

## I. Introduction

This present research work is based on Spanish born Canadian writer Yann Martel's book *Life of Pi* (2002) that was awarded with the prestigious Man Booker Prize 2002. It aims to analyze the novel from the perspective of multiculturalism. In the present world of global economy and market, culture and practices of a nation too, has fallen prey to the global scenario and hence no practices and cultures can boast of having a unique identity.

Piscine Molitor Patel, the central character in *Life of Pi* popular among his friends and family as Pi Patel believes in universal brotherhood and hence, for him all religions and its aspects are of equal dignity, to him. He has alike decorum for people of all religions, as such, he visits a temple, a mosque and all holy places with equal respect. Hindus claim him to be an adherent follower of Bishnu, as he was born to Hindu parents; Islamist claim him to be Muslim, as he visits Mosque, every Friday and Christians claim him to be good Christian as he never misses Sunday prayers. Thereby, Pi Patel represents the concept of universal fraternity and denounces the concept of a single god of a single religion.

Pi Patel represents the ideology of modern man, who can no longer stick to the concept of dogmatic values of his/her religion, but, is a follower of all. His concept and belief is of global practise, where all religions merge to a common goal. In postmodern period, concept of single God is fast losing its charm, as people are being tolerant to each others' culture and religion. Pi Patel, too is a follower of multicultural world, signifying in him the concept of modern man.

However, when *Life of Pi* advocates the idea of multicultural God, it has also planted the seeds of uncertainty towards the existence of God, at least, in the readers mind. Martel in his own way offers us to believe in the presence and superiority of the almighty, but his concept of almighty is not limited to Christ, or Bishnu, or Allah alone but much more them

all these put together. Martel's God is mysteriously a post-modern God, who is more like an illusionist, rather than the Supreme.

As an illusionist writer, Martel creates doubts in the readers mind through the author's note. But this voice, as we come to know by the end is fictional and there are no characters or organization that he talks about in the novel. So, right from the beginning, Martel becomes a fictional narrator as the story progresses. He propagates this doubt all the way through the novel, written as if it were a combination of Pi's memoirs and Martel's investigate reporting. It begins as a simple memoir of a child shipwreck survival.

The fiction revolves around, Pi Patel from his childhood in amongst the zoo animals in Pondicherry – an autonomous state in South India and his high survival in Pacific Ocean and in a deserted island for 277 days. However, some of Pi's later adventures begin to test the limit of reader's judgement on whether they are fiction or fact. However, it seems to play with the reader's sense of reality is Martel's cup of tea. The height of the drama unfolds, when Martel even mentions and thanks his own two fictional characters, Japanese officials who provided Martel some fictional documents about the shipwreck in Pacific Ocean, where the main character Pi was trapped.

But by the end of the story, we are left confused about the statues of truth in the story, because the main character and narrator Pi proves himself to be liar. During the investigation of the two Japanese officials on the unusual survival of Pi Patel, he presents with two versions of the story and asks the interrogator (indirectly to the readers) to accept, the more reliable version. It seems the officials are more interested on his unusual survival, as in the story, they have to believe that the missing person of shipwreck was found alive after 277 days. And according to Pi Patel, after the ship sinks there were five survivors; Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg) a female orang-utan, and a 450-pound Royal Bengal Tiger. The scene is, of course set for an extra ordinary adventure.

The second version of Pi Patel's story is substituting the animals in his remarkable survival. This tale is neither miraculous nor extraordinary but a brutal tale of human savagery. The version narrates that all the humans and the animals died except, of course, Pi.

Martel offers a counter-narrative, against the narratives of all existing religions, to expose the very tradition of narrative and their linguistic, fictional foundations. His protagonist, Pi Patel,

Martel, the child of diplomats, was born in Salamanca, Spain on June 25, 1963. His parents were civil servants of Canadian descent. He grew up in Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Alaska and Canada and as an adult has spent time in Iran, Turkey and India. After studying philosophy at Trent University, Canada, he worked at various odd jobs until he began making novel, and of the story collection *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Reccamattios*. He lives in Montreal, Canada.

Martel spent a year in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan from September 2003 as the public library's writer-in-residence. He collaborated with Omar Daniel, composer-in-residence at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, on a piece for piano, string quartet and bass. The composition of *You Are Where You Are*, is based on text written by Martel, which includes parts of cell phone conversations taken from moments in an ordinary day.

As an adolescent Martel attended high school at Trinity College School, a boarding school in Port Hope, Ontario, where he polished his early skills in writing. As an adult, Martel has travelled the globe, spending time in Iran, Turkey and India. After studying philosophy at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, Martel spent 13 months in India visiting mosques, temples, churches and zoos, and then two years reading religious texts and castaway stories. His first published fictional work, *Seven Stories*, appeared in 1993.

In 2001, Martel published *Life of Pi*, which was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2002. Soon afterward, a dedication to Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar appearing in the preface

of the novel briefly elicited questions about the story's originality. It appeared that the premise of *Life of Pi* and some aspects of its plot had been inspired by Scliar's *Max e os Felinos*, published in 1981. Martel admitted having been influenced, but accusations of plagiarism were defused when Scliar read *Life of Pi* and wrote about it for *La Presse*, saying that the two books were different. *Life of Pi* was later chosen for the 2003 edition of CBC Radio's *Canada Reads* competition, where it was championed by author Nancy Lee. In addition, its French translation, *Histoire de Pi*, was included in the French version of the competition, *Le combat des livres*, in 2004, championed by singer Louise Forestier.

A *20th century Shirt* another of literary venture by Martel deals with the Holocaust: it takes place between two talking animals (a monkey and a donkey) on a man's dress shirt. It was published simultaneously with an essay on the same subject, also under the same name. Martel cited them as simply two approaches to the same subject. He claims it will be a philosophical work, essentially just "one long conversation." He is also working on a project entitled *What is Stephen Harper Reading?*, where he is sending the Prime Minister of Canada one book every two weeks that portrays stillness with an accompanying explanatory note. He is posting his letters, book selection and any responses to the website devoted to the project.

Stuart Sim takes *Life of Pi* as a text as a brilliant example of post-modern literary creation. He in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* writes:

Yann Martel's imaginative and unputdownable *Life of Pi* is a magical reading experience. It successfully sows the seed of uncertainty in the mind of its reader, which the postmodern writers tend to do. Moreover, when he directly speaks to the readers, he creates illusion of being a demo god, walking away from the established trend of writing fiction. (87)

In an attempt to make the fiction real, he creates an illusion of some characters, which he claims to be real, at least within the story, however, this is where he successfully plants uncertainty in the mind of the readers.

As a postmodernist writer, Martel is suggesting that inconsistency may be the part of human lives, if we follow it then that so will the story human tell. Martel also aims to astute the story's inconsistencies, tensions and struggles because these original points of confusion and uncertainty indirectly, to reveal that all is probably not as simple as it may seem, or it directly promotes the postmodern permanent concept of uncertainty.

Martel wants to use the very telling of the tale, multi-narrators, a play full fairytale quality once upon time and happy ending, are mentioned in passing. Realistically presented events, that may be hallucinations or simply made up to push the limit of what is believable let still convince his readers of his literary but not literal veracity. Martel wants to expose and even mock up the tradition of narrative and truth establishing practices with the help of postmodern game of narration and language.

Even if one accepts Martel's offer to believe in God through the fiction, it is only an exemplar postmodern practice of establishing God through telling a tale because postmodern mini-narratives are always situational contingency, provisional, and temporary, making no claim to universality, truth or stability. However, these are the diverse cultural practices, as cultural diversity does not seek one religion or culture as superior but emphasize in the superiority of all. And, Martel uses his God as a symbol to unity amongst the diversity.

