

Symbiosis: An Eco-critical Reading of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

This thesis explores complex connectivity of human beings, diverse animal world, and landscape relation from ecological perspective in Yann Martel's novel Life of Pi. This research claims how literature and nature are given equal importance thereby exposing symbiosis of human being and other elements of nature in Martel's novel. Posing problem on anthropocentric tendency of human beings, Martel presents complex and confusing situation of many different stories which define Pi's life in which he creates all the roles keeping human in the center. Although he favors the animal story, the final chapter reveals that the only story humans find real is the one in which animals are seen as anthropomorphic. By taking theoretical insights related to eco-criticism and nature-human symbiosis proposed by William Rueckert, John Berger and Greg Garrard, this research finally concludes that Martel's novel prioritizes the role of fiction in the development of human personality and dissects the relations between the human, the natural world, and the text.

Keywords: ecocriticism, biocentrism, anthropomorphic, symbiosis, ecotone, nature subjugation

This thesis focuses on the question how social, cultural, religious, and environmental contexts affect an individual's understanding and action in the global world. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* represents how Martel, of his multicultural interaction and understanding, curiosity and empirical knowledge have contributed to write novel, *Life of Pi*. There are several accounts of eco-criticism due to the circumstances of the main character Pi. The events presented are complex and horrible to consider. 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 deny 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 aspects stand in intense opposition and occasional partnership with one another. The boy Pi and the tiger Richard Parker are both enemies and allies.

Life of Pi is a wonderful English novel that shows the relationship among human beings, animals, land and water. In this novel the author uses almost the same stand to Richard Parker, the Bengal tiger which survived in shipwreck and reached to Mexican forest as human to non-human being. Therefore, the novel is also about Richard Parker, or endangered animal of the world.

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. He appeals us to look at nature by putting off our spectacle of anthropomorphism. Pi sees this as evidence of a shameful lack of imagination. To him, the dilemma on faith in either direction is like the listeners who are incapable of appreciation of multiple dimensions that a story provides. The shipwrecked inhabitants of the little lifeboat do not simply accept 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.

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. The hyena's disloyalty shows 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.

Bindu Annie Thomas applies eco-critical principle of Biocentrism to Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. The central character of the novel *Life of Pi*'s Piscine Patel's (Pi for short) progression from theism to pantheism is presented by the novelist. He attains the state of seeing "himself as an element in the interconnectivity of things and the struggle for power over nature/wildlife yields to a world view that is more mature, tolerant and eco-friendly" (182). Thus, Thomas shows how Martel reveals the equality of all creatures, that is biocentrism.

The protagonist Pi after fighting for the superiority, that subjugation comes to a realization that every living creature either human or animal is equal and we have to live together to benefit others, every creature has its own importance and we cannot live separately without each other, that is the main concept of symbiosis.

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.

In the water or Pacific Ocean Pi practices the knowledge gained being without human only with wild/furious animal. It is interesting that Yann Martel has not given equal emphasis on human being. Pi was worried more for tiger rather than his parents and brother who sank in the ocean. A kind of new relations we can understand that any person who lost own family or neglected from the family start social life with

animals. Animals become the nearest and dearest friends for them. Pi was able to adapt the weather in Ocean; he learned how to live with Richard Parker and sea animals. Sea animals became the source of food for both Pi and Richard Parker and their survival. Pi changes his dietary habit from vegetarian to non-vegetarian. The difficult situation as well as inherent capacity in the animal, which Pi expresses "animals fight us, it is out of sheer desperation. They fight when they feel they have no other way out"(296).

This principle was followed throughout the struggle in the ocean. It means that how we behave with the animal they will also respond accordingly. The human and animal relationship was successfully established because of knowledge and feeling. This builds a kind of interrelatedness.

Anna Kallas simply takes out the issues 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 rooted in the author's idea of constructing layers of practical 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 a story of a sixteen-year old boy who lost everything including family, friends, a life in shipwreck, only thing he has is a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker that becomes the main subject matter of the novel.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is the story of a young man who survives a painful 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 wilder and true nature of animals, namely that they are not meant to be treated like or thought of as people.

