

Research Article

A Study of Animal Symbols in Yann Martel’s “Life of Pi”

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Abstract

Symbolism plays a vital role in literature. By attaching additional meaning, symbols help writers to express poetically and effectively. Every writer has his own way of using symbols to poetically convey ideas through their works. Yann Martel is one such writer who used various types of symbols in his novels to project his themes and the inner and outer conscious of his characters. His symbolic way of writing enhances his narrative style to the next level to mesmerize his readers. In his novels, he used many allegorical representations that portray the human traits and tendencies that emanates in life. Moreover, his animal symbolism is much noted for its powerful representations that represent human virtues and vices. *Life of Pi* is one such novel that has animal symbols to the core in unleashing the life cycle, human psychology and human philosophy. The animal symbols also emanate religious, spiritual, hierarchy, power, trust, hope and other virtues and vices through their actions.

Keywords: Symbolism, Animal Symbols, Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*

Manly P. Hall in his book “The Secret Teachings of All Ages” says, “Symbolism is the language of the mysteries. By symbols men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcend the limitations of language.” (P 36) One of the fundamentals of human nature is to seek explanations for the mysteries of life. The life’s mystery is in fact beyond explanation, as we use the language of symbolism to represent them. Signs, images, colors, beings, settings, ideas, surround the world and so on that is often highly symbolic. A sign is an object or idea that represents or points to something else in a straightforward way. A symbol, in general, is clearly linked in function to a sign, and these two words are often used interchangeably, whereas symbol has a deeper meaning. A symbol, through its nature or appearance, reflects or represents another meaning more profound than it represents.

The natural world provides a vast and rich store of symbols. The writers of literature these symbol to represent their inner meanings and emotions. The sun, moon, and stars are the most used symbols that affect the every aspect of our lives. Plants, flowers, and fruits have multiple meanings; plants of productivity, flowers of love, and fruits of fertility. Moreover, in nature, animals too have particular associations linked to their characteristics and cultural importance. Mythical beasts that are half-animal and half human, represents both

animal instincts and human intellect. Egyptian Gods developed from the merging of two earlier cultures, one with Gods in human form, and one with animal-shaped Gods. Gradually a remarkable religion evolved that centered on the cult of the dead.

Yann Martel's works are highly symbolic. Responding *Goodreads*' interview, Martel says, "On some level *all* literature operates on a symbolic level—language itself is symbolic—but as for strict allegory, I don't know what today's tastes are, but I do believe readers are always open to something that moves them and makes them think, and allegory can do that as well as any other mode. Personally I love allegory." (*Goodreads.com*)

Yann Martel, after the failures in his first two published works; a collection of short stories and a novel *Self*, he backpacks to India in 1996, where he enjoys visiting the different traditions and cultures. Martel, a secular minded man, and in India, he discovers the different aspects of religious awakening. Beside the Indian faiths, he is amazed by the wonder of animals such as sacred cows, loudly cawing crows, and the tribes of monkeys, which are interlinked with the native tradition. The Confront between Gods and animals make him to take both of them seriously, as Martel says, "I bought a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and of the gospels. I camped near cows and observed them at length. I started attending masses, pujas and Friday prayers." According to him, India is where "Gods and animals abound and rub shoulders", and a place "where all stories were possible". (*theguardian.com*) Therefore, this may be a strong conviction in him to use animals as symbols.

The 'divinity' in animals, is the result that Martel gets after his detailed study in India. Martel does not limits his experimentation of animals within the *Life of Pi*, and it continues through his following novels, *Beatrice and Virgil* and *The High Mountains of Portugal*. Beatrice, a donkey and Virgil, a red howler monkey in *Beatrice and Virgil*, and Odo, the chimpanzee in *The High Mountains of Portugal*, are the other few examples for his divine and spiritual experimentations. Martel's all these masterly animals stands high for their symbolic representations; the tiger for power, the orangutan for love, pity and as a victim, the donkey and monkey for love and horror, and the chimpanzee for love and mystery, hyena for brutality and cunningness and the zebra for swiftness and as a victim.