The symbolism, Martel wants to use in this fiction is brilliant. Pi echoes the mathematical sign pi, which mathematicians believe to be irrational number having no fixed value, which has great significance in fiction. Pi defines himself to be like this of pi, and even asks us to measure up his value on the same way as pi equals to 3.14 and his inconsistency in his narrative accounts as he tells two alternate versions of same story exposes his unfaithful

nature like that of irrational value of pi in mathematics. Pi's taste of faith towards God is always undercut by his doubt. Even if one accepts the twist and turns of narrative, one faces further challenge for tracking down clues hidden in a warren of illusions about Pi's religious faith, and whether narrator and the readers, we will be persuaded the story's original promises that it will make one "believe in God."

Pi which makes the pi is presented as a liar and flicker, lacking consistency in his narrative. He is devoted Hindu, Christian and Muslim at once because he loves the God and all God. Pi's God is plural because he could not see the sense of choosing between three good stories, even though he ironically claims that his decision to believe in God over atheism and agnosticism is because for him "God is better story" (64). It would then seem that though, the better story embodies multiple stories none are arbitrary or without meaning and significance. Pi tells two different versions of the story of his unbelievable survival in the hallucinatory shipwreck, through which, Martel pursues us to believe in God. Here, Martel may be suggesting that believing in God is believing the thing which is unbelievable, in other words which does not deserve to be believed.

Martel through *Life of Pi* promotes the postmodern general concepts of fluidity and uncertainty of meanings. This feature is one of the aspects of multiculturalism. He creates a state of confusion and leaves the readers in a sea of questions about the most discussed metaphysical aspects of multiculturalism. In the context, Sim comments:

Martel, by offering a confusing pastiche of devotions through his main character Pi, who at once is devout Christian, Hindu and Muslim not only further illustrates through Pi's connotation that all religions are essentially same, and all for love but he also uses mysticism to underscore all the profound ways in which religious texts create the image of God. Martel

equalizes the story and religions because both are myths and linguistic production. (56)

Here, Martel poses a great question on God? Who is God? Is the concept of God different to different religions? However, he may be suggesting that, the sources of god are all the irrational and groundless narratives. Where Martel, parodically, offers us a counter-narrative, through which he himself tries to create a God, which is too much individualized notion of faith and God. Martel indirectly discloses that the entire irrational things are the product of God in illusion that is made by men to rationalize their illusions. Through his fiction *Life of Pi*, Martel proves the Lyotard's statement that in postmodern age legitimating is dispersed, plural and local. Postmodernism is credulity towards "meta-narratives," where no narrative is above the question of functionality and language game.

There are few critics, who take the text as religious book, whereas others deny the claim. Still others take the book as an animal story and few also opine that the text is of the voice of the marginal expelled and subaltern people. Among the religion based critics, M. K. Dollar Koch is one of them. He comments:

Martel's novel *Life of Pi* is a text that offers a fascinating insight of all major religions. The plot has more to do with perception than with answer, explores themes like trust unfettered imagination our animal instincts, nature of animal and offers a fascinating insights into Hinduism, Christianity and Islamism.

(40)

On the other hand, denying Koch's idea Binn Jones takes book not convincing in believe in God rather successful to make think whether we should as he goes in this passage, believe in God. Bin writes:

Martel combines dramatic episodes, scientific knowledge, well written passage, humour and gruesome details to move story along. Since we know

the entire book is told in flashback we know how things will turn out yet the suspense still grips us. The writing here is deceptively simple: Martel lets winsome narrative voice and the intriguing plot carry us all the while winking, he tosses out thoughts on the kind of metaphysical questions men have pondered for centuries. The story may not make us believe in God, but certainly helps us to enjoy asking whether we should. (35)

By this analytical passage, Jones offers the readers to celebrate questioning about God and faith.

Critic Linda M. Morra compares *Life of Pi* with *Robinson Crusoe* and she takes the narrative as means of survival in the face of cruelties. She finds Martel's novel as a kind of fictional biography, and as such for her novel displays certain hagiographical tendency and presumably, Pi's life is meant to be for example. She also, states that the book also seems to critique the confessional and instructional facet of Defoe's book, derives its moral orientation from puritan and moral tracts. The autonomy and economic rewards that Crusoe and upwardly middle class enjoyed many have been result of solid work ethic, but they were also the product of imperial exploitation.

Martel's choice of Indian for his protagonist seems implicitly to make this point about Crusoe's position in the world. Moreover, if Crusoe himself discovers religious belief and experiences a conversion because of his hardship, Pi demonstrates a kind of spiritual precocity, since he has explored even, celebrated three major religious belief systems in advance of his ordeal at sea. Narrative itself becomes a means of sheltering from the cruelties of survival two versions of Pi's life conveyed to the Japanese investigators at the end indicate that narratives like religion renders the cruelties of the survival more tolerable.

In conclusion, critics have diverse view on *Life of Pi*. Nevertheless, this fiction is typically postmodern fiction that deals about universality of culture and God. Martel not only

resists the technique of singularity of grand narratives, but also parodies all the existing tales and narratives. Martel displays his sceptic attitude towards telling tradition and truth construction practices that are based on language medium. The God is more a creation of language and so is the culture of various civilizations. However diverse criticism on *Life of Pi* might be find, it is nevertheless, no one can ignore the idea of multiculturalism, predominantly present in the novel.

## II. Multiculturalism as a Post-modern Trend

The term “multiculturalism” refers to an applied ideology of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity, within the demographics of a specified place, usually at the scale of an organization such as a school, business, neighbourhood, city or nation. Some countries have official, or *de jure* (by law) policies of multiculturalism aimed at recognizing, celebrating and maintaining the different cultures or cultural identities within that society to promote social cohesion. In this context, multiculturalism advocates a society that extends equitable status to distinct cultural and religious groups, with no one culture predominating.

Bruce Bawer, one of the prominent critics on multiculturalism in *Hudson Review* writes:

Multiculturalism, a recent trend is fast developing as distaste toward the idea and policies in Europe, especially, as stated earlier, in the Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Austria and Germany. The belief behind this backlash on multiculturalism is that it creates friction within societies, risking the chances of disputes and ultimately, chaos. (27)

Incompatibility with secular society has been influenced by a stance against multiculturalism advocated by recent philosophers, closely linked to the heritage of New Philosophers.

Fiery polemic on the subject by proponents like Pascal Bruckner, and Paul Cliteur has kindled international debate. They hold multiculturalism to be an invention of enlightened elite who deny the benefits of democratic rights to the rest of humanity by chaining people to their roots. They claim this allows Islam free rein to propagate abuses such as the mistreatment of women and homosexuals, and in some countries slavery. They also claim multiculturalism allows freedom of religion to exceed the realms of personal religious experience and to organize towards mundane ambitions seeking moral and political influence that opposes European secular or Christian values.

Multiculturalism is a theory about the foundations of a culture rather than a practice which subsumes cultural ideas. (Harrison, 1984) Looked at broadly, the term is often used to describe societies (especially nations) which have many distinct cultural groups, usually as a result of immigration. This can lead to anxiety about the stability of national identity, yet can also lead to cultural exchanges that benefit the cultural groups. Such exchanges range from major accomplishments in literature, art and philosophy to relatively token appreciation of variations in music, dress and new foods.

On a smaller scale, the term can also be used to refer to specific districts in cities where people of different cultures co-exist. The actions of city planners can result in some areas remaining monoculture often due to pressure groups active in the local political arena, or indeed the direct actions of these pressure groups or societies general prejudices such as racism or homophobia. Mono-cultural districts can often be referred to, positively or negatively, as ghettos. Gay ghettos may be a positive force for some, but quite obviously, other forms of ghetto like those created by the Nazis or those in South Africa during the Apartheid Era are not. Multiculturalism can also be a prescriptive term which describes government policy.

