact and truth about nature and animal can be known objectively, the narrator Pi categorically rejects this sort of confining forms of knowledge. To him, each form of knowledge is subjectively determined by the rational, imaginative and impulsive passions of man. Rather than objective and scientifically verifiable truth, it is subjectively determined truth which is ennobling and uplifting for mankind. This research reaches the conclusion that knowledge derived from the use of anthropomorphic vantage point is a real saving grace and the knowledge as such is life-affirming and liberating.

Keywords: Humane, Animal, Nexus, Anthropomorphic, Hunger, Knowledge, Spirituality

Human Animal Nexus in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*

This research makes an attempt to explore human animal nexus and survival of the character in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. Piscine Molitor Patel, variant Pi, is the central character of the novel that has been brought up in India. His friend taunts him because of his name. Later on, he changes his name to Pi, which means the diameter of a circle, and it evokes to give basic lesson of geometry. When he was small, he was taught swimming by his *mamaji* (his maternal uncle) in Pondicherry. This novel explores the spirituality (meaningful activity, personal growth and blissful experience). It is divided into three parts. The first part is about his educational background, childhood, and belief about the gods and animals. The second part shifts towards the voyage to Canada, sinking of the ship and struggle in the ocean with the animals. Third part is conversation with the reporter who is present to know the reality behind the incident and Pi tries to convince the reporter by creating another story without animals, he told the story of his struggle with the animals but both reporters don't believe. Therefore Pi creates the other story to make them believe which includes the story without an animal.

The animal as such exhibits the possibility of coexistence between human and animal. Both human and animals are trying to exist and they struggle to survive in the ocean. The crests of the larger waves were striking at them in the middle of the ocean, all the animals in the lifeboat try to save their lives in the middle of the Pacific. Animals and Pi are able to save their lives from shark and other aquatic animals. There were various problems that they face. They are able to save themselves from harsh unforgiving Ocean, storm, rain and so on. To live, a Pi turns into a non-vegetarian. He eats raw meat, which is found in the ocean. The only

survivors are; a sixteen-year-old boy, a zebra with a broken leg, a hyena, an orangutan and a Royal Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker. Both, animals and the human Pi are under tremendous mental strain therefore Richard Parker who is a carnivorous animal doesn't kill the zebra. This novel from the perspective of eco-criticism shows that the relationship between literature and the biological environment. We can see close and affectionate observation of wildlife. Though, Richard Parker, the tiger, is carnivorous animal, it doesn't eat either human or animal. We can see relationship between human and animals; Pi tries to save his life from the dangerous animal and harsh nature. The animal also tries to fight with nature and survives together with human in the ocean.

This study explores the issue of anthropomorphism in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. This novel dramatizes and employs anthropomorphisms. It refuses to distinguish the poetic from religious faith. It proves how the human thirst for meaning demands that people see themselves everywhere. The novel engages with the belief by constantly battling with its opposite. It finally concludes that people are faithful temporarily. The objects of faith cannot be permanent. It is Pi's relationship with the tiger, Richard Parker that constitutes the anthropomorphic dimension. In addition, it is the decentering of humans in favor of animals that adds uniqueness to the narrative differences of the text. The tendency of humans to put themselves at the center of any story is a noticeably striking issue that underscores the essential core of the narrative. It prioritizes the role of fiction in the development of human personality and dissects the relations between the human, the natural world, and the text. The only story humans find real is the one in which animals are seen as anthropomorphic.

Pi is guided by philosophy that animals can never be loyal but we see coexistence between human and animals. Pi eats raw meat for survival although he

is vegetarian. The four hundred and fifty tiger called Richard Parker, who cannot be away from flesh, does not eat Pi. We find the human emotions playing even in the animal part indicating anthropomorphism. Hence thesis explores two main questions:

- I. How is anthropomorphism exhibited in the novel *Life of Pi*?
- II. What is the extent of anthropomorphism evident in the novel *Life of Pi* with respect to culture, religion, human emotions and belief systems?

The novel depicts the issues of a boy who tries to struggle with animals. Though the boy and the tiger try to control each other they, later on they come to a realization. Through the realization of both Parker and Pi (the animal and human), that they need each other to survive among the harshness surrounding them. Yann Martel in *Life of Pi* promotes anthropomorphism.

The main purpose of this study is to present the human struggle for survival through seemingly insurmountable odds. The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

- I. To find out the extent of anthropomorphism evident in the novel *Life of Pi* with respect to culture, religion, human emotions and belief systems?

This novel shows the terrifying situation of a sixteen-year-old boy and the animals. After a tragic shipwreck, a solitary lifeboat is left at the mercy of the wild blue waters of the Pacific. Parker (tiger) shows some human nature; sacrifice of food that is flesh. This proves that novel has views from the sight of anthropomorphism. Parker is treated as innocent child who is angry, shows love. Throughout the novel we see the human nature in the animals. We see such aspect in zebra who doesn't attack Pi though it is in same lifeboat, tries to defend the nature, struggle with the other animals like hyena and so on.