The Guardian reviews Martel's *Life of Pi* as, "The central metaphor of *Life of Pi* comes to him one day like a revelation: the animal will be divine ... and the lifeboat crossing the Pacific will be ... an odyssey of the soul across existence". (*The Guardian*) In life of pi, the divinity of animal is used through orangutan (Orange juice) and the Bengal tiger (Richard parker). And the words of Martel, "discovering life through a religious perspective" and "Life is a story; you can choose your own story; a story with God is the better story", makes clear about the allegorical usage of animals, in the novel. The review states:

One aspect of Martel's writing, which is often called his "cutesy" or "whimsical" side, was generally seen as enlivening a fantasy adventure with a tiger but judged less appropriate for the subject of the Holocaust. It is also the case that some elements within the old-style literary establishment have always been skeptical of Martel: Sexton, who so disliked *Beatrice & Virgil*, has written of *Life of Pi* that its "mystical twaddle ... sticks in the throat"... But readers enjoyed *Beatrice & Virgil* more than the critics, and his appeal to the general book-buying public will assuredly remain strong. After all, as a reviewer of *The High Mountains of Portugal* noted, his writing "hums with a vivid populism. (*The Guardian*)

Martel, even he is packed with a secular background, he is keen to learn the essence of different religions through his spiritual lens. Martel says, “When I was reading about religions, I noticed a particular quality in religious figures. One is their strong sense of being right here, right now. Buddhism is all about trying to be in the present moment, but you see it in Jesus too.” He adds, “Animals live in the present. People, on the other hand, are always dealing with their past, and worrying about their future; the present moment seems to slip by unnoticed.” In addition, through his animal characters, Martel’s inner quest and self are represented through the animal symbols.

Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* is an epic survival story with all-embracing hope and religious themes. The novel tells the story of Piscine Molitor Patel known as Pi, the younger son of Santosh Patel who owns a zoo at Pondicherry. In the midst of the political crisis in India, hoping for a new life, Patel decides to immigrate to Canada with his family. Santosh Patel and his wife Gita Patel board a freighter, with their sons and a few animals. Tragedy strikes and the Japanese ship *Tsimtsum* sink halfway to Midway Atoll, the region around the Pacific Ocean. No one survives except Pi and a menagerie of animals, a Zebra, a hyena, an Orangutan (Orange juice), and a Bengal Tiger (Richard Parker). Pi with these four animals, are packed into a twenty-six feet long lifeboat, are let and forced to survive a harrowing 227 days at sea. There happens the loss of Zebra, Orangutan, and Hyena. Finally, Pi and Richard survives and reaches ashore.

Eventually, Pi reaches on to a beach in Mexico, where Richard Parker disappears into the nearby jungle without looking back or bidding farewell. Nearing to death Pi is taken to the hospital at Mexico, where the two officials come from the Japanese ministry of transport who conduct an inquiry about the shipwreck. Pi tells them the story with the animals; Hyena kills a zebra and an Orangutan, and then Hyena by the Bengal Tiger. As the officials hesitate to believe the story with animals, Pi offers them a second story in which he is adrift on a lifeboat not with zoo animals, but with the ship cook, a Taiwanese sailor with broken leg, and his own mother. The officials conclude that the Hyena symbolizes the cook, Zebra, the sailor, Orangutan, Pi’s mother and the Tiger represents Pi.

Yann Martel, after the disappointments regarding the failures of his two early works, in India and Canada, he researched the essentials regarding zoology and religion. He did an in-depth study on survival at sea which reflects in the novel through Pi’s struggle over 227 days at sea. Martel direct experiences from zoo, understanding of the commerciality of zoo animals, and the strategies that zoos used to promote themselves, are reflected both in *Life of Pi*. Martel’s scrutiny on the emotional bond between the trainers and the zoo animals helped him to bring out the live emotion to the readers. The zoo animals are both emotionally entertained and incarcerated. Martel used the animal images and its physical and emotional barriers in the novel to symbolize both positive and negative emotions.

