

Reconstruction of Self in a Post- Colonial world: Retrieval of Identity in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

Abhijith M. S.*

Independent Scholar

Abstract – For hundreds of years, colonial discourse had been taking a shot at etching the space between inflexible polarities developed by the western bits of knowledge. Human or animal, civilized or savage, man or nature, hunter or hunted and the norm or the other are among such doubles which contributed in solidifying an expansive vision of progress: its highlights, principles and prerequisites. Building up a conspicuous difference among human and creatures, provincial introduction went for debasing the native in the colonized nations. In this manner, colonizing realms legitimized the killing of the native, since they were considered a long way from being human as indicated by the western viewpoint.

Key Words: Post colonialism, identity crisis, suppression, mimicry, migration, subaltern, battle for survival.

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Life of Pi tells the story of an Indian teenager called Pi Patel raised in Pondicherry, a French district in India. His family owns a zoo, where he began receiving his first lessons about dealing with animals. However, the 1970s were turbulent in India, as Mrs. Indira Gandhi instituted Emergency Rule. On deciding to sell the zoo and immigrate to Canada, Pi's family packed up in a Japanese cargo ship to cross the Pacific. A tragic shipwreck occurred causing the death of all the passengers except Pi, an orang-utan, a hyena, a wounded zebra and a Bengal tiger called Richard Parker, to end up sharing one lifeboat. After some massacre among the animals, Pi and Richard Parker are the only ones left to carry on in a journey of two hundred and twenty-seven days in the Pacific Ocean.

The seeking of one's identity leads many people on a path of discovery, understanding, and reflection. In Martel's *Life of Pi*, Piscine embarked on a quest in order to discover who he was and with whom he could have an intimate connection. He finds an answer to his questions that finding a cosy association with someone and deciding the genuine uniqueness of an individual are basic components to fashion an individual's character. Personality is a lot of natural attributes, characteristics, and information that recognizes one individual from the rest. This story is a majestic illustration of the process of discovering the identity of one's self.

The story happens in the post-free India, especially Pondicherry; the capital of French province in India. India as a province was torn among numerous domains including the Dutch, the Portuguese, the British and the French. Be that as it may, everything wound up in the hands of the British and the French

who as adversaries were contending in forcing their societies, dialects and structures on the Indians. Pi says, "the French were still trying to make Pondicherry as Gallic as the British were trying to make the rest of India Britannic" (Martel 12). The author uncovered serious frontier impacts on the Indians including the foundation of French schools, for example, St. Joseph and Petit Seminaire.

In the pre-colonial period, there was no binding together structure to bond the colonized of the one country together, pushing them to pursue the colonizers' strides, which is known as mimicry. "Mimicry introduced by Homi K. Bhabha is adopting the colonizers cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result are never a simple reproduction of those traits" (Ashcroft et al. 125).

Mimicry is exhibited in *Life of Pi* in Mamaji's character. Mamaji, a companion of Pi's family is a case of an Indian man getting his instruction in Paris, the city, because of the provincial organization. Besides, he appreciates extravagant methods for diversion in the humanized world; he has enthusiasm for meandering among French pools searching for French exclusive expectations of individual cleanliness.

Being excited by the acculturated world, the colonized, during the time spent adjusting the colonizers figure, fall in the device of turning into an obscured duplicate of it. Now and then the resulting picture is an odd or a farce of the first picture. Bhabha asserts in *Location of Culture* (1994) that "the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also

disrupts its authority" (126). So it doesn't simply cover the colonized's unique character behind it, yet additionally confuses the colonizer's way of life. Pi Patel is a clear case of such an odd spoof, with respect to his name.

Pi's original name is Piscine Molitor Patel; he is named after a French pool, which achieved a joke to his name since it doesn't fit in an Indian setting. Powerless to articulate his name effectively, from "Piscine" to "Pissing", the name is strayed transforming into a bad dream which pushed Pi to an internal outcast. Pi's dual identities, a French name in an Indian context arouses his double consciousness. He decided to change his name because his classmates were making fun of him. A new name was born and he himself called Pi, the Piscine stayed behind. He says, "My name is Piscine Patel, known to all as Pi Patel" (22).

In *Life of Pi*, Piscine's name is much unexpected as in it exudes sea-going bits of knowledge, which foresees his sea-going trial in the Pacific, and demonstrates the ease of his personality in such a culture. Hence, he figures out how to change his name to escape such a joke. Therefore, he manages to change his name to escape such mockery.