Anthropomorphism is an inveterate tendency to project human qualities into natural phenomena. It can be conscious and unconscious. The standard and most important variant of anthropomorphism is animism, which sees a soul in everything in nature. Elaborating on anthropomorphism, Joseph Agassi, in his article "Anthropomorphism in Science" argues:

First, when we draw an analogy from humans to nature, we assume that we know humans; that is to say, we make an analogy from known human qualities to unknown natural qualities. However, it is not what we know of human beings, but what we assume to be human that we read into nature. For all we know, the analogy may go the other way: like sticks and, human beings may not have souls. At the very least, we may leave the question; "Do stones human souls exist?" open, and still speak of animism as based on an analogy. (12)

Anthropomorphism is not decisive. Anthropomorphic assumptions are known to be false. Animals behave like humans in certain respects. It may indeed be anthropomorphic and yet true. Nevertheless, it is assumed by and large that when people make an anthropomorphic assumption. It is not likely to be true.

The narrator does not bother to describe what he sees in a neutral, objective and impartial way. His observation of chimpanzee in zoo is colored by his anthropomorphic awareness. With a frank sense of being a keen observer, the narrator says, "in the literature can be found legions of examples of animals that could escape but did not, or did and returned. There is the case of the chimpanzee whose cage door was left unlocked and had swung open". (19) The findings of the narrator arising from his observation are colored by anthropomorphism. The narrator

claims to have consciousness of chimpanzee's silence evocative of agony. He furthermore insists:

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. A herd of roe deer in a European zoo stepped out of their corral when the gate was left open. Frightened by visitors, the deer bolted for the nearby forest, which had its own herd of wild roe deer and could support more. Nonetheless, the zoo roe deer quickly returned to their corral. (19)

Pi goes on explaining that in spite of facing many problems in the smooth functioning of zoo like adequate arrangement of food. He is involved in building up proper shelter for animals. Aware of his involvement in lot of legal issues regarding the health of all animals, a zookeeper is further made to suffer from the harsh criticism of various animal rights organizations. The motive behind reporting of these difficulties, gives the impression of Pi's desperate attempt to defend his father from accusations. He insists that all the charges and problems of a zookeeper himself. He seems to make others feel sympathetic about his father's business thus completely turning out his father from the frame of being blamed further.

Anthropomorphism represents a process of inductive inference about non-human agents. It consists of the basic cognitive operations that perform such inferences. It should be no different for anthropomorphic inferences than for any other inductive inferences. These basic cognitive operations include the acquisition of knowledge, the activation or elicitation of stored knowledge, and the application of activated knowledge to a given target. In this regard, P P Weiner contends:

Such correction processes are generally insufficient such that final judgments are influenced in the direction of the most readily accessible information. These process accounts are best known in domains of dispositional inference, belief formation, and social comparison. As a basic process of induction, anthropomorphism works through a similar process of starting with highly accessible knowledge structures as an anchor. It is an inductive base that may be subsequently corrected and applied to a nonhuman target. (865)

The narrator claims that though he has approached and represented the world of nature and animals from anthropomorphic angle, true nature of animals and trustworthy insight into the world of nature can be gained.

This claim on the part of the narrator is questionable. It would not be difficult for readers to believe that there is certain trace of truth in the narrator's statement of claim. In the novel, the narrator says assertively:

I would like to say in my own defense that though I may have anthropomorphized the animals till they spoke fluent English, the pheasants complaining in uppity British accents of their tea beings cold and the baboons planning their bank robbery getaway in the flat, menacing tones of Americans gangsters, the fancy were always conscious. (34)

The truth that comes out is that hardly anyone is concerned about death of animals. The animal's death is rendered as just another death because society has completely isolated itself from all such problems, which lie beyond their selfish ends. This is the only reason how people play blames games. As nobody has time to delve into the reality of matter, it provides other people with chance to mold truth and present it in

whichever way they want. Another aspect, of which Pi can be accused, is his idea of supporting the belief of caging animals.

Anthropomorphism in animation is a common appearance, but often referred to exceptionally briefly by those who analyse the medium at any length. Animals in animation are used to define a character's personality quickly and effectively.

Focusing on Anthropomorphism, Timothy James Jar dim takes the following stand:

Anthropomorphism will first be defined as myth and fable and the animals found therein to be analyzed as an influence on animation. The fantastic nature of animal casts is analyzed, as well as the manners in which humans are drawn to an animal cast. Animation history is analyzed to give context to the above-mentioned investigations as well as to the case studies. (32)

Our emotions and personalities can be interpreted by one another through our own understanding of the self and those around us. Therefore, as a survival mechanism, mankind has had to mentally imprint its own traits upon the world around it.

Pi gives many reasons to justify why zoos are better place for animals than an open territory but he overlooks the most important fact that freedom is valuable to everyone. In a moment of affirming his ignorance, he says, "I do not know where Father got the idea that his youngest son was itching to step into a cage with a ferocious carnivore. But wherever the strange worry came from-and Father was a worrier". (34) Pi does not find anything erroneous in ridding animals off their natural habitat and using them for amusement purposes. Pi being a son of zoo owner was familiar with animals' behavior. He talked about it in the first part, which he brings into practice in this part. He knows that animals always want to maintain certain distance hence one must respect their feelings without trying to break that distance barrier.

The entire spectrum of Pi's struggles shows the battle for gaining control over other by inheriting broad area on lifeboat. It is a novel of anthropomorphism, retelling how humans try to justify their every act as good even if it might turn out to be harmful for other creatures. Pi is told to be wary of animals that act harmfully and dangerously. His father tells this. His father has had superficial understanding. But Pi's understanding is somewhat different. Till animals are supplied with food, they do not act violently on human beings, according to Pi. The following extract is clearly illustrative of this point:

But even animals were bred in zoos and have never known the wild that are perfectly adapted to their enclosures and feel no tension in the presence of humans, will have moments of excitement that push them to seek to escape. All living things contain a measure of madness that moves them in strange, sometimes inexplicable ways. (41)

In order to save his life from Parker, Pi decided to tame tiger, as that was the only way left, to remain alive. He applied the same tactics as that of a ring man of circus in taming Parker. Pi's act of taming tiger cannot be condemned here, because in this situation, it is his necessity to do so.