After spending so many days sharing in the lifeboat with the ferocious animal, Pi consciously begins to regard Richard Parker as a human companion in distress, an animalus anthropomorphicus, by giving him something to always worry about—the constant threat of death. Once they escape the island, Pi explains that “it was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God” (284). Noticeably, no further explanation as to which God he turned to is given. The lifeboat reaches Mexico after 227 days on the Pacific. Pi is, after all, rewarded for keeping the tiger alive—in return, the lamb too is spared by the tiger, which jumps off the boat as soon as they reach the Mexican beach. But Pi needs “a more humanly satisfying end to his relationship with Richard Parker” (Dwyer 17) and cannot understand the animal's natural instinct for survival, since this animal is more than an animal for him:

He didn't look at me. He ran a hundred yards or so along the shore before turning in. His gait was clumsy and uncoordinated. He fell several times. At the edge of the jungle, he stopped. I was certain he would turn my way. He would look at me. He would flatten his ears. He would growl. In some such

way, he would conclude our relationship. He did nothing of the sort. He only looked fixedly into the jungle. Then Richard Parker, companion of my torment, awful, fierce thing that kept me alive, moved forward and disappeared forever from my life. (Martel 284–285)

After spending months together in a same lifeboat Pi thought that Richard Parker has become his true friend that will never leave him but Richard Parker left him without looking back at once that was the most heartbreaking moment for Pi. The lack of closure, the unordered form of his story and the inability to conclude things properly, torment Pi in a typically human way. This may be the better story which Pi has been searching for, but the bungled goodbye suggests that the readers must keep searching for a story that is easier to believe—one that deals with humans, not animals.

This novel depicts 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-criticism.

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 find 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 a place that is established to make 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.

The dramatic events followed in the novel, fight and struggle to claim territory by main characters are 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, Deepali Yadav 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 do not attack anyone because they are hungry or bloodthirsty but only when someone enters their territory.

Bernard Mardianus Tampubolon evaluates *Life of Pi* from the structuralis and formalist 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 they create an ecotone and it is essential in today's world. Martel tries to elaborate faith and science into a fiction which has much values, two religion's perspectives in the world. This novel conveys about anything that people think. This novel does not deliver any knowledge of life, but a pure and pristine wisdom is manifested.

Karen Scherzinger detects some traces of trauma which Pi is exposed in an invariable way. In this novel, *Life of Pi*, the traumatic state of Pi's mind and repressed ego is presented. 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 novel 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 symbol of repressed traumatic experience. Unorthodox implementation is best understood in language of ambiguity

and plurality. Such a narrative construction opens up possibilities for the function of the fantastic.

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 to 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 afore mentioned critics and reviewers examined *Life of Pi* from different perspectives and arrived at different findings including the issue of Eco-criticism, none of them has clearly raised the issue of symbiosis and ecological relationship between human being, animals, environment and text together.

Eco-criticism is study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view. While interpreting natural phenomena, wild activities and survivals of animals, human beings bring their method of judgment, mode of analysis and trick of

rational calculation. The major theorist from whose methodology this research work is grounded are John Barger, William Rueckert and Greg Garrard. The activist orientation of liberationist criticism is formulated in ethical debates, but the distinctive inflection of modern Cultural Studies comes from John Berger's essay 'Why Look at Animals?' (1980), which examines the animal question as a social and aesthetic issue. Berger writes. "When we look at animals, they return our gaze, and in that moment, we are aware of both likeness and difference. Hence the peasant 'becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away his pork'" (5). He further writes:

For the integrated, pre-modern sensibility, the fondness and the slaughter are not contradictory. It is only through industrialization that most animals are removed from everyday life, and the meat production process hidden away. Once marginalized in this way, the few animals still visible to us can be only 'human puppets' as family pets or Disney characters, or else the objects of spectacle, most often wildlife books and films, where animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are. (14)

Berger in his book mentions why we should look at animals, why we cannot ignore their existence. Animals are also part of nature, they are also God's creature like humans but human beings ignore their existence and use them for their benefit so he in his book give us a way of seeing animals in new way, same thing has been done in Martel's *Life of Pi*.

Human beings are seldom habituated to put off the lens of rationality, human bias and subjective comprehension. Animals' dependency on innate violence for

survival is justifiable but rational human beings interpret it as a violence which is cruel. What is cruel 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.