In *Life of Pi*, Martel portrays four central animals, Hyena, Zebra, Orangutan and the Bengal Tiger to convey the themes that symbolize hope, optimism, trust, sacrifice, destruction and death. Martel’s passion on animals is reflected through the protagonist Pi. The first section of *Life of Pi* details Pi’s childhood in Pondicherry, India. His father owns a Zoo and Pi spends most of his time thinking about animals. This early experience helped him to be optimistic and to survive his struggling days at sea. In the Second Section of the novel, Martel compares the same story of animals by giving human images.

In *Life of Pi*, zoo is symbolized as a ground of hope, beauty, truth and miracle. Pi enjoys all his benefits until the political crisis forces his family to sell the zoo animals to

North American zoo, and moves to Canada. The story begins with Pi as an adult who narrates his early life at Pondicherry. Pi's childhood life at the zoo in Pondicherry is always nostalgia for him, which symbolizes joy, as Pi feels the zoo as a "paradise on earth" (Pi 14). Pi loves waking up at the Lion roars that make him to feel a pleasant dawn. He walks through the earthly paradise every day to see the colorful and unique animals. Not only the animals, but also every creature makes the zoo an earthly paradise. He feels:

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 prin. 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. (Pi 14)

Pi enjoys the bright-eyed otters, burly American bison, and stretching yawning orangutans. The elephant symbolizes joy as it searches his pocket with its trunk for snacks. As he remembers, "It was after school that I discovered in a leisurely way what it's like to have an elephant search your clothes in the friendly hope of finding a hidden nut" (Pi 15). The seals slipping into water and Lions merely turn the head. In addition, every of his childhood memories bring him joy.

Usually, critics consider zoo merely a jail because it has a limited environment, limited food, and has psychological and emotional barriers than in forest. Wild animals are territorial. They have their own margins and life routines that lack in zoo. Animals are caged which symbolically represent being inside a hell. They can feel being in paradise only in forest. Whatever it may, animals are always animals. Pi's father uses a goat as a bait, to teach him the cruelty of animals, particularly of a tiger.

Zebra is one of the animals, which is trapped along with other three animals and Pi. Injured Zebra in the first section is described as the injured sailor in the second section of the novel. The injured and trapped zebra symbolizes uniqueness, struggle and hope. It struggles throughout the life, and never loses its hope. The zebra is unique in its beauty, gentleness and calmness, as Pi says, "From time to time the zebra shook its head and barked and snorted. Otherwise it lay quietly." While describing the beauty of the zebra, Pi says, "It was a lovely animal. Its wet markings glowed brightly white and intensely black." He adds, "I was so eaten up by anxiety that I couldn't dwell on it; still, in passing, as a faint afterthought, the queer, clean, artistic boldness of its design and the fineness of its head struck me." (Pi 109)

The Zebra is to trust its own ability, to fight against the every odds surrounded in that environment, especially the Bengal Tiger, Hyena and the deep blue sea. The zebra is very careful in front of the powerful and most dangerous Richard parker, as Pi says, "My guess was that Richard Parker was on the floor of the lifeboat beneath the tarpaulin, his back to me, facing the zebra, which he had no doubt killed by now." (Pi 108) The zebra, even in its difficult and dangerous situations, shows its trust to defend all its difficulties. Pi says, "It protested with diminishing vigour. Blood started coming out its nostrils. Once or twice it reared its head straight up, as if appealing to heaven—the abomination of the moment was perfectly expressed." (Pi 125/126) The zebra defends every attack as of the hyena, shows the never giving up attitude and its trust in its ability. The trust shows the individuality and uniqueness in its behavior that is not equipped with some other wild animals.