As a basic process of induction, anthropomorphism works through a similar process of starting with highly accessible knowledge structures as an anchor. It is an inductive base that may be subsequently corrected and applied to a nonhuman target.

In order to answer the research questions it is imperative that the methods and methodology utilized here stand up to scrutiny. The scope of this thesis encompasses qualitative research of a doctrinal and comparative nature. Qualitative research is defined as, 'the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made'.

At first, we carry out the literature review to understand the anthropomorphism and its use in English literature. Secondly, we qualitatively analyse the events, characters, and emotions and also perform comparative analysis as possible in order to find how and to what extent anthropomorphism has been portrayed in the novel.

In order to have a detailed understanding of anthropomorphism in *Life of Pi*, we follow detailed exploratory qualitative research methodology analyzing the chronological events, characters and their emotions that are full of the fantasy and magical-realism intertwined within the post-colonial era during which the whole plot is set. Justine Jordan in his article “Animal Magnetism” mentions:

...Despite the extraordinary premises and literary playfulness, one reads *Life of Pi* not as much as an allegory or magical – realistic fable, but not as much as edge- of – seat adventure... We learn much about animal behavior, flight distances, aggression, social hierarchy, which is later, translated to Pi's survival tactics on the lifeboat. (“*Animal magnetism*” 2002)

Jordan mentions that Pi runs safely in Mexico and the tiger about which he still has "nightmares tinged with love ", which saves his life by coming between him and a more terrifying enemy, despair leaps ashore and disappears into the jungle, denying him an anthropomorphic goodbye growl. He mentions that Pi is creature of faith that has wonder faith in god and his creation.

The true events of Pi’s sea voyage are too horrible to contemplate directly. Any young boy would go insane if faced with the kinds of acts Pi tells his integrators he has witnessed. By recasting his account as an incredible tale about humanlike animals, Pi does not have to face the true cruelty human beings are actually capable

of. Similarly, by creating the character of Richard Parker, Pi can disavow the ferocious, violent side of his personality that allowed him to survive on the ocean. He believes that the tiger-like aspect of his nature and the civilized, human aspect stand in intense opposition and occasional partnership with one another. The boy Pi and the tiger Richard Parker are both enemies and allies.

To Pi, the important thing is to believe in something. Pi can appreciate an atheist's ability to believe in the absence of God with no concrete proof of that absence. Pi has nothing but disdain. He appeals us to look at nature by putting off our spectacle of anthropomorphism. He claims that it is impossible to know either way. Pi sees this as evidence of a shameful lack of imagination. To him, agnostics who cannot make a leap of faith in either direction are like listeners who cannot appreciate the non-literal truth a fictional story might provide. The shipwrecked inhabitants of the little lifeboat don't simply acquiesce to their fate: they actively fight against it. Pi abandons his lifelong vegetarianism and eats fish to sustain himself. Orange Juice, the peaceful orangutan, fights ferociously against the hyena.

Human beings try to perceive reality pertaining to animals through their own perspective which is another name for anthropomorphism. Even the severely wounded zebra battles to stay alive; his slow, painful struggle vividly illustrates the sheer strength of his life force. Living creatures will often do extraordinary, unexpected, and sometimes heroic things to survive. However, they will also do shameful and barbaric things if pressed. The hyena's treachery and the blind Frenchman's turn toward cannibalism show just how far creatures will go when faced with the possibility of extinction. When Pi raises the possibility that the fierce tiger, Richard Parker, is actually an aspect of his own personality, the reader is forced to decide just what kinds of actions are acceptable in a life-or-death situation.

Anthropomorphism describes the tendency to imbue the real or imagined behavior of nonhuman agents with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions. Although surprisingly common, anthropomorphism is not invariant. When people are likely to anthropomorphize, they focus on three psychological determinants—the accessibility and applicability of anthropocentric knowledge, the motivation to explain and understand the behavior of other agents and the desire for social contact and affiliation. Nicholas Epley, Adam Waytz, and John T. Cacioppo clarify this point in the following extract:

This theory predicts that people are more likely to anthropomorphize when anthropocentric knowledge is accessible and applicable, when motivated to be effective social agents, and when lacking a sense of social connection to other humans. These factors help to explain why anthropomorphism is so variable; organize diverse research; and offer testable predictions about dispositional, situational, developmental, and cultural influences on anthropomorphism. (2)

Discussion addresses extensions of this theory into the specific psychological processes underlying anthropomorphism. Applications of this theory into human affairs are pervasive. But these existing observations and empirical research do not provide a psychological account of anthropomorphism itself, nor do they explain or predict systematic variability in the tendency to anthropomorphize nonhuman agents.