In dealing with immigrants groups and their cultures, there are essentially four approaches- like, mono-culturalism, in most old World nations, notably with the exception of the UK, culture is very closely linked to nationalism, thus government policy is to assimilate immigrants. These countries have policies aiming at the social integration of immigrant groups to the national culture. This is typical of nations that define themselves as one and indivisible and do not recognize the existence of other nations within their midst. A literary and social ideology that presupposes that all cultural value systems are equally worthy of study, multiculturalism has permeated numerous aspects of American life since the 1960s. Growing out of the civil rights and feminist movements and reflecting America's increasingly

pluralistic, multiethnic society, multi-culturalist ideals have influenced literature, art, popular culture, media, education, and legal and social policy. In response to greater globalization, and due to the questioning of the entire concept of assimilation, the social model for American society has shifted away from the image of the “melting pot” – a according to which minorities gave up their individual identity to integrate fully with general society – and moved towards a model where unique ethnic identities remain intact and contribute to the greater good.

While educational curricula have adjusted to mirror a less Eurocentric worldview and to compensate for the lack of attention paid to non-Western cultures over the past century, critics have begun debating the problems inherent with institutionalizing multiculturalism. For example, some have argued that the pendulum has swung too far, resulting in the unwarranted dismissal or ignoring of scholarship from Caucasian academics as well as multiculturalist – driven syllabi that routinely attack aspects of Western civilization. Other commentators have suggested that the categories of multicultural study have become too rigid and deterministic, defining groups of writers too narrowly and without taking into account individual talent and independence of mind. The very notion of defining population groups primarily by ethnicity continues to be argued, with pundits noting the wealth of inconsistencies and discrepancies inherent in such forms of classification. Certain scholars have additionally observed the repression, or even suppression, of academic dialogue on certain topics – for example, racism and the cultural role of Jews – that have been deemed too inflammatory or problematic within a multicultural context.

Critical discussion of multiculturalism has been augmented by the increased need for international communication and mutual understanding in the modern world. Several of the more extreme varieties of multiculturalism have been softened through academic practice and experience – many literary critics have called for a return to the evaluation of works of

literature solely as works of art, rather than as reflections of a particular culture. Others have continued to voice their dissatisfaction with the slow progress of multiculturalism, emphasizing that the changes instituted in education, art, and society remain superficial at best.

Leading culture societal model has been developed in Germany by Orientalist Bassam Tibi. In his book 'Europa ohne Identität' ('Europe with no identity'), communities within a country can have an identity of their own, but they at least support the core concepts of the leading culture on which a society is based. In the West these concepts are democracy, separation of church and state, Enlightenment, civil society.

Melting Pot: In the United States the traditional view has been one of a melting pot where all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention. However, many states have different language policies within the union. Immigrants maintain their own culture and family background while also becoming Americans.

Multiculturalism, in comparison to the above two approaches, multiculturalism is a view, or policy those immigrants, and others, should preserve their cultures with the different cultures interacting peacefully within one nation. Today, this is the official policy of Canada, Australia and the UK. However, contrasting views on the Australian model articulate a fundamental shift that identifies a singular homogenised culture derived from a heterogenous society. Multiculturalism has been described as preserving a "cultural mosaic" of separate ethnic groups, and is contrasted to a "melting pot" that mixes them. This has also been described as the "salad bowl" model.

No country falls completely into one, or another, of these categories. For example, France has made efforts to adapt French culture to new immigrant groups, while Canada still has many policies that work to encourage assimilation.

Some, such as Diane Ravitch, use the term multiculturalism differently, describing both the melting pot, and Canada's cultural mosaic as being multicultural and refers to them as pluralistic and particularist multiculturalism. In her terminology, pluralistic multiculturalism views each culture or subculture in a society as contributing unique and valuable cultural aspects to the whole culture. Particularist multiculturalism is more concerned with preserving the distinctions between cultures.

### **Multiculturalism: As an Approach**

Multiculturalism became incorporated into official policies in several nations in the 1970s for reasons that varied from country to country.

From the late 1990s multiculturalism came under sustained intellectual attack in Western Europe largely, but not exclusively, from the political right. Most of these attacks were, surprisingly by the so-called elite group of people. The reaction was more vehement than in North America, since it was associated with several other factors such as the return of explicit nationalism as a political force, the revival of national identity, the rise of euro scepticism, and concerns about Islam in Europe. The period saw the rise of anti-immigrant populism in Europe, which was uniformly, sometimes fanatically, hostile to multiculturalism.

The debate of multiculturalism became increasingly polarised, and increasingly associated with Islam and terrorism. The Islam world was largely identified as dogmatic society and west as liberal, in which the first is blamed as fertile land for terrorism. The multiculturalism issue merged with the immigration policy issue. However, the concept of multiculturalism has been analyzed from different perspectives in different nations.

In the United States especially, multiculturalism became associated with political correctness and with the rise of ethnic identity politics. In the 1980s and 1990s many criticisms were expressed, from both the left and right. Criticisms come from a wide variety

of perspectives, but predominantly from the perspective of liberal individualism, from American conservatives concerned about values, and from a national unity perspective.

In 1991, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., a former advisor to the late President of United States, John F. Kennedy and other US administrations and Pulitzer Prize winner, published a book with the title *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*.

Schlesinger states that a new attitude on the issue. He writes, “Multiculturalism is the one that celebrates difference and abandons assimilation and it is likely that it may replace the classic image of the melting pot theory in which differences are submerged; as if in democratic norms” (124). He argues that ethnic awareness has had many positive consequences to unite a nation with a history of prejudice; however, the “cult of ethnicity”, if pushed too far, may endanger the unity of society. Schlesinger further clarifies:

Multiculturalists are very often ethnocentric separatists who see little in the western heritage other than western crimes. Their mood is one of divesting Americans of their sinful European inheritance and seeking redemptive infusions from non-Western cultures. It is an attempt to walk away from the past and towards a new tomorrow. (75)

Americans have always lived in the shadows of the Europeans. Schlesinger argues that multiculturalism is an escape from their bitter past. In his 1991 work *Illiberal Education* Dinesh D’Souza argues that the entrenchment of multiculturalism in American universities undermined the Universalist values that liberal education once attempted to foster. In particular, he was disturbed by the growth of ethnic studies programs (e.g., black studies).

Samuel P. Huntington, political scientist and author, known for his *Clash of Civilizations* theory, has described multiculturalism as “basically an anti-western ideology.” According to Huntington, multiculturalism has “attacked the identification of the United

States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other sub-national cultural identities and groupings” (77).

The liberal-feminist critique is related to the liberal and libertarian critique, since it is concerned with what happens *inside* the cultural groups. In her 1999 essay, later expanded into an anthology, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” the feminist and political theorist Susan Okin argues that a concern for the preservation of cultural diversity should not overshadow the discriminatory nature of gender roles in many traditional minority cultures, that, at the very least, “culture” should not be used as an excuse for rolling back the women’s rights movement.

Criticism of multiculturalism in the US was not always synonymous with opposition to immigration. Some politicians did address both themes, notably Patrick Buchanan, who in 1993 described multiculturalism as “an across-the-board assault on our Anglo-American heritage.” Buchanan and other pale conservatives argue that multiculturalism is the ideology of the modern managerial state, an ongoing regime that remains in power, regardless of what political party holds a majority. It acts in the name of abstract goals, such as equality or positive rights, and uses its claim of moral superiority, power of taxation and wealth redistribution to keep itself in power.