The zebra is the symbol of suffering and death. It reaches the lifeboat with a broken leg, and struggles to survive the dangers until its last breath. Pi says, "I was surprised to see that the zebra was still alive." (Pi 109) Pi becomes so sad on the suffering of the zebra, and wants to help the struggling zebra, but he is helpless. Pi says:

It was sad that it was suffering so much—and being such a big, strapping creature it wasn't at the end of its ordeal—but there was nothing I could do about it. I felt pity and then I moved on. This is not something I am proud of. I am sorry I was so callous about the matter. I have not forgotten that poor zebra and what it went through. Not a prayer goes by that I don't think of it. (Pi 120)

The zebra represents gory death, as it suffers the most and dies in the jaws of the cruel hyena. The cruel hyena attacks the zebra, which makes Pi to feel fear and horror. Pi says, "The hyena had attacked the zebra. Its mouth was bright red and it was chewing on a piece of hide." He adds, "My eyes automatically searched for the wound, for the area under attack. I gasped with horror." The brutal hyena tortures the innocent zebra inch by inch, and it tears the hyena's body into parts. Pi says, "The zebra's broken leg was missing. The hyena had bitten it off and dragged it to the stern, behind the zebra. He adds, "A flap of skin hung limply over the raw stump. Blood was still dripping. The victim bore its suffering patiently, without showy remonstrations." (Pi 120) The zebra defends the terror attacks of hyena to protect itself, but in vain, where the cruel hyena eats it alive completely. The hyena kills the poor zebra in a disgusting way, as Pi describes the suffering death of the zebra as:

It put its front legs on the zebra's side, reached over and gathered a fold of skin in its jaws. It pulled roughly. A strip of hide came off the zebra's belly like gift-wrap paper comes off a gift, in a smooth-edged swath, only silently, in the way of tearing skin, and with greater resistance. Immediately blood poured forth like a river. Barking, snorting and squealing, the zebra came to life to defend itself. It pushed on its front legs and reared its head in an attempt to bite the hyena, but the beast was out of reach. It shook its good hind leg, which did no more than explain the origin of the previous night's knocking: it was the hoof beating against the side of the boat. (Pi 125)

Pain and goriness are seen in the death of the zebra and the victim suffers to the core. Whereas the hyena, the victimizer enjoys its food and tears down the body of the zebra and eats well the zebra is partially alive.

The zebra's attempts 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 its haunches. It started pulling out coils of intestines and other viscera. There was no order to what it was doing. It bit here, swallowed there, seemingly overwhelmed by the riches before it. After devouring half the liver, it started tugging on the whitish, balloon-like stomach bag. But it was heavy, and with the zebra's haunches being higher than its belly—and blood being slippery—the hyena started to slide into its victim. It plunged head and shoulders into the zebra's guts, up to the knees of its front legs. It pushed itself out, only to slide back down. It finally settled in this position, half in, half out. The zebra was being eaten alive from the inside. (Pi 125)

The detailed description of the murder of the zebra makes Pi to shatter in faith and he fears all the time to stay at the lifeboat. This situation gives Pi a state of psychological trauma and fear.

Orangutan is the second animal called as Orange juice by Pi. The orangutan is the human representation of Pi's mother. Martel makes a comparison between the Orangutan and Pi's mother, where Pi feels the orangutan as his own mother and also gives her a religious representation of Mother Mary to symbolize love and hope. Pi describes the entry of the orangutan as, "She came floating on an island of bananas in a halo of light, as lovely as the Virgin Mary. The rising sun was behind her. Her flaming hair looked stunning." (Pi 111) The floating Orangutan comes floating, carrying the piles of bananas, seems for Pi as his mother as an angel, approaching him in his suffering at sea.

Pi feels isolated and hopeless in the initial stages, but the unexpected happenings around change his mood and gives him strength. "The image of a new species popped into my head: the rare sea faring green orangutan". After seeing the Orange Juice (orangutan), Pi feels very happy, hopeful, and satisfied, as Pi says, "I returned to scrutinizing the horizon, my hopes high" (122). According to Pi, Orange Juice has not only cheered up him but also had taken out the nauseating feelings of seasickness. After seeing the orangutan, Pi feels fine there and becomes jubilant to have a good companion.

The orangutans are genetically cool-headed and calm by their behavior. This coolness and calmness of the orange juice provides wisdom to Pi in his odd times, which already Pi learns from his mother. During his childhood at Pondicherry, Pi has some difficult times with his father, the cool approach that Pi learns from his mother, provides Pi wisdom to tackle the situations. And the wisdom often helps Pi in his difficult situation throughout the novel.