The construction and dealing with an island by both Pi and the tiger is the product of anthropomorphic exercise of imagination. The lifeboat comes across a low island covered entirely with algae. Pi and Richard Parker stop for a time, eating the vegetation, drinking the fresh water, and nursing them back to health. The island is full of meerkats, small ferret like creatures. Pi sees that the island's fresh ponds are

full of dead fish. A storm hits while Pi and Richard Parker are ashore. The island weathers it beautifully, absorbing the ocean's ferocious waves. Pi notices that the island burns his feet at night but not during the day. Seeing that meerkats spend the nights in the treetops, Pi, who has been sleeping on the lifeboat, joins them. The whole description is a product of anthropomorphic intervention.

Anna Kallas simply brings into light the bare bone of the novel in plain terms. She traces the origin of the subject matter of the novel. According to her, it is the journey that implanted in the author the idea of constructing a narrative fraught with layers of viable interpretations. With respect to this aspect of the novel, Kallas makes the following observation:

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* tells the story of a sixteen-year old Indian boy, pi Patel, who survives the shipwreck of a Japanese cargo on which he and his family were immigrating to Canada, and ends up in a lifeboat together with a 450-pound Bengal tiger. The author starts his novel with a team, in which he narrates the story of the novel's conception: Martel goes on to tell us how he went to India to write a novel set in Portugal in 1939, but failed to do so and, instead, met an Indian narrator who told him the story of a friend of which later became the subject matter. (144)

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is the story of a young man who survives a harrowing shipwreck and months in a lifeboat with a large Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The beginning of the novel covers Pi's childhood and youth. His family owns and runs a zoo in their hometown in India, and his father is emphatic about being aware of the wildness and true nature of animals, namely that they are not meant to be treated like or thought of as people.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* justifies the irony behind the stated proverb. It develops the bond between human and non-human environment. Entire narration can be read in two ways. when the story takes its course with the involvement of animals and humans in all three sections- in zoo, in ocean and in Mexico where Japanese officials cannot find it true to believe in animal story but they readily accept human story. Addressing this aspect of thematic dimension of the novel, Deepali Yadav sheds light on which is found in the following extract:

While the second manner of approaching the novel is through eco-centrism.

This concept has been brought into force while giving the descriptions of certain places like France and Munnar, in the novel. Though Pi's opinion about animals changes with the furthering of the narrative but nowhere in the novel, does he finds anything wrong in running a zoo. Pi recounts that Pondicherry at that time had nearly no amusement source and hence running a zoo appeared to be a great idea to his father. (1-2)

Zoo is kind of assurance of earning huge profits. It is the only amusement destination it would attract many visitors daily. It is pity that in this whole conception of doing business through wildlife, nobody thought about the everyday inconvenience of animals.

Of all the dramatic events of the novel, struggle description for territory undertaken by the protagonist is of huge importance. The struggle between Pi and Richard Parker (the tiger) on one boat catches the attention of every reader. Focusing on this dramatic aspect of the encounter that reaches the peak of noble heroism, Pankaj Mishra makes the following remarks:

In the beginning there were few other animals which gradually got eaten up by other physically superior animal thus justifying the concept of life-cycle.

Only Parker and Pi were left at last. In order to save his life from Parker, Pi decided to tame tiger, as that was the only way left, to remain alive. He applied the same tactics as that of a ring man of circus in taming Parker. Pi's act of taming tiger cannot be condemned here, because in this situation, it is his necessity to do so. (12)

Pi being a son of zoo owner was familiar with animals' behavior. He talked about it in the first part which he brings into practice in this part. He knows that animals always want to maintain certain distance hence one must respect their feelings without trying to break that distance barrier. According to him, animals don't attack anyone because they are hungry or bloodthirsty but only when someone enters their territory.

Bernand Mardianus Tampubolon evaluates *Life of Pi* from the structural and formalistic angle. He praises the use of the flashback technique. It is the use of this technique that yields the artistic and literary perfection of this novel. Concentrating on the formalistic aspect of the novel, Tampubolon argues:

This novel uses the flash-back plot where Pi as the main character repeats the accident in the boat and gives any reason for that accident from the beginning to the ending. The flash - back plot in this novel utilizes as the tool which bounds every chapter in this novel. I am so excited to know more about the author's perception about how to share the plot in every part and chapter. How Yann directly introduces to the readers about the three major religions in the world, they are Islam, Christian and Hindu. (19-20)

Two major aspects in this novel are faith and science, they blend each other. Martel tries to elaborate faith and science into a fiction story which has much values, two religion's perspectives in the world. This novel conveys about anything that people

think. A novel does not deliver any knowledge of life, but in this novel a pure and pristine wisdom is manifested.

Karen Scherzinger detects some traces of trauma which Pi is exposed in an invariable way. The novel, *Life of Pi*, charts and chronicles how traces of trauma on the part of the narrator facilitates the acting out of repressed ego, the turbulent inner fire of the protagonist that lie passively in his mind. With respect to this issue, Scherzinger makes the following revelation:

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* takes as its focal point a deeply traumatic event that befalls its main protagonist, Pi Patel. One effect of Pi's traumatic experience is that it hinders his ability fully to communicate the scope and detail of his suffering. This article argues that in its daring experimentation with allegory and the mode of the fantastic, the novel works creatively to confront the difficulties inherent in the representation of Pi's trauma. (12)

The double narrative presented in the novel is an allegorical account of repressed lacerating traumatic traces. Unorthodox implementation is best understood in language of ambiguity and plurality. Such a narrative construction opens up possibilities for the function of the fantastic.