Multiculturalism has also been attacked through satire, such as the following proposition by John Derbyshire in *Trend and Pale Conservatives*, writes:

The Diversity Theorem Groups of people from anywhere in the world, mixed together in any numbers and proportions whatsoever, will eventually settle down as a harmonious society, appreciating -- nay, celebrating their differences, which will of course soon disappear entirely. The present statuses of harmony will soon its ground, ending in chaos and disorder. (67)

This theorem of diverse of people living in a communal community is held to be false by Derbyshire and other pale conservatives. Lawrence Auster, another conservative critic of multiculturalism, has argued that although multiculturalism is meant to promote the value of each culture, the reality is that its real tendency has been to undermine America's traditional majority culture. In Auster's view, multiculturalism has tended to "downgrade our national culture while raising the status and power of other cultures" (122). He writes:

The formal meaning of "diversity," "cultural equity," "gorgeous mosaic" and so on is a society in which many different cultures will live together in perfect equality and peace (i.e., a society that has never existed and never will exist); the real meaning of these slogans is that the power of the existing mainstream society to determine its own destiny shall be drastically reduced while the power of other groups, formerly marginal or external to that society, will be increased. In other words the U.S. must, in the name of diversity, abandon its particularity while the very groups making that demand shall hold on to theirs. (79)

Since multiculturalism claims to stand for the sanctity and worth of each culture, the discovery that its real tendency is to dismantle the existing. "The European-based culture of the United States should have instantly discredited it," (80), he adds further.

Another critic of multiculturalism is the political theorist Brian Barry. In his 2002 book *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, he argues, "Some forms of multiculturalism can divide people, although they need to unite in order to fight for social justice" (81).

Kevin B. MacDonald, a professor of psychology at California State University, Long Beach, has argued in *Trilogy on Judaism* argues that Jews have been prominent as main ideologues and promoters of multiculturalism in an attempt to end anti-Semitism. MacDonald

considers multiculturalism to be dangerous to the West, concluding in his Jack London Literary Prize acceptance speech, he comments:

Given that some ethnic groups, especially ones with high levels of ethnocentrism and mobilization will undoubtedly continue to function as groups far into the foreseeable future, unilateral renunciation of ethnic loyalties by some groups means only their surrender and defeat, the Darwinian dead end of extinction. The future, then, like the past, will inevitably be a Darwinian competition in which ethnicity plays a very large role. The alternative faced by Europeans throughout the Western world is to place them in a position of enormous vulnerability in which their destinies will be determined by other peoples, many of whom hold deep historically conditioned hatreds toward them. Europeans' promotion of their own displacement is the ultimate foolishness, historical mistake of catastrophic proportions. (83)

Since the beginning of early twentieth century, there has been a sharp rise in the migration ratio, across the world. It is a general trend that people from the rural section migrate to the urban and from developing countries to the developed nations. As the flow of migration increased, societies with different caste and creed of people have been formed in the various parts of the world. In the context, the United States of America excelled the remaining parts of the world.

In past decades, the American lifestyle existed as 'the melting pot'. This was due to the assimilation of diverse cultural, ethnic and racial populations. In this reality, American culture attempted to assume a single, homogeneous, modern culture, which demonstrated unequal relationship between the existing dominant culture and the myriad of subcultures. In finding a medium to overcome and somehow balance the unequal relationships established

between the existing diverse cultures, multiculturalism along with multicultural education came into existence.

The first multicultural policy was set up in Canada. Spokespersons of different ethnic heritages that made up Canada argued in the late 1960's, that a new model of citizen participation in larger society had to be adopted. They argued that it should be one that addressed all the ethnic groups that were part of Canada as they too were part of the national war effort and felt that they should also reap the benefits of Canada's revival. Unlike the melting pot model of the United States, they preferred the idea of a "cultural mosaic," unique parts fitting together into a unified whole. The Royal Commission of Canada was appointed by the federal government to deal with English and French relations in Canada at the time began to be enlightened by the spokespersons of different ethnic heritages that were unhappy with their status in Canada.

The Commission agreed with the spokespersons and presented their ideas along with recommendations to the federal government which would acknowledge the value of cultural pluralism to Canadian identity and encourage Canadian institutions to reflect this pluralism in their policies and programs. The policy was accepted in 1971. The policy was one of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework however, ethnic pluralism was only declared to be a positive feature of Canadian society worthy of preservation and development and not law. Only in 1982 did it become a law and later in 1988 Bill-C-93 was passed as the Multicultural Act. The Multicultural Policy states that under Canadian law, these equalities are the rights and privileges of any person, and ensure that they may participate as a member of the society, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious background.

In spite of these advancements in Canada's recent history, multiculturalism did not eliminate racism or the disparities encountered by the ethnic minorities in this country. Through media, racism is still perpetuated as will be demonstrated in this paper. Because of

the failure of multiculturalism, critical multiculturalism has been pushed to the forefront. Stephan May points out in his book *Critical Multiculturalism*, the public sphere of the nation-state represents and is reflective of the particular cultural and linguistic habitats of the dominant (ethnic) group. These habitats, in turn, are accorded with cultural and linguistic capital while other (minority) habitats specifically are not. The principal consequence for many minorities--at both the individual and collective level - has been the enforced loss of their own ethnic, cultural and linguistic habitats as the necessary price of entry to the civic realm.

To make all the nations of the world, a more Democratic space, education in the twenty-first century must help all students regardless of race, ethnicity or gender to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to participate in a multicultural society. Also, education must be structured to assist students in understanding and affirming their community cultures, freeing them from cultural boundaries and allowing them to create and maintain a civic community that works for the common good. However, a unified and cohesive democratic society can be created only when the rights of its diverse people are reflected in its institutions, educational environments and national culture. Paramount in achieving this is the recognition of the importance of collaboration between students, parents, educators, and communities working toward social justice in the education system.

Unfortunately, there are factors that hinder the advancement of multiculturalism and that especially tarnish the views and attitudes of our children whom we are trying to educate in multicultural settings. The media is one of these factors. Augie Fleras and Jean Lock Kunz critically dissect the media in their book *Media and Minorities*. In doing this they attest that, “no one should underestimate the possibility that media centric values may reinforce racism in the media through the one-sidedness of media messages in perpetuating a race-based status quo” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001). Mainstream media continue to endorse structures and values

that have the systemic consequence of denying or excluding minority women and men (Fleras and Kunz, 2001).

However, the approach of multiculturalism came to severe threat, as the mainstream media continue to be accused of racial discrimination against minority women and men by way of images that deny, demean, or exclude (Fleras and Kunz, 38). These accusations are not unwarranted and children are at the receiving end of the undesirable values of and presented by the media producers. This is why it carries on into the classrooms because this is what children know from watching television and movies. Critically discussing the representations of minorities in the media as misrepresentations can guide children in the right path of respecting and celebrating the differences in people including their own. This critical discussion can lead to media literacy.

Fleras and Kunz on these misrepresentations of media, comments:

Media literacy seeks to empower citizenship, to transform citizens' passive relationship to media into an active, critical engagement capable of challenging the traditions and structures of a privatized, commercial media culture, and thereby find new avenues of citizen speech and discourse.

However, in the process, the voice of the marginalized is left still farther. (96)

Media is a major contributor to the propagation of racism, sexism and stereotypes in our pluralistic society. Media racism acknowledges the pervasive influence of both structures and agendas that have an unintended yet negative effect-both systemic and subliminal-of misrepresenting minority women and men (Fleras and Kunz, 2001). Critical awareness of how the media propagates these notions in children has to be brought to the forefront. Creating awareness in our children of the racism embedded in media and in turn in our classrooms' is a positive step in preparing our children for a multicultural society via critical multicultural education. In this paper I will critically dissect Pocahontas, children's film that

although attempting to be a representation of a different culture has been proven to be inaccurate and as a result a brutal misrepresentation of the culture it attempts to represent.