The Orangutan's ability to fight back is notable in the novel. When the hyena attacks the Orangutan, she fights back violently but nonetheless killed. She tries her best to resist her life from the bloody Hyena, shows the never giving up nature. Pi says, "I believe I have made clear the menace of a hyena. It was certainly so clear in my mind that I gave up on Orange Juice's life before she even had a chance to defend it." He adds, "I underestimated her. I underestimated her grit." (Pi 129) The orangutan breaks Pi's notion on the ability of the orangutan. She attacks the hyena on its head, which Pi gets shocked. Pi says, "I exulted. Orange Juice's stirring defence brought a glow to my heart." (Pi 130) She is given as the symbol of trust, as she trusts in herself till to her death. Pi details:

Dumb with pain and horror, I watched as Orange Juice thumped the hyena ineffectually and pulled at its hair while her throat was being squeezed by its jaws. To the end she reminded me of us: her eyes expressed fear in such a humanlike way, as did her strained whimpers. She made an attempt to climb onto the tarpaulin. The hyena violently shook her. She fell off the bench to the bottom of the lifeboat, the hyena with her. I heard noises but no longer saw anything. (Pi 131)

The orangutan is also given the Christian symbol of sufferings, as Pi says, "Orange Juice lay next to it, against the dead zebra. Her arms were spread wide open and her short legs were folded together and slightly turned to one side." (Pi 131/132) He adds, "She looked like a simian Christ on the Cross. Except for her head. She was beheaded." (Pi 132) Pi here states the long struggle and sufferings of the orangutan, as it suffers a lot, since the shipwreck. Christ fights against the evils and suffers death on the cross to redeem the sinners, where the orangutan suffers in the midst of the dreadful animals and the sea.

The third animal is the Hyena that is described as the cook in the second story told by Pi to the officials. Hyena is a carrion-eater, regarded as greedy, cowardly and unclean, and it

symbolizes graveness and destruction. The unclean Hyena brutally kills the Zebra and Orangutan symbolizes violence, death and destruction. The Zebra, Orangutan, and Pi equally fear and feel death in the presence of Hyena. It is so greedy, as it kills the Orangutan very few hours after the Zebra, and not of hunger. The Hyena is presented in the novel as an ugly, intensely violent animal, which dominates the lifeboat before Richard Parker emerges.

The ugliness of Hyena's attitude is seen when it attacks the Zebra's leg. It is compared with the cunningness of the cook in cutting off the sailor's leg. The Hyena eats the injured legs of Zebra, which shows the cruel and destructive nature of Hyena. Martel compares the animalistic behavior of the Hyena with the inhumanity of the cook, both heartless. As Pi experiences:

The zebra's broken leg was missing. The hyena had bitten it off and dragged it to the stern, behind the zebra. A flap of skin hung limply over the raw stump. Blood was still dripping. The victim bore its suffering patiently, without showy remonstrations. A slow and constant grinding of its teeth was the only visible sign of distress. Shock, revulsion and anger surged through me. I felt intense hatred for the hyena. I thought of doing something to kill it. But I did nothing. (Pi 120)

Hyena's attack on the mild tempered Orangutan shows its cruelty in its peak. Pi says, "The hyena, with only its jaws, will overcome the ape because it knows what it wants and how to get it." (Pi 130) It beheads the pathetic orangutan, the decapitation is a normal food chain event for such a wild animal, and when the hyena represents the French cook, it becomes a symbol of bloody cruel violence.

The fourth animal if the Bengal tiger called as Richard Parker in the novel. Tiger is the symbol of power and supremacy over good and evil. Chinese Gods ride tigers to signify their mastery over animal passions. Eastern belief is that the tiger is a yang animal with the power to drive out demons. They believe that it throws away the poisonous animals out of its reach. In many countries, Lion is widely known as the king of the beasts, but in East tiger takes the role. Easterners consider tiger as the symbol of courage, power, speed and beauty. For Indians, tiger is the national animal and has religious affinity. Durga, the Hindu goddess who rides a tiger symbolizes her mastery over animal passion. Lord Shiva wears the Tiger's skin that symbolizes power and mastery. In literature, tiger plays an important role, mainly to symbolize power. As it is found in Latin literature, God drives His tigers down the slopes of Nysa, in Virgil's *Aeneid*. In the literature of middle ages, Chaucer and Spenser portray tiger as a cruel beast. The most famous and mysterious tiger in literature is the creation of Blake in his "The Tyger."