In this novel, when Pi was with Richard Parker on that wreckage boat with all the troubles he has faced, he finally admits that there are very few castaways who survived so long at sea and as Pi none of those ships had an adult Bengal Tiger. So the story of overall novel tries us to convince that Pi believes god exists after all the incidents happened on the castaway. But Mr. Okamoto and his team did not convinced because they had more interest in human story than any god story as told by Pi.

In spite of Pi's love for the animals, the fact remains that they are living in a zoo, an infamous institution plagued by "certain illusions about freedom" (19). Pi, however, depicts the Pondicherry Zoo as a home to animals, not a prison as many would immediately think. According to Schwalm, "the notion that animal entertainment within zoos ... is not only attractive, but also beneficial to the animals themselves, reassures consumers and alleviates any feelings of guilt arising from the animals' incarceration". The "mythology of "good zoos" as a kind of Ark" is "underpinned ostensibly" by "Pi's expertise as zoologist" (ibid), and indeed, in the novel, Pi argues that "if an animal could choose with intelligence, it would opt for living in a zoo, since the major difference between a zoo and the wild is the absence of parasites and enemies and the abundance of food in the first, and their respective abundance and scarcity in the second" (Martel 18). The claim that there have been examples of "animals that could escape but did not, or did and returned" (19), justifies Richard Parker's behavior in the lifeboat. For Martel, "zoos are good in principle, if

not always in practice” (Schwalm 53), so “Pi speaks of ideal enclosures that contain the supposed essence of any given animal’s natural habitat, which meets all of the animal’s needs, and provides stimuli and protection” (54).

However, this does not by any means glorify humans as the species that wants to have animals. On the contrary, the animal lives inside the zoo are the source of thrill, fun, and amusement. 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. As I see, only how the animal lives in the zoo appears pleasantly. But, inside the zoo, animals are not really in pleasant condition. They have not got the same level of freedom and food which they used to get in their natural habitat. They derive pleasure having seen the hungry animals inside the zoo. But the pain of captured animals in the zoo is 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 pleasure, happiness and joy. The scenes inside the zoo are relaxing and peaceful to the viewer. But the exact reality pertaining to the pain of confined animals remains inaccessible to them. Taking animals in the zoo is actually subjugating them in reality. It is inaccessible to human

beings including the narrator no 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.

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 eco-centric awareness. With a frank sense of being a keen observer, the narrator says “in the literature can be found legions or groups of examples of animals that could escape but did not, and returned. There is the case of the chimpanzee whose cage door was left unlocked and had swung open”(19). The narrator claims to have consciousness of chimpanzee's silence evocative of agony. He furthermore insists:

Increasingly anxious, the chimp began to scream 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 zoo keeper 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.

Regarding the nexus between man, nature and other natural elements, George Garrard mentions:

Humans can both be, and be compared to, animals. There is, therefore, an extensive 'rhetoric of animality', as Steve Baker calls it, that is as functional in descriptions of human social and political relations as it is in describing actual animals. Liberationist cultural critics typically focus on the place of domestic animals within this rhetoric, whereas eco-critics study the representation of wild animals, a difference in emphasis that roughly corresponds to Berger's family/spectacle dichotomy, and the animal rights/environmental ethics contrast. These provisional distinctions will form the basis for a separate consideration of the two strands in the remainder of this chapter. (139)

Garrard here discusses how wild animals are domesticated for human's entertainment and the same thing is discussed in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. In this novel, wild animals are kept in the zoo to entertain people and to earn money that comes under the theory of eco-criticism discussed by Greg Garrard. The same theory can be applied in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*, because in this novel there is a symbiotic relationship between two creature Pi and Richard Parker. It also explores how human beings behave as animals and how animals behave like human being when domesticated.

The idea of finalizing which animal in the zoo is a dangerous; 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 cognitive judgment regarding animals in the zoo is also indicator of how human judgment is guided by subjugation. The same and similar

imposition of human viewpoint and vantage point that is increasingly anthropomorphic in approach is reflected in the following extract:

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 animalus anthropomorphicus, the animal as seen through human eyes. We have all met one, perhaps even owned one. It is an animal that is pure, friendly, loving, and devoted, merry, understanding. These animals lie in ambush in every toy store and children's zoo. Countless stories are told of them. They are the pendants of those vicious, bloodthirsty, depraved animals that inflame the ire of the maniacs. (31)

Other things remaining the same, the entire novel is a narrative account of animals seen through the eyes of humans. Actual findings and reality regarding animals remain beyond the territory of human understanding.