In the preface to his book, *The Children Are Watching: How the Media Teach About Diversity* Carlos Cortes presents a strong argument that school education about diversity will always be self-limiting in its effectiveness if school educators do not seriously engage the reality-the inevitability-of students learning about “otherness” through the media (Cortes, 2000). In saying this Cortes opens up the topic of “Othering.” This action broadly refers to where the media places minorities in relation to the dominant “ethnic” population of the western world (Fleras and Kunz, 2001). According to Fleras, Kunz and Cortes in the media, minorities are represented as the “other”. They are not the people who make the decisions. They are not the people who run the show. They are the people who in the media are represented in their stereotypical roles of outsiders, Ebonics speakers, athletes, criminals, terrorists and any of the other roles that are typically known to be filled by those who carry the minority status title. In common usage, these terms both refer interchangeably to the variety of cultures and the need to acknowledge this variety to avoid 'universal prescriptive cultural definitions.

However, Homi Bhabha, in the essay “The commitment to Theory” (1988), employs cultural diversity terms as oppositions to draw a distinction between two ways of representing culture. Bhabha argues that it is insufficient to record signifier of cultural *diversity* which merely acknowledges a revenge of separate and distinct systems of behaviour, attitudes and values. Such a framework may even continue to suggest that such differences agree merely aberrant or exotic, as was implicit in imperialistic ethnographies. References to cultural diversity based on an assumption of pre-given cultural contents and customs’ give rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity.

Cultural difference, on the other hand, suggests that cultural authority resides not in a series of fixed and determined diverse objects but in the process of how these objects come to be known and so come into being. Bhabha writes:

This process of coming to be known is what brings into being and discriminates between the various statements of culture or on culture' and which gives authority to the production of the fields of references by which we order them. By stressing the process by which we know and can know cultures as totalities, the term cultural difference emphasizes our awareness of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons' and places the emphasis on a questioning attitude towards 'the authority of cultural synthesis in general.

(20)

The difference Bhabha emphasizes here is clearly connected with the radical ambivalence that he argues is implicit in all colonial discourse. He insists that this same ambivalence is implicit in the act of cultural interpretation itself since, as he puts it, the production of meaning in the relations of two systems requires a 'Third Space'. This space is something like the idea of deferral in post-structuralism. While Saussure suggested that signs acquire meaning through their difference from other signs (and thus a culture may be identified by its difference from other cultures), Derrida suggested that the 'difference' is also 'deferred', a duality that he defined in a new term difference. "Third Space" can be compared to this space of deferral and possibility (thus a culture's difference is never simple and static but ambivalent, changing, and always open to further possible interpretation). In short, this is the space of hybridity itself, the space in which cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities. Therefore, Bhabha argues, claims to inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity.

However, this view in relation to multiculturalism is incompatible with the idea of development of a radical and revolutionary native intelligentsia. In fact it is specifically invoked as the defining condition for such a radical native intelligentsia as opposed to a comprador-class or neo-colonists native elite, which merely positions itself within a totalized and controlled metaphor of cultural diversity. Such an elite culture that invokes unchanging and fixed native's form can never fully oppose the control of the dominant culture, since they define culture as fixed and un-progressive. Yet, ironically, it may be their very in-betweens that allow a revolutionary potential for embracing change in members of the same group of native intelligentsia. Bhabha suggests:

The liberator people, who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural exchange are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity ... and they construct their Culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress transforming the meaning of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future' (38).

Bhabha's interpretation of multiculturalism is more near to the hybrid culture. He concludes that these "hybrid" cultures give rise to a new culture, influenced by the global impact of change. As such, multiculturalism amid negative and positive remarks continues to be an applied ideology of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity, within the demographics of a specified place. It is still in the go of creating a mutually closer world amid people of different religions and cultures.

### **III. Multiculturalism: Concept of a Tolerant God**

In his Booker prize winning novel, *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel tells a story which is supposed to make the readers believe in God, but in his own unique way. However, there are few of the readers, or hardly anyone, who have after reading the text, will march to the local church, mosque or temple and sign up themselves as an adherent follower of all the religions. This is not necessarily a failure on the part of Martel or his story – in fact *Life of Pi* is a thoroughly a religious story intended to drive people towards religious tolerance, if not followers of all the religions.

Pi Patel, the central figure of the fiction is a diehard believer on religious ethics and its culture. However, his concept of theology is not narrowed down to one religion, but has a broader aspect and devotion to all the religions. He strongly rejects religion as a singular concept of a singular God. He hardly could believe, when Mr. Kumar one of his neighbours in the fiction comments that religion is darkness. In reply, he cannot believe what he hears and falls in mental dilemma. He thinks, [. . .] “Darkness? I was puzzled. I thought, darkness is the last things that religion is. Religion is light. Was he testing me? Was he saying “religion is darkness,” the way he sometimes said things like “mammals lay eggs,” to see if someone would correct him?” (27).

The view of religion he gives in the novel is one, though quite old, still has not found much traction for our thoroughly modern mentalities. Martel’s God is not realist but is more than so. He suggests a world, where all religious culture and its God are same or of equal values. It was only language that differentiated the Gods. He says, The Bishnu, the protector, Christ, the saviour and Allah the guardian were in fact the same adjective given to separate almighty.

According to Martel's idea religion is imposed on us. Most of us are unaware, of what our religion, but as we grow up, people start to identify us by the social existent cult. Martel's mouthpiece, Pi Patel, on the issue says:

We are all born like Catholics, aren't we – in limbo, without religion, until some figure introduces to God? After that meeting the matter ends for most of us. If there is a change, it is usually for the lesser rather than the greater; many people seem to lose God along life's way. That was not my case. [. . .] 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. (47)

Religion is imposed upon a baby, as soon as s/he is born and remains the same, for almost all of them, throughout their life. However, in case of Pi Patel it was not the same. He found solace in visiting the shrines of all religions and was interested in their ethics, by each day, as never before.

He visited a temple in Pondicherry. The priest was highly influenced by his aesthetic behaviour and claimed him to be a pure son the almighty Bishnu. Pi Patel himself says about his inclination to 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 clanging of bells to announce one's arrival to God, because of whine of the reedy Nadaswaram and the beating of drums, because of patter of bare feet against stone floors down dark corridors pierced by shafts of sun-light. (47)

Religion has a charm, a majestic quality that attracts people unknowingly towards it. And, when it comes to its native followers, there arises more of such beauty to boost upon and feel proud for.

But in the case of Pi Patel, it was same for all the religions. Being a devotee of all religions, he doesn't hesitate to compare the major religions with each other. On comparing Christianity with Hinduism, he has following opinions:

Christianity is a religion in rush. Look at the world created in seven days. Even on a symbolic level, that's creation in frenzy. To one born in religion where the battle for a single soul can be a relay race run over many centuries, with innumerable generation's passing along the baton, the quick resolution of Christianity has a dizzying effect. If Hinduism flows placidly like the Ganges, then Christianity bustles like Toronto at rush hour. It is a religion as swift as swallow, as urgent as an ambulance. (57)

Hinduism for ages has been in its own slow pace, whereas Christianity is moving on a rather frenzy mood. Patel finds it's amazing that the world in Christianity was found in seven days and the wars the Hindu lords fought went on for ages and ages.

Then, came his faith in Islam. He was fifteen. He was already exposed to the other two religions and one day as he was exploring his hometown, Pondicherry, he saw a Muslim quarter, which was not very far from his father's zoo. "It was a small quiet neighbourhood with Arabic writing and crescent moons inscribed on the façade of the houses," (58). He was instantly inspired by its quiet look and descent looking people.