In *Life of Pi*, the most powerful animal symbol used is the Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker. Pi describes it as a heavy beast of four hundred and fifty pounds. In length, it covers one third of the lifeboat. Richard Parker is the name of a hunter mistakenly assigned to the tiger, is a clerical error. It is an uninvited guest at the lifeboat, almost covers and accompanies Pi around 227 days of survival at sea. Pi manages to live with the tiger with confidence, dominance and hope.

Pi describes Richard Parker as, the "companion of my torment, awful, fierce thing that kept me alive, moved forward and disappeared forever from my life". (Pi 285) Martel shows the Tiger as a super alpha that symbolizes power of both good and evil. Hyena as a wild animal knows the destructive power of the Tiger, and itself the Hyena feels as the "Super

alpha is watching me —I better not move" (Pi 136) Even when the Tiger is calm, Hyena feels fear and death, and hides itself to a small space behind the Zebra.

The Tiger and the Hyena are both destructive in nature and both symbolize death. However, the terrible fear of the Hyena highlights the superiority of the tiger. Hyena fears the greater beast and even fears of touching the tiger's food. The power of the tiger in killing is extremely superior than the other. Hyena's attack on the zebra and the Orangutan is very cruel and disgusting, whereas the tiger kills the Hyena in a heroic manner. The tiger straightly jumps to the hyena and directly kills it without causing any sufferings to the prey. Pi says, "The hyena died neither whining nor whimpering and Richard Parker killed without sound" (Pi 150). The cruelty and tremendous power of the Tiger is described in the beginning of the novel, as Santosh Patel teaches Pi about the sudden and unexpected attacks of the Tiger.

The death of the Zebra, Orangutan and Hyena, and the destructive nature of the Tiger make Pi to feel fear of death. All the cruel and disgusting incidents that happen around Pi, teaches him to believe in himself. He trusts in his skills, trains the Tiger and eventually makes it to be his companion. In Pi's words, "Repetition is important in the training not only of animals but also of humans." (Pi 23) Pi's training skills over Richard Parker resembles that of what Crusoe gives to Friday in *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. Pi's trust in him helps him to train the Tiger, as Tigers are territorial.

Territorial dominance is a notable animal symbol in this novel. Though *Life of Pi* deals with the seemingly boundless nature of the sea, it also studies the strictness of boundaries, borders and demarcations. The leading animals in the forest or in zoo have the habit of dividing their territory, by urinating around. Here in the case of Richard Parker, it divides a part of the boat, which it requires. It seems hopeful and a friendly sign for Pi. Pi states, "Tigers are highly territorial and it is with their urine that they mark the boundaries of their territory" (171). Pi often struggles to reach Richard parker's territory, particularly in times when he tries to get the needed stuffs from the lifeboat locker that is under the territorial control of the mass tiger. Pi's evinces third recommendation to those who should ever find themselves in a predicament such as he was. Pi suggests:

Now comes the difficult part: you must provoke the animal that is afflicting you. Tiger, rhinoceros, ostrich, wild boar, brown bear-no matter the beast; you must get its goat. The best way to do this will most likely be to go to the edge of your territory and noisily intrude into the neutral zone. I did just that: I went to the edge of the tarpaulin and stamped upon the middle bench as I mildly blew into the whistle. It is important that you make a consistent, recognizable noise to signal your, aggression. But you must be careful". (Pi 203)

Pi too marks off his territory and differentiates it from Richard Parker's is necessary for Pi's survival. "It was time to impose myself and carve out my territory" (Pi 202). A tiger, as we learn in the novel is territorial. They mark their space and define its boundaries carefully, establishing absolute dominance over every square inch of their area.