Life of Pi captivates imagination and awareness of the elemental instincts of life. Facing the horrific realities of survival, Pi's moral system is unbearably challenged as a castaway at sea. Highlighting the value of elemental instinct and environmental awareness, Jocelyn Lok-Yee Lee makes the following disclosure:

By balancing the primacy of Pi's survival needs with moral conscience and revealing the dire extent to which creatures will go when faced with extinction, Martel illuminates how miracles may be asserted from a religious-neutral perspective. Pi's pluralistic faith draws upon a moral ethic that is

realized to be best felt rather than judged. Storytelling and perception are skillfully utilized by Martel to instill meaning and hope to ritual observances.

(1-2)

Pi responsively confronts the extenuating events narrated in the human condition with acknowledgement. The fierce tiger, Richard Parker, metaphorically personifies his connection to nature. Amidst a courageous struggle with faith and reason, the reader is compelled to reflect upon the actions that may be morally acceptable. *Life of Pi* thus mirrors a transformative journey of hope where fear is alleviated not only by the courage and strength discovered in moral purpose and meaning.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined the novel, *Life of Pi*, from different perspectives and arrived at different findings, none of them noticed the issue of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is the imposition of human observation, understanding, values and criteria of judgment on the world of animals in the course of our attempt to interpret it. While interpreting natural phenomena, wild activities and survivals of animal beings, human beings bring their method of judgment, mode of analysis and trick of rational calculation. Human beings are seldom habituated to put off the lens of rationality, human prejudice and subjective comprehension.

Animals' reliance on innate violence for survival is justifiable but rational human beings interpret it as a violence which is callous. What is callous to mankind is basic to animals. For a long time, human beings are conformed in their understanding that fierce animals like tiger can take human life when a helpless human life is face to face with a hungry tiger. Due to our mistake called anthropomorphism, we are trained to believe. But in the novel, just the opposite happens. To probe the world as it really is, it is necessary to set aside the temptation to anthropomorphism.

It's one revelation of belief comes in its barely apparent acquiescence to the veracity of Pi's ordeal in the lifeboat with the tiger Richard Parker, as it concedes in its final sentence that very few castaways can claim to have survived so long at sea as Mr. Patel, and none in the company of an adult Bengal tiger. It is mystifying that this could be the document to convince the narrator of the story's conversionary power. For not only does Mr. Okamoto's report contain no reference to God. It is by no means a categorical expression of belief in the truth of Pi's story.

The animal lives in the Pondichery zoo is viewed, appreciated and highlighted from anthropomorphic angle. To the narrator, the animal lives inside the zoo are the source of tranquility, thrill, fun, amusement and solace. But the agony of animals in confined zoo, their hungers and their ferocity as well as the pain of being cut off from their natural habitat are not captured by the narrative account of the narrator. Only how the animal lives in the zoo appears pleasantly to the narrator is captured in the novel. Inside the zoo, animals are not really in pleasant conditions. They have not got the same level of freedom and food which they used to get in their natural habitat. But rational human mind and calculative human beings do not have power to penetrate this reality. They derive pleasure having seen the cowered and hungry animals inside the zoo. But the pathos and pain of captured animals in the zoo are not accessible to human beings in that human beings are prone to approach and understand truth from anthropomorphic angle. The following extract is illustrative of this point:

To me, it was paradise on earth. I have nothing but the fondest memories of growing up in a zoo. I lived the life of a prince. What maharaja's son had such vast, luxuriant grounds to play about? What palace had such a menagerie? My alarm clock during my childhood was a pride of lions. They were no Swiss clocks, but the lions could be counted upon to roar their heads

off between five-thirty and six every morning. Breakfast was punctuated by the shrieks and cries of howler monkeys, hill mynahs and Moluccan cockatoos. (14)

Seeing animal lives in the zoo, the narrator takes delight, solace, and amusement. The scenes inside the zoo are relaxing and tranquil to the onlooker. But the exact reality pertaining to the pain of confined animals remains inaccessible to them. It is inaccessible to human beings including the narrator not because human beings have no capacity to know the truth that lies outside the domain of human world but because when human beings think they think in terms of anthropomorphism. They impose what their minds supply on the world of animal and nature they want to interact.

Anthropomorphism is an inveterate tendency to project human qualities into natural phenomena. It can be conscious and unconscious. The standard and most important variant of anthropomorphism is animism which sees a soul in everything in nature. Elaborating on anthropomorphism, P P Wiener argues:

First, when we draw an analogy from humans to nature, we assume that we know humans; that is to say, we make an analogy from known human qualities to unknown natural qualities. However, it is not what we know of human beings, but what we assume to be human that we read into nature. For all we know, the analogy may go the other way: like sticks and stones, human beings may not have souls. At the very least, we may leave the question, "Do human souls exist?" open, and still speak of animism as based on an analogy. (12)

Anthropomorphism is not decisive. Anthropomorphic assumptions are known to be false. Animals behave like humans in certain respects. It may indeed be anthropomorphic and yet true. Nevertheless, it is assumed by and large that when people make an anthropomorphic assumption. It is not likely to be true.

The idea of finalizing which animal in the zoo is a dangerous and which is not is also based on the anthropomorphic sense of human evaluation. Pi's father had posted a card along the zoo that reads like "Do you know which the most dangerous animal in the zoo is?" (31). such a categorical judgment in regard to the animals in the zoo is also indicative of how human judgment is colored by anthropomorphic evaluation.