However, he could not hide his fear about the ill fame he had heard about the Islam. He thinks, "Islam had a reputation worse than Christianity's – fewer gods, greater violence, and I had never heard anyone say good things about Muslim schools – so I wasn't about to step in, empty though the place was," (58). However, this dilemma of Pi was soon going to vanish, as he was welcomed by an Imam, in the friendliest tone he had ever heard and soon he learnt the rituals of Islam prayers.

He was immediately attracted towards the simplicity of Muslims and specially their prayers. He found the cycle of prayers in the mosque like a soothing exercise. He says:

Islam in nothing but an easy sort of exercise, I thought. When he had finished – with a right-left turning of the head and a short bout of meditation – he opened his eyes, smiled stepped off his carpet and rolled it up with a flick of the hand that spoke of old habit, he turned it to its spot in the next room and that was it. And he was a Muslim. (60)

In fact Muslims are one of the most humble and God fearing people. However, in the eyes of the west all these innocent people too, fall under the category of suspicion and this is what has created the gap between the east and the west. Most Muslims are simple people who offer prayers to their God, five times a day and give alms to the needy and poor, as per one's capacity.

However, at this point in the story, Martel sows the seeds of uncertainty towards the existence of God. Pi Patel has equal respect and devotion to all Gods means, either all Gods are same or of equal dignity. If this philosophy is same, then why there is so much of violence and killings in the name of religion. This raises doubts on the prominence of all religions. Due, to this strange mingling of religions and beliefs, there of course rises the concept of multiculturalism. Pi creates and celebrates his fiction, a strange God in all religion. Being a devout Hindu, Christian, and Muslim at once echoes the postmodern hybrid and eclectic nature of religious faith. This also shows that the charm of dogmatism on religion is losing its ground.

Here, Martel aims to show, how is postmodern time, the concept of God and religion is reflected moral relativism, which is influenced by the certain general characteristic of postmodernism: its fluidity, diversity, uncertainty and ultimately its lack of concern with truth. After Martel's fiction, it would be had to come up with a more banal revelation that

God is good because God is not real life. In other words, God is myth that exists in all religion with equal charm and mysticism. This mystic God is the major fulcrum, on which the society and the people are rotating. Of course, since Pi rejects the major religions, yet accepts them all, and is happier than others shows the illusion of religious men.

As a liberal critic of Martel, Phoebe Kate Foster sees the prospects of multilayer of understandings of *Life of Pi*. He paves the way for postmodernist interpretation, as he finds this fiction as timeless and easily falling in any category or in any topic. As he comments:

Pi is timeless book not falling into easy categories of allegory or parable but paradoxical and gently challenging ambitious in its scope and utterly unique in the current literary scene. Its style is elegant but readers, friendly and high informative on such vast numbers of topics that rather boggles the mind. It offers so many levels of understandings that one can easily pick and choose which floor to get off on. All of them are easily satisfactory. (65)

Foster's analysis paves ways of postmodernist interpretation where multi possibilities and multi-understanding of a single text have always been promoted.

*Life of Pi* follows a typical postmodern manner with a very problematic author's note. Through his author's note Martel alerts his reader about his fictional project and exposes the very constructedness of the text. The aim of postmodern anti-illusionist narrative is to mock up the traditional illusionist style of telling stories. Martel's author's note begins as expected in the author's voice, but it becomes a voice of fictional narrator as it progresses. To play with the reader's sense of reality Martel presents author's note in the guise of realistic mask. He directly interacts with his fictional characters and even at last thanks his own characters for their kind help. Martel deals with his main character Pi, as if he were a family friend. Even the chapter setting of the story of *Life of Pi* is influenced by his character. Martel sets up his novel in hundred chapters according to the wish of his main character Pi, which is

presented as if it were mixture of Martel's journalistic investigation and Pi's memoir in relation to the acceptance of all Gods.

However, we are still, alas, not ready for such a thing. Martel has made no secret of the fact that he means this book to be a meditation on the nature of belief and the role that religion can play in our lives. While the first part of the book is clearly focussed on religion – telling us the story of Pi Patel as a boy and his various introductions and experiments with three Indian religions – such discussions apparently get lost in the second, major section of the book, only to reappear briefly at the end.

In the first section, Pi Patel lives with his parents and the zoo full of different animals in Pondicherry. After being introduced to all major religions existing all around him, he, too is not free of dubious feelings. He reads in a Christian school, however thinks of the flight of Prophet Mohammad in Mecca. He too, has plans to fly his hometown, one day to achieve the ultimate knowledge, as Mohammad had done. He says:

I spent my last year at St. Joseph's School feeling like the persecuted prophet Mohammad in Mecca, peace be upon him. But as just as he planned his flight to Medina, the Hejira that would mark the beginning of Muslim time, I planned my escape and the beginning of a new time for me. (21)

For him, the religion of that God seems to disappear for the majority of the book has lead many critics and commentator to treat the text almost wholly in terms of its use of the ideas of imagination and fiction, its treatment of stories and storytelling.

The other story of the book is the strange survival of Pi Patel in a shipwreck that claimed the life of his parents and brother, including many zoo animals. When life became tough in Pondicherry, Mr Patel decided to move to Canada, with his family and zoo animals. However, the ship they were travelling met with an accident and all animals and Mr. Patel's family died, of course not Pi Patel, a hyena, a zebra and a royal Bengal tiger.

Hereby starts, another fascinating story of survival in the highs of Pacific Ocean with a hyena, a zebra and a tiger. They all are in a small raft and all are hungry. But Pi Patel is found after 277 days in Mexico beach, all safe and sound. How come this miracle took place? Did the tiger not eat Pi Patel?

The whole text is thoroughly religious – from Pi’s early exercises in interreligious dialogue to his sufferings as a lifeboat castaway, to his strange stay on a Meerkat- filled carnivorous island, and finally to his rescue and later recounting of the story – this is a religious fable.

However, two of the many religious issues which arise in this book: that of religious naturalism and the possibilities of multi-religiosity. On a particular view of religion, this is the view that alludes earlier which most of us are not ready for yet. This view is not quite post- modern as this term is now understood or rather misunderstood, but it is certainly not modern. What I mean by this is that Martel’s God is not understood to be a real entity, over and above the universe, creating by divine fiat, omnipotent, and omniscient, simple, unsurpassable all of the classical characteristics which we ascribe to a modern God who is real. Rather Martel’s God bears more resemblance to a fictional character and if this is the case, then the religion of Pi Patel is like a story, or rather like language itself.

How can religion be like language? Language is what we use both to make sense of the world and our experience of the world, as well as to communicate our own thoughts, feelings and ideas to the world. Language, in its broadest sense, thus exists in the space between us and that which is not our selves. It is the tool we use to categorise and organise the world as well as the method by which we present ourselves to others. As a tool, language helps us to name and identify the things and creatures of the external world as well as those often vague experiences, feelings and images which populate our internal landscapes. So language acts as a conceptual scheme through which we see the world but it also acts as a

conduit by which we inject ourselves into the world – we take upon ourselves or partially create a persona which enables us to become actors in the world, and this persona is created largely of images and symbols, narratives and metaphors which we derive from the languages we live by. I suggest that religion is seen in the same way in the pages of *Life of Pi* and that this view makes sense of both Martel's religious naturalism and his religious multiculturalism, for religion, like language, acts as a buffer between us and the world. Religion provides us with categories, names the significant forces and lends to the things, people and events of our lives their meanings and significance. Religion thus acts as a conceptual scheme to organise our worlds – to cut our experience of the world into digestible pieces and then to arrange these pieces into a story that makes sense – that forms an overall vision. And on the other side, just like language, religion also furnishes us with particular roles to play in this story, an identity through which to act and be in the world. One of the great fruits of religion is self-identity: that is, ways to understand ourselves with respect to others, the natural world and God. Thus religion is a tool we use to manipulate our experience of the world but it is also a tool that uses us in its own self-creating work. We employ religion just as we are employed by religion, and it is because of religion's affinities with language that all of this is possible. It is religion as language that also makes possible.