To master Richard Parker, Pi must establish his control over certain zones in the lifeboat. He pours his urine over the trap to designate a portion of the lifeboat as his territory, and he uses his whistle to ensure that Richard Parker stays within his designated space. The small size of the lifeboat and the relatively large size of its inhabitants make for a crowded vessel. In such a confined space, the demarcations of territory ensure a relatively peaceful relationship between man and beast. If Richard Parker is seen as an aspect of Pi's own

personality, the notion that a distinct boundary can be erected between the two represents Pi's need to disavow the violent, animalistic side of his nature.

Pi's power of controlling the powerful Richard Parker shows the human superiority over animals. Pi tries his every best to love and comfort the companion Richard Parker. Hunger and thirst are the other notable issues, where Pi and Richard Parker fixates continually on food and water. Tiger needs ten pounds of meat a day, where Pi starts fishing to feed his mate. Pi experience in fishing is first hand as he says, "I decided to try my hand at fishing, for the first time in my life" (178). Pi's care and concern over the Tiger shows his unconditional love on animals, as even he tries to kill the same Tiger in the beginning because of fear. Besides all the struggles and hardships, Pi's trust, passion, belief and love makes Pi to dominate the heavy beast. Richard Parker acts as an omega or submissive animal, respecting Pi's dominance. The positive emotions and the struggles, both together helps Pi to shape his hope of survival during these hard times.

Martel's animal characters in this novel, add more beauty in this novel. Away from Pi and Richard Parker, every one of the characters in this novel plays their role aptly, where it is needed. 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. It is a slow and painful struggle that vividly illustrates the absolute strength of its life force. Besides all the struggles and hardships, Pi's trust, belief and love makes Pi to dominate the heavy beast. The positive emotions and the struggles, both together helps Pi to shape his hope of survival during these hard times.

Another one minor animal symbol is the sea mammal, which is of greater importance is the Whale, Pi sees the whale jumps out of the water and the huge size of it stuns him for a while. Pi trusts in him at that time that Lord Vishnu has come to give him a vision to embolden his hope. When he catches and kills a big fish to feed Richard, he gets excuses form the Lord Vishnu, feeds Parker, and eats it to survive. It shows the spiritual trust evolved in the hearts of Pi.

Then, Pi offers a small rat in the lifeboat to Richard to train and get confidence in him. Pi understands the life cycle in a peculiar manner. In the carnivorous Island, Pi sees the magic of the sea and the carnivorous island. It is full of Meerkats and they are used for survival. Pi comes under the order of life cycle while at the sea. Pi and Richard become curious and fearful in the island on seeing the magic happening at the night. All the Meerkats and Pi climb the tree for survival and Parker restores to the boat by its territorial sense. When he leaves the island, he takes the algae to eat for himself and the meerkats for Parker. He wants to be a normal man without feeding on non-vegan diet.

Hence, Martel through *Life of Pi* tries to portray the humans own the animalistic nature, who are dangerous than animals. The words at the Pondicherry zoo, "DO YOU KNOW WHICH IS THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMAL IN THE ZOO?" talks much that humans are with the animalistic behavior even more danger than the dangerous wild animals. In addition, behind the words, "it was a mirror." (Pi 31) As for Pi, the animals too have the human qualities, as he elaborates the comparison:

We've all met one, perhaps even owned one. It is an animal that is "cute", "friendly", "loving", "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 I have just mentioned, who vent their spite on them with walking sticks and umbrellas. In both cases we look at an animal and see a mirror. The obsession with putting ourselves at the centre of everything is the bane not only of theologians but also of zoologists. (Pi 31)

Thus, Martel is a proponent of utilizing symbols in his novels in a novel manner. His animal symbols show the senses of the animals and represents the qualities of them in attribution to the human beings. The virtues and vices of human philosophy exist in the animal symbolism of Martel. Indeed, the animal symbols drive the novel powerfully encompassing the theme with a strong commitment of message conveyed to the humans on hope, trust, power, life, tragedy etc. It relies as an archetypal treat to the reader and one can view the original senses of good and evil while reading the novel. It may also help man to become benevolent with the help positive traits of human laws.

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