The same and similar imposition of human viewpoint and vantage point that is increasingly anthropomorphic in approach is reflected elsewhere in the novel. The following extract taken from the novel throws light on the notion of anthropomorphism as the yardstick of understanding the world of animals:

But I learned at my expense that Father believed there was another animal even more dangerous than us, and one that was extremely common, too, found on every continent, in every habitat: the redoubtable species Animal anthropomorphicus, the animal as seen through human eyes. We have all met one, perhaps even owned one. It is an animal that is cure, friendly, loving, and devoted, merry, understanding. (31)

Other things remaining the same, the entire novel is a narrative account of animals seen through the eyes of humans. The innate animal instinct and behaviors come as findings of human understanding of the world of animals from the point of view that is absolutely anthropomorphic. Actual findings and facticity regarding animals remain beyond the realm of human comprehension.

Only when human beings keep at bay anthropomorphic bent of their minds, they can perceive exact reality with regard to animals and the world of nature.

Addressing this issue, Adam Waltz makes the following explanation with a view to illustrating anthropomorphism:

Few divides in social life are more important than the one between us and them, between human and nonhuman. Perceptions of this divide are not fixed but flexible. Understanding when technology crosses that divide to become more humanlike matters not just for how people treat increasingly humanlike technology, but also for understanding why people treat other humans as mindless objects. (15)

After few days Parker too got an idea that Pi understands his idea of space and willingly depends on Pi for his food. Parker is portrayed with some consciousness in the novel as he did not attack Pi in the entire journey. Pi too knew that Parker won't attack him till he provides Parker with food from sea. At this juncture it would be interesting to contrast Pi's father with Parker. Parker in spite of carnivore did not feel the need of killing Pi till his basic need of food got fulfilled. On the other hand Pi's father, being a human, to whose heart we attach notions of beauty, love, peace, humanity, did not hesitate in extracting money through animals till the very end. This episode clearly states that animals do not have tendency to hurt humans but it is greed of humans which forces them to land up in their territory and develop enmity with them. This fight of territory led man commit many crimes against animals and environment.

But yes it is on our part to remember that ring master is never under compulsion to take charge of tigers and beat them with hunter only to offer a good circus show. Watz dwells upon the notion of anthropomorphism as follows:

Anthropomorphic characters are a step removed from human characters and require a certain degree of imitation or impersonation of human traits in order to succeed. The major difference is seen in the degree and type of abstraction: whereas the male characters are abstracted to actions. The female characters

are abstracted and reduced to physiological characteristics and recognizable feminine traits. (66)

A close relationship will also mean protection from the other members of the pride. It is this compliant animal, to the public no different from the others in size and apparent ferocity that will be the star of the show, while the trainer leaves the beta and gamma lions, more cantankerous subordinates, sitting on their colorful barrels on the edge of the ring.

Pi's reflective position is that belief in stories allows for a connected moral conscience to the world around us. The structure given to our understanding of the universe and our place in it mirrors the hopes, values and meaning inherent in stories. Intrinsic values instill life meaning in ways that facts based solely on observation cannot. As Pi's interactions exude an idyllic life of wondrous contemplation while emanating a spiritual presence, his inquisitive nature charms with humor rather than alienates with facts.

This disbelief is more explicitly analogized in the initial skepticism of the two Japanese interviewers when faced with the story of Pi's survival for 227 days in a lifeboat with the tiger Richard Parker. Central to this tensile movement is the concept of anthropomorphism which is often used in both theological and zoological contexts to indicate the ascription of a human attribute or personality to either God or animals. Pi directly addresses the problem of anthropomorphism, the animal as seen through human eyes. Stewart Elliott Guthrie claims:

Rather than being a boon against the adoption of religious faith is the very foundation of religiosity. Religion may be best understood as systematic anthropomorphism. It is bolstered by the fact that human modes of perception arise out of a fundamental perceptual uncertainty. This

uncertainty forces viewers to always be interpreting, rather than simply seeing, the phenomenal world. (55)

Humans will choose to perceive objects as animate until proven otherwise. It performs a survival function: were the hiker to see as a boulder what is in fact a bear, her misperception could prove fatal, while on the other hand, little is lost in briefly hallucinating the bear. Guthrie notes how such a strategy is analogous to Pascal's wager and claims that anthropomorphism, and thus religion, arise from a similar perceptual bet:

Anthropomorphism by definition is mistaken, but it also is reasonable and inevitable. Choosing among interpretations of the world, we remain condemned to meaning, and the greatest meaning has a human face. The jubilation Pi feels upon emerging from the Muslim Mr. Kumar's bakery after an afternoon of prayer nicely exemplifies this link between anthropomorphism and meaning in a religious context. "I suddenly felt I was in heaven," Patel tells us, marveling at the richness of his surroundings:

The life of a zoo, like the life of its inhabitants in the wild, is precarious. It is neither big enough a business to be above the law nor small enough to survive on its margins. To prosper, a zoo needs parliamentary government, democratic elections, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, rule of law and everything else enshrined in a sacred code. (79)

Pi here invokes heaven amidst earthly surroundings, attributes language and kinship to the various elements of those surroundings. Such invocation shows a willingness to place him prior protestations notwithstanding, and however coincidentally. Pi is willing to indulge in the fallacy as it applies to his surroundings while in the grip of

religious exaltation. That this rampantly anthropomorphic passage is one of the book's most convincing evocations of Pi's religious fervor is no accident.