Martel's inclusion of religious naturalism and religious multiculturalism in the same book, and it is to these that I now want to turn. Religious naturalism is a pretty old idea. In the modern period it is at least as old as the German theologian Feuerbach and gets an eloquent exposition in the work of Kierkegaard. It is simply this: that religion is the expression of humanity's highest spiritual ideals and has nothing to do with any supposed real transcendent being or state. Religion thus becomes the system of narratives we as a society construct in order to help us gain the ends which we desire and which reflect our highest shared values. That we construct religion through myths of Gods, demons, angels,

heavens and hells, and that we sustain and police these myths through institutions, rituals, dogmas and ethics, does not change the essentially created or constructed nature of religion. Religious naturalism is thus in sharp distinction to religious realism – which simply holds that all of the aforementioned Gods, demons, heavens, hells and the like objectively exist over and against the natural world, and that the sustaining institutions, rituals etc. have a real referent – are talking about a real thing.

Now we should not make the mistake to say that religious naturalism is simply about fairytales of our own creation. The whole gist of Kierkegaard is that this religious naturalism looks for all intents and purposes *exactly the same* as the view of the world given by religious realists. When brought down to its bones, the religious realist and the religious naturalist can do and say identical things – but, of course, for very different reasons. There is, however, one great advantage to the religious naturalist's position – it is wholly impervious to the dry, yeast-less factuality of agnosticism. And this is where Martel lands us – he gives us a choice between religious realism and religious naturalism. On the one hand there is the agnostic, rationalist, somewhat boring.

Japanese insurance agents and on the other there is the gleeful, heroic, loving, and deeply humorous Pi Patel. On the one hand there is the bare-bones list of facts which recount a young Indian boy, his mother, an injured sailor and a psychopathic French cook stuck on a boat; and on the other side we have the same young Indian boy, the same boat, but now a beautiful and sweet orang-utan, a stately and stoic, suffering Zebra, a ravenous hyena, and a terrible but majestic tiger. Martel bids us to choose, which among the two is the better story? However, for us both the stories are factually falsifiable.

Both of the stories recount what happens on the boat and explain how Pi survives, so in that sense the two stories is equivalent, but the ordinary story – the one with the French cook, and the several murders – is susceptible to doubt in a way that the animal story is not.

This is not because the story with animals is less factual or reasonable than the story without animals, but rather because the story with Richard Parker is about an internal reality, and the other story is about the merely external. If in the end all we have are two different stories – one with a tiger and one without – and neither of them factually provable or falsifiable, then we are already in the religious naturalist camp – all it falls to us to do now is to choose which story better expresses our highest spiritual values. Though Martel leaves this up to the reader to decide, it is pretty clear that he believes the Tiger story is better for it allows us to see ourselves and God and the struggle of faith in a different and clearer light. Moreover, if Pi and Richard Parker convince us that religion is like a language, then why restrict ourselves to just one? The religious multiculturalism of the first part of the book also hinges on the notion that religion is simply a way we organise and are organised by, the religiously ambiguous world.

One of the best parts of the story is Pi's experiments with religion. That he is a young boy allows him a naive acceptance of three supposedly contradictory faith positions, but on my reading of religion as language, there is no necessary contradiction at all. Would anyone really suggest that to be a fluent French speaker, English Speaker and Hindi speaker necessarily leads to a pernicious inconsistency? Clearly one can speak many languages and take delight in all of them precisely in and because of their differences, without judging which is better, which is consistent with the others, and which is true?

However, the concept of God, now seems more near to the political accommodation by the state and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race or ethnicity; and more controversially, by reference to nationality, aboriginality, or religion, the latter being groups that tend to make larger claims and so tend to resist having their claims reduced to those of immigrants.

The ethnic assertiveness associated with multiculturalism has been part of a wider current of 'identity' politics which has transformed the idea of equality as sameness to equality as difference. Black power, feminist, and gay pride movements challenged the ideal of equality as assimilation and contended that a positive self-definition of group difference was more liberatory. The rejection of the idea that political concepts such as equality and citizenship can be colour-blind and culture-neutral, the argument that ethnicity and culture cannot be confined to some so-called private sphere but shape political and opportunity structures in all societies, is one of the most fundamental claims made by multiculturalism and the politics of difference. It is the basis for the conclusion that allegedly 'neutral' liberal democracies are part of hegemonic cultures that systematically de-ethnicize or marginalize minorities. Hence, the claim that minority cultures, norms, and symbols have as much right as their hegemonic counterparts to state provision and to be in the public space, to be 'recognized' as groups and not just as culturally neutered individuals.

The African-American search for dignity has contributed much to this politics, yet, ironically, it has shifted attention from socio-economic disadvantage, arguably where African-Americans' need is greatest. For multiculturalism in the US seems to be confined to the field of education and, uniquely, to higher education, especially arguments about the curriculum in the humanities. Academic argument has, however, no less than popular feeling, been important in the formulation of multiculturalism, with the study of colonial societies and political theory being the disciplines that have most forged the terms of analysis. The ideas of cultural difference and cultural group have been central to anthropology and other related disciplines focused on 'primitive' and non-European societies. The arrival in the metropolitan centres of peoples studied by scholars from these disciplines has made the latter experts on migrants and their cultural needs. They also enabled critics from previously colonized societies, often themselves immigrants to the 'North', to challenge the expert and other

representations of the culturally subordinated. These intellectual developments have been influenced by the failure of the economic ‘material base’ explanations of the cultural ‘superstructure.’

The prominence of political theory in multiculturalism is reflected in concepts like, India is largely a Hindu country and Canada, where at present Pi Patel resides. “On a visit to a restaurant in Canada, I miss Indian food,” (3) recalls Pi Patel. The nature of community and the nostalgia of minority are well defined, when being in minority, in an alien land.

Multiculturalism has had a less popular reception in mainland of Hindus and Muslims. Its prospect has sometimes led to the success of extreme nationalist parties in local and national polls. Like, in India, where intellectual objections to multiculturalism have been most developed, multiculturalism is opposed across the political spectrum, for it is thought to be incompatible with a conception of a ‘transcendent’ or ‘universal’ citizenship. However, though hostile, the presence of church, mosque and temple in all over India and in Pondicherry believes in race, ethnicity, and gender, which promote multiculturalism.

The political accommodation of minorities, then, is a major contemporary demand across the world, filling some of the space that accommodation of the working classes occupied in most of the twentieth century, and constitutes powerful, if diverse, intellectual challenges in several parts of the humanities and social sciences.

Pi Patel, who receives his education initially in a local school, and later in a missionary school, is a stark reality of diverse cultural background prevalent in the society.

Of course, the grammar of multiculturalism is spread all over Pondicherry, however, each of these languages are different and incommensurable, but no one lives and communicates through the rules of grammar – to do so would be foolish. Just so, the living religious traditions of the world can be entered into and practiced as many languages – and enjoyed, celebrated in and for their differences without any need for judging which is best or

which is true (whatever that means). To get stuck on the grammar of religions – their respective theologies – is simply foolish, for no one lives and communicates through the rules of grammar, but by the language that is the religious way of life itself.

Here, Martel is emphasizing that all religions teach the same thing. Rather he allows each to have its own message and character, and as languages he can celebrate their differences and can have fun with their similarities □□ so much so that he can playfully say that Hindus are hairless Christians, Muslims are bearded Hindus and Christians, hat-wearing Muslims. In today's desperate times such a view is not just cute, but perhaps necessary. As, upon the inquiry of his religion he comments, "Bapu, Gandhi said, all religions are true. I just want to love God" (69).