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. Though 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 an aggressive tone, the narrator says:

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 being cold and the baboons planning their bank robbery getaway in the flat, menacing tones of American gangsters, the fancy were always conscious. I quite deliberately dressed wild

animals in tame costumes of my imagination. But I never deluded myself as to the real nature of my playmates. My poking nose had more sense than that.

(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 blame games. As nobody has time to dig 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.

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 wrong 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. According to him, animals do not attack anyone because they are hungry or bloodthirsty but only when someone enters their territory. They always believe in living in own territory and any attempt to invade their territory will result in to attack from their side. So Pi now decides to build his own separate territory from that of Richard Parker.

After few days, Parker too gets 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 will not 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.

William Rueckert's *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism* has boomed within the field of literature studies, establishing itself as an integral part of the environmental humanities. In general, advocates of this school of thought deal with the web of relationships between cultural products and nature. In doing so, they intentionally express their cultural and literary critiques from an environmentally political perspective. Objects of study include texts, poems, plays, and, increasingly, visual productions like films and artwork. While the eco-critical approaches to these formats are diverse, a common and constant goal is to eliminate the dichotomy between nature and society. As such, eco-critics deconstruct topics encompassing, for example, the dearth of adequate responses to environmental crises, the neglecting of environmental concerns, and romanticized conceptions of nature. Environmental justice and ethics also provide platforms for eco-criticism. This theory is quite applicable in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*, diverse culture, creature and perceptions

are presented in a symbiotic way that shows the interdependency of the creatures on one another, it explores the idea that if every creature are given equal value there will be harmony in environment and natural world.

The entire spectrum of Pi's struggles shows the battle for gaining control over other by inheriting broad area on life-boat. It is a novel of eco-criticism, 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 which act harmfully and dangerously. This is told by his father. His father has had shallow or surface 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 those were bred in zoos and have never known the wild, which are perfectly adapted to their enclosures and feel no tension in the presence of humans, and 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. This madness can be saving; it is part and parcel of the ability to adapt. Without it, no species would survive.

(41)

In order to save his life from Parker, Pi decides to tame tiger, as that is the only way left, to remain alive. He applies 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. 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. Further case of an open exercise of eco-criticism is found in the following citation:

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. The same is true of the circus animals and is also seen in zoos. Socially inferior animals are the ones that make the most strenuous, resourceful efforts to get to know their keepers. They prove to be the ones most faithful to them, most in need of their company, least likely to challenge them or be difficult. (45)

Pi's 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. Fundamental values teach life meaning in ways that facts based solely on observation cannot. As Pi's interactions exude an idyllic life of incredible observation while deriving a spiritual presence, his curious nature charms with humor rather than making distance with facts.

This disbelief is more clearly comprised in the initial doubt 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.

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,” he 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)

In this novel, Pi misleads readers by not mentioning Richard Parker is a tiger until much later and creating contradiction on first reading. This might be due to feeling of anthropomorphism. 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. 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 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. The loss of the raft was perhaps not fatal to my body, but it felt fatal to my spirits. (228)

Pi's avoidance of unqualified eco-criticism 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 truth. He still implicitly acknowledges its necessity.

Eco-criticism, as characterized by Guthrie and others, is a perceptual strategy by which we attempt to glean the greatest meaning from the world around us. Pi's appeal to meaning in the above passage is not surprising; Richard Parker's presence during his lifeboat ordeal provides him with another proximate being to fill with

significance, a fellow mammal with whom to share the months of endless horizon.

Like all humans, Pi remains condemned to meaning. He is a meaning generator. So, Richard Parker's presence allows Pi to exercise a fundamental aspect of his humanity.

The following extract serves as a classic example of how the narrator tries to lend meaning to his shipwrecked existence on sea by means of imagination:

Everything suffered; everything became sun-bleached and weather-beaten.

The lifeboat, the raft until it was lost, the tarpaulin, the stills, the rain catchers, the plastic bags, the lines, the blankets, the net-all became worn, stretched, slack, cracked, dried rotted, torn, discolored. What was orange becoming whitish Orange. What was smooth became rough. What was rough became smooth. What was sharp became blunt. What was whole became tattered.