The affective power of anthropomorphism in works of literature has often been noted. In this regard, John Ruskin remarks:

Endorsement of anthropomorphism carries within itself the illusionary resuscitation of the natural breath of language. But the most important aspect of the anthropomorphic impulse, implicit in all the above accounts, is that it finds expression primarily in response to doubt or disbelief. Given the prevalence of anthropomorphism as a strategy for combating perceptual uncertainty it tends to humanize the animals that surround him. (23)

The zoological knowledge affords him insight into the drawbacks of such a tendency. It takes on a special significance, especially in light of his apparently incongruous and excessive engagement with religion. He attempts to excuse having humanized the pheasants, baboons and other animals of the zoo "till they spoke fluent English" by claiming that "the fancy was always conscious". (42) Pi never entirely loses his youthful tendency to anthropomorphize. This is most obvious in his attitude to Richard Parker, the tiger with a human name, an anthropomorphic trope writ large.

The first time readers hear of Richard Parker, Pi laments: "I did not dare lick them. I wiped them guiltily on my napkin. He had no idea how deeply those words wound me" (7), an anthropomorphic misunderstanding that jars quite strikingly with Pi's aforementioned oration on the dangers of anthropomorphism which happens only a little further on in the novel. But although Pi presumably sees quite clearly the fallacy in daring to attribute fellow feeling to a tiger, the reader is not explicitly told that Richard Parker is a tiger until much later, and so would not recognize the contradiction on first reading.

Besides, the rhetorical importance of the passage far outweighs the logical contradiction it embodies, as the narrative impact of Zebra's appearance in the lifeboat as "The zebra's attempt at self-preservation only whipped the hyena into a frenzy of snarling and biting. It made a gaping wound in the zebra's side. When it was no longer satisfied with the reach it had from behind the zebra, the hyena climbed onto it haunches" (124) entirely depends on the reader having naturally assumed that Richard Parker is human.

Richard Parker is human because that is the most meaningful thing he could be; because, as Guthrie notes of our anthropomorphic impulse. This is not to say that the revelation of Richard Parker's tiger-ness strips him of meaning. Because by the time his biological status is clarified, he has already been sufficiently humanized for the reader to have placed him on a continuum with the novel's human characters. Although the believability of Pi's story depends on his detailed engagement with Richard Parker's tiger-ness, much of Richard Parker's charm as a character subsists in his consistent humanization, a function his name subtly fulfills at every mention.

Although Pi resists directly anthropomorphizing Richard Parker for most of the lifeboat journey, qualifying his statements with the verb to seem so as not to claim possession of an inaccessible knowledge. The following extract throws light on this sort of troubled relation between the narrator and the animals which verge on harmony and understanding:

I noticed the loss of the raft at dawn. All that was left of it were two tied oars and the life jacket between them. They had the same effect on me as the last standing beam of a burnt-down house would have on a householder. I turned and scrutinized every quarter of the horizon. Nothing, my little town had

vanished. That the sea anchors, miraculously, were not lost-they continued to tug at the lifeboat faithfully-was a consolation that had no effect. (228)

Pi's avoidance of unqualified anthropomorphisms through most of the long lifeboat section might convince us that he has, as he claims, learned from the tiger "the lesson that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us" (39). But at the end of the novel, while recounting their sad final parting, he takes up once again his anthropomorphic lament.

Further on, Pi admits that that bungled goodbye hurts me to this day. It is an indication that though he may be intellectually resolved to the unbridgeable distance between himself and Richard Parker. Also worth noting is Pi's shift to the present tense. He believes in form showing that however his experiences with Richard Parker may have disabused him of any faith in the truth of anthropomorphism. He still implicitly acknowledges its necessity. In this regard Guthrie makes the following argument with a view to illustrate anthropomorphism:

Anthropomorphism is a perceptual strategy by which we attempt to glean the greatest meaning from the world around us. It appeals to meaning in the above passage is not surprising. This is in the interest of realism; the meticulously detailed lifeboat section would suffer in believability were the narrator's more wildly fallacious anthropomorphisms to emerge too often.

(87)

Gone therefore are such elaborate comparisons as that of three-toed sloths to upside-down yogis deep in meditation or hermits deep in prayer. Except for the comment that Richard Parker's mix of ease and concentration would be the envy of the highest yogis. Pi's early proclivity for improbable comparisons is noticeably muted in the

novel's long second part. Richard Parker's name and a slew of indirectly humanizing analogies carry the anthropomorphic conceit through to its re-emergence at the coda.

Pi's well-established anthropomorphic fervor comes mainly in passing. So remarkably slight is Pi's engagement with religion during this section that when he claims that it was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God. His piety rings a little false. At this point he has made no reference to the world of nature. But given Pi's persistent conflation of aesthetic and religious belief, the absence of religious questioning during the lifeboat ordeal seems consistent. Neither Pi nor his author-narrator makes any distinction between the temporary suspension of disbelief and firm religious faith, between the acceptance of a believable story and the embrasure of an omniscient God.

From such a vantage point, the subjective aesthetic value of the lifeboat section effectively supplants objective religious truth. According to the worldview embodied in the novel, the religious aspects of the narrative do not simply fade to the background. Despite their essential dissimilarity, God and story do share doubt as an adversary, and this commonality lies at the heart of Pi's conflation of aesthetic and religious truth. Pi's friendship with the biology teacher Mr. Kumar provides the occasion for Pi's first musings on doubt. When Mr. Kumar characterizes the zoo as his temple, one might think such a devoutly religious lad as Pi would see heresy, but he makes no remark. Further on, Mr. Kumar tells Pi that religion is darkness, rather than express his strongly felt disagreement.