This book looks at the concept of breaking free from the dogmas of cultural superiority by the followers of a religion. Pi Patel, through his all-adjacent nature towards all religion advocates of a multicultural society. It has three parts. The first section is an adult Pi Patel's rumination over his childhood in Pondicherry, a former French Colony in India. The main character, Piscine Patel (shortened to "Pi") talks about his life living as the son of a zookeeper, and speaks at length about animal behaviour and religion. Pi investigates Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam and sees merits in all three religions. In the book, Pi stated simply, "I just want to love God" (76). Because of the political situation in India, Pi's father decides to sell the zoo and relocate the family to Canada. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the ship on which the family is travelling sinks, leaving Pi Patel, with some ferocious zoo animals.

The second part is a fanciful allegory in a medieval style. Pi manages to find refuge on a lifeboat, though not alone. He shares the limited space with a female orang-utan named Orange Juice, a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, and a Royal Bengal Tiger by the name of Richard Parker. At first Pi believes that Richard Parker has abandoned the boat, and focuses

on surviving the hyena. It is not long before the hyena begins to feed on the zebra. After the zebra's death, the hyena kills the orang-utan, after which Pi approaches it. It is then that he notices that Richard Parker has been resting under a tarpaulin and has been aboard the lifeboat the entire time.

The tiger kills and eats the hyena, but does not immediately attack Pi. The young man manages to construct a raft using supplies aboard the boat, and avoids direct confrontation with Richard Parker by keeping out of the tiger's territory on the deck of the boat. Pi eventually marks his own territory by using his knowledge of zoology thus taming Richard Parker. Pi reasons that while Richard Parker is healthy, he poses less of a threat - an injured or hungry beast being more dangerous. Therefore keeping the tiger alive becomes his primary focus. Pi's focus day to day is redirected towards day to day survival. He catches fish and turtles, and uses solar stills to obtain drinkable water. At one point, due to poor diet, nutrition, and weakness, Pi goes temporarily blind, and during this state meets another castaway on a boat travelling parallel with his own.

The other man has a French language accent, and after a period of amicable conversation he boards Pi's boat with a view to murder him. As soon as he boards, however, he is killed and devoured by Richard Parker. Soon after, the duo washes ashore upon a strange wooded island, populated by meerkats, and containing pools of fresh water. After some time, Pi finds a strange tree on the island, and upon examining the fruit, finds human teeth. He realizes that the island is carnivorous, and he and Richard Parker must leave the island immediately. The lifeboat finally washes up on the beach in Mexico at which point Richard Parker bounds off into the jungle never to be seen again.

Here begins the third part of the story. When Pi is rescued and taken to a hospital, two men representing the Japanese Ministry of Transport interrogate and quiz him to find out why the ship sank. Pi offers his story. That does not satisfy the Japanese, and they dismiss it as a

fantasy. Pi then offers an alternative and more plausible explanation. He was on board the lifeboat with three other people: his mother, the ship's French chef, and a wounded sailor. The barbaric chef first kills and eats the sailor, then brutally kills his mother. Upon seeing this, Pi kills and eats the chef.

Pi asks the men from the shipping company which story they prefer. The novel ends with the report to the Japanese government, in which the two men have told the first story. As Pi explains, in his Indian hometown of Pondicherry, the local priest, pandit and imam, as well as Pi's parents, had many objections to his penchant for collecting religions. But as Pi reasons in his typically idiosyncratic way, "Hindus, in their capacity for love, are indeed hairless Christians, just as Muslims, in the way they see God in everything, are bearded Hindus, and Christians, in their devotion to God, are hat-wearing Muslims" (21). When he observes how Muslims pray, he says, "Why, Islam is nothing but an easy sort of exercise. [. . .] Hot-weather yoga for Bedouins" (28) His naiveté can be silly, but ultimately its open-mindedness, a way of turning things upside down to see them differently, that serves him well.

Eventually, Pi's family flees an unstable India, where his father runs a zoo, heading for Canada, and bringing various animals along with them on a Japanese cargo ship. It's on this voyage that their happy ark mysteriously sinks. Luckily, Pi possesses a nonreligious kind of understanding and faith that allows him to survive on the lifeboat with four animals not known for their compatibility. Pi's father taught him that the most dangerous creature in the zoo is "the animal as seen through human eyes. [. . .] It is an animal that is 'cute,' 'friendly,' 'loving,' 'devoted,' 'merry,' 'understanding' (37).

Yet, while Pi knows about the ferocity of the beasts, he's also familiar with the quirks of the animal kingdom that often befuddle humans peering in from outside. Sometimes goats can get along just fine with rhinos. A mouse can live with vipers: "While other mice dropped

in the terrarium disappeared within two days, this little brown Methuselah built itself a nest, stored the grains we gave it in various hideaways and scampered about in plain sight of the snakes.” Likewise, if handled carefully, a ravenous and terrified Bengal tiger will spare the life of the only human in sight.

Pi’s lost-at-sea story never drags. The slow journey is spiked with fascinating survival scenes, as when Pi and Richard Parker meet a school of flying fish: “They came like a swarm of locusts. It was not only their numbers; there was also something insect-like about the clicking, whirring sound of their wings.” Pi attempts to catch the fish for food; the tiger is better at it: “Many were eaten live and whole, struggling wings beating in his mouth ... It was not so much the speed that was impressive as the pure animal confidence, the total absorption in the moment.”

Pi’s story is so extraordinary that when he finally makes it ashore, he offers a comparatively boring version of the tale to two researchers, acknowledging that humans don’t have much of a taste for the miraculous. This played-down version makes Pi’s true tale, thanks to Martel’s beautifully fantastical and spirited rendering, all the more tempting to believe.

#### IV. Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, the researcher has come to a conclusion that this fiction preaches tolerance towards religious and cultural ties in the most excellent manner. On the surface level, Martel reworks the ancient sea voyages and castaway themes of classical writers, but in the deeper level, he produces a typical post-modern tendency of adjudging religion and culture from a tolerant notion.

He offers us to believe in "God" not from the dogmatic perspective but in the sense that all Gods are of equal value and respect. The central character, Pi Patel stands symbolic to universal culture of respecting and regarding all religions and cultures. This is a post-modern tendency, where all religions are of equal importance and so are cultures associated with it.

God, as Martell tells us, is same. He only has different name, according to the culture and tradition of the land. The perceiving of God depends on the way, we want to visualize him. And on top, God is something like in stories, where finally the "good" wins over the "bad," hence the concept of God is a phenomenon to believe, as it is linguistic in nature, and ultimately fictitious.

Martel sows the seeds of uncertainty about God and religious faith, as he presents a strange mingle of religious notions and figures that together comprise the deity that Pi creates and celebrates, in short, God of his own fiction. His vision of God is represented by Pi, who is a devout Christian, Hindu, Muslim, all at once. This echoes the post-modern hybrid and eclectic nature of religious faith.

A modern man is also a strange combination of various cultures, put together. Like Pi, s/he visits a temple, a mosque, and a church with equal servility and respect. Above all, s/he worships and all cultures, associated with various religions, with same charm and devotion. This is one of the best examples of religious tolerance, which is one of the most essential characteristics of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism advocates an ideology that should allow, or at least, permit people of distinct culture and religious groups with equal status. Martel, through his mouthpiece character, Pi Patel aims to show, how in post-modern age the concept of God and religion is reflected through such relativism, which will lead the people of our society to a better tomorrow. Pi Patel, who practices multiculturalism, is influenced by these certain general characteristic of postmodernism; its fluidity, diversity, uncertainty and ultimately its lack of concern with truth, as the strange survival of Pi Patel all alone in the Pacific Ocean.

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