Rubbing fish skins and turtle fat on things, as I did, greasing them a little, made no difference. (238)

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 dominance point, the subjective aesthetic value of the lifeboat section effectively replaces objective religious truth. According to the worldview used 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 opponent, and this harmony lies at the heart of Pi's merger 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 young man as Pi would see deviation, but he makes no remark. Further on, Mr. Kumar tells Pi that religion is darkness, rather than express his strongly felt

disagreement. Pi tells us he was more afraid that with a few words thrown out he (Mr. Kumar) might destroy something I loved.

Pankaj Mishra characterizes that the doubt or even denial might be seen as evidence as born-again theology of Pi and his author. As per him, God exists mostly to help rather than complicate the individual's lonely pursuit of happiness. In other words, Pi sees faith in God primarily as armor against his doubt, a viewpoint created by his role as religious believer and also fantastical tales' teller. On comparing atheism and agnosticism, it is ecotone that Pi does not see any difference between agnostic's doubt and the incredulity. Yann Martel misrepresents the atheist and agnostic positions; it is the atheist who tends to justify his faith through reason, while the agnostic's doubt is rooted on someone's intellect limitations. Pi tone down religion by beautifying to its aesthetic value without considering it objective truth. Anyone without imagination, it might be difficult for him to embrace God, and being in religion is inheritance where time and place is essential.

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. The tree was more inviting. I noticed its patch of shade. I tried to stand again. I managed to get to a squatting position but as soon as I made to rise. (260)

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. 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” (250). For Nietzsche, 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:

If I define the mammal and then after examining a camel declare, ‘See, a mammal,’ a truth is brought to light, but it is of limited value. I mean, it is anthropomorphic through and through and contains not a single point that would be ‘true in itself,’ real, and universally valid apart from man. The investigator into such truths is basically seeking just the metamorphosis of the world into man. (251)

Apparently the same would hold for God; therefore, to a certain extent, it is characteristically subjective. So, though it seems illogical 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. In his novel, Martel tires to

emphasis only what is in the center that matters and in Pi's mind the center is the "presence of God" (63) where he totally ignores the god can be in different forms and different image. This is also the crux of Gandhi's teaching:

In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will perhaps always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But I can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. I think that we have to find unity in diversity. We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal. (10)

The alternative story he tells Mr. Chiba and Mr. Okamoto seems to acknowledge the 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 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 research reveals that Martel's novel is a critique of human tendency to put themselves at the center of any story, whether about animals or gods. Using flash back technique, Martel presents complex and confusing situation of many different stories which Martel creates all the roles keeping human at a center. In this novel, Pi's relationship with Parker seems to out of dire need but an intense reading would reveal the fact that Pi just could not kill Parker because he started loving it.

The novel also portrays the fact that humans can realize and understand nature only when left alone in the natural world far from the civilization. Since this realization, Pi takes good care of Parker all along with the struggles. He is in fact does not leave Parker away for a little while when they reach toxic island. On their return from the island he gathers healthy food for both him and Parker. He also starts talking to Parker telling his beliefs and thinking. In the progress of their relationship, Pi understands the mystery behind the human and nature's relationship. He understands that animals and humans are the integral part of the environment.

The study reveals that *Life of Pi* is an epitome of how a text can be an effective vehicle to inculcate human responsibilities towards nature. As the story unfolds, the challenging situation Pi faces, changes his whole idea of the natural world. He eventually learns to relate himself with the wildest tiger (Richard Parkar) with which he is left alone in a small boat in the Pacific Ocean for months. His relationship with the tiger begins initially as a matter of survival but gradually he discovers the truth that nature is an integral part of the environment and therefore he begins to take care of the tiger and thereby proves to be the steward of nature.

The novel is successful to give us insight on the importance of diverse religious values and philosophy, need of bio-diversity protection and importance of conserving socio-cultural diversity. Though *Life of Pi* is a fiction, it is associated with philosophy, theories and practices of eco-systemic diversity of the world. I focus on the issue of eco-criticism. This issue is very clearly presented in *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel using most powerful and humanistic expressions, which has great influence to the common people's perception. For many, it is Pi's relationship with the tiger, Richard Parker; for some, it is the decentering of humans in favor of animals; and yet

for others, the central idea of the novel lies in Martel's unusual treatment of religion and its role in human life.

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