Pi's unconcern with openly defending or promoting his anthropomorphic impulse, while understandable in the context of his relationship with a figure of authority like Mr. Kumar, still indicates certain tenuousness in his faith, a fear of doubt's virulence:

The pacific is no place for rowers, especially when they are weak and blind, when their lifeboats are large and unwieldy, and when the wind is not cooperating. He was close by; he was far away. He was so my left; he was to my right. He was ahead of me; he was behind me. But at last we managed it. Our boats touched with a bump even sweeter sounding than a turtle's. He threw me a rope and I tethered his boat to mine. (254)

An adherence to doubt involves as much faith as the affirmation or denial of symbiotic existence. Humanity was to obtain knowledge formerly posited by the agnostic as inaccessible; her doubt could be proven misguided. But although Pi seems to see atheism as included in the statement he quotes from Gandhi that all religions are true. He does not accord agnosticism the same status.

This hostility to doubt over even flat-out denial might be seen as evidence of what the novelist Pankaj Mishra characterizes as the somewhat born again theology of Pi and his author. It is as though God exists mostly in order to help, rather than complicate, the individual's lonely pursuit of happiness. In other words, Pi sees faith in God primarily as armor against doubt, a viewpoint facilitated by his dual role as both religious believer and teller of fantastical tales. His second comparison of atheism and agnosticism makes it clear that Pi sees no distinction between the agnostic's doubt and the incredulity.

Pi trivializes religion by appealing to its aesthetic value without regard for its objective truth. For a person to lack imagination might very well make it difficult for her to embrace God, but not necessarily. Pi included, come to religion as an inheritance, for which birth at a certain time and place is the only prerequisite. The potential inability of the reader to perform such an imaginative exertion — or her unwillingness to suspend her disbelief — is most explicitly dramatized in part three of

the novel, as Mr. Chiba and Mr. Okamoto, the two interviewers sent by the Japanese government to investigate the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*.

After enumerating the various aspects of Pi's story that they find hard to believe. They tell him that although they liked his story very much. They would like to know what really happened. Significant here is the distinction between liking and believing a story, which Pi attempts to explode in the dialogue that follows:

A solitary tree stood about two hundred feet away. It was the only tree downhill from the ridge, which seemed a very long way off. I say ridge; the word perhaps gives an incorrect impression of how steep the rise from the shore was. The island was low-lying, as I have said. The rise was gentle, to a height of perhaps fifty or sixty feet. But in the state I was in, that height loomed like a mountain. (260)

Pi's appeal to the inventive aspect of all perception colludes nicely with Guthrie's assertion. All seeing is seeing as. That Guthrie uses the interpretive nature of perception as the foundation for his theory of religion as anthropomorphism can be related to Pi's story in a number of ways. Both Pi's occasional anthropomorphizing of the animals that surround him and the subtle anthropomorphic trope of Richard Parker's name can be seen as strategies to impart these figures with the greatest possible meaning.

Anthropomorphic thinking finds expression primarily in response to the unknowable. The perceivers attribute human characteristics to Gods, animals, and landscapes because they have no other terms under which to give them meaning. In his essay "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense," Friedrich Nietzsche endorses such an extreme view of human perception which goes:

Because truth cannot but be expressed in language, and language is at its essence reductive and incapable of encapsulating the thing-in-itself, it follows that truth itself is, at best, aptly figurative. “What is truth? a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms. All language and indeed all human thought are inherently anthropomorphic; in merely speaking of animals, in naming them, we impose a fraction of our humanity. (254)

Presumably the same would hold for God; our conceptions of Him are inherently anthropomorphic. Therefore, to a certain extent, it is inherently subjective. So though it seems absurd to attempt to explain the religious outlook of a story that claims it will make you believe in God in light of the epistemological theories of a thinker most famous for declaring His death, Pi’s peculiar faith seems to demand just such an approach.

The alternative story he tells Mr. Chiba and Mr. Okamoto seems to acknowledge the anthropomorphic nature of truth in that its primary movement is to literally humanize the animal characters of his previous story. To counter the disbelief of his listeners, Pi emphasizes what Coleridge would call the human interest of the story, in the perhaps ironic hope of making it more meaningful to them. But when Mr. Chiba notices the correspondences between the animal characters of the original story and the human characters of the revised one the obviousness of the anthropomorphic transfers thus highlighted ultimately render the human story unbelievable.

The story which includes Richard Parker is preferable not because it is necessarily true, but because it is. It makes its appeal to human truth less overtly by inviting disbelief with fantastic premises so as to grant the imagination the pleasure of suspending it. In his monumental study of the psychology of religion, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James emphasizes the essential subjectivity of

religious faith in his characterization of religion as “a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism”. (480) According to James, because the appeal of religion rests in the feeling that our personal concerns can be divinely met, each of us adapts God to suit our individual needs. Pi and his author-narrator show themselves to be no exception, rooting their conception of God in a defiance of doubt made all the more vehement by their roles as storytellers.

Thus, it can be concluded that the novel, *Life of Pi*, puts forward anthropomorphism as a way of forming truth, perceiving reality, admitting and internalizing life experience. At the cost of all the available perspectives, if anthropomorphism is applied, it would be the best strategic mode of interpreting and understanding the complex interrelationship between human world and the world of animals.

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