He picks a nickname, "π" or "Pi", which he accepts is confined from any decided culture and he says: "in that Greek letter that looks like a shack with a corrugated tin roof, in that elusive, irrational number with which scientists try to understand the universe, I found refuge" (24). No matter what the surroundings of an individual are, identity crisis will have some sort of an effect on either the physical or mental aspect of an individual. In the eyes of his Indian kin, he is a grotesque joke, as it deracinates him from his identity. After some decades, even in Canada, his name does not fit in a French context because of his different French accent from the original one. The idea of an unfitting name is repetitive in many postcolonial literary texts such as V.S Naipaul's *Half a Life* (2001).

In spite of being Canadian, Martel can build up a progressively all-inclusive point of view out of a Third World setting. India, for centuries, has accepted diversities of religions with God houses everywhere. Martel creates a quintessence of universality in Pi's character, through his passion in all religions. Describing his office Martel says,

On the shelf below are various articles of devotion: a beaker full of water; a copper spoon; a lamp with a wick coiled in oil; sticks of incense; and small bowls of red powder, yellow powder, grains of rice and lumps of sugar. There is another Virgin Mary in the dining room. Upstairs in the office, there is a brass Ganesha sitting cross-legged next to the computer, a wooden Christ on the Cross from Brazil on a wall, and a green prayer rug in a corner. Next to it, on a low bookstand, is a book covered by a cloth. At the centre of the cloth is a single Arabic word. The word God in Arabic. The book on the bedside table is a bible. (46)

All religions; hence, dwell in a similar setting with no contentions or debate, as Pi's basic intention is to look for otherworldliness in the two religions and nature.

Martel makes a core of universality in Pi's character, through his energy in all religions. He selects the best of each religion to embrace without privileging one over the other. Pi was a Hindu and he also follows the religions such as Islam and Christianity. This can be evident from his conversation with his father. He says, "I would like to be baptized and I would like a prayer rug. I would like to pray outside without getting my pants dirty. And I'm attending a Christian school without having received the proper baptism of Christ. Because I love God. But I want to pray to Allah. I want to be a Christian" (71-72).

Pi looks for the universality of religion; he chooses the best of every religion to grasp without privileging one over the other. In the middle of concordance liquefies inflexible fringes among religions and tones with nature.

Pi arises as a hybrid of religions and their cultural backgrounds. To Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity is a state of in-betweenness like a person who stands between two cultures. Pi's religious hybridity is not a direct outcome of colonialism but it can be regarded as a positive aspect between the cultures. As a consequence of hybridity, Pi has no belonging to a nation or state.

Pi's family needed to escape from India so as to escape Emergency Rule in 1975-1977 which issued checking common freedoms and forcing control on the press; thusly, their country turns into no longer safe for its subjects. Immigration is a deliberate choice, taken by Pi's family's free will and full consciousness. Pi shouts about the explanation for moving from a country to another, he says,

Why do people move? What makes them uproot and leave everything they've known for a great unknown beyond the horizon? Why climb this Mount Everest of formalities that makes you feel like a beggar? Why enter this jungle of foreigners where everything is new, strange and difficult? The answer is the same the world over: people move in hope of a better life (77).

Political disputes and financial clashes emerge after the takeoff of the colonizer as it turns into an incredible test to the colonized to fire up their country. All things considered, numerous citizens couldn't withstand such a test thus incline toward getting away to the colonizing nation or some other settlement recently colonized by the equivalent colonizing power.

The journey seems awkward; Pi narrates the dialogue between his father and himself, "Father said, „We'll sail like Columbus!" „He was hoping to find India", I pointed out sullenly" (88). It is an-other-

way-round journey, a reverse of the norm. Canada was not on their guide; it is totally uncanny, and most presumably a sheer inverse of India in each angle. Hence, sinking before achieving the New World and being everlastingly caught in the profundities of the Pacific between the Old and the New World may show the unrelieved loss of country and the difficulty of going back in neither time nor space.

Being exposed to a shipwreck, Pi is marooned ending up losing all his family members and his family's income resources, their animals, and faces the danger of being trapped with an orangutan, a hyena, a wounded zebra and a Bengal tiger called Richard Parker in one lifeboat. In part two, postcolonial desultory portrayal shifts in the method; Martel utilizes a purposeful anecdote of expansionism as a human-creature relationship, described from a first narrator's viewpoint. Utilizing creatures in artistic writings has experienced distinctive stages in frontier writing, beginning from the imbued conviction that creatures are debased and ordinarily thought about lower than individuals, which has been on the colonialist motivation. So as to legitimize the homicide of the aboriginals and the control of their human and characteristic assets, the colonialist venture set up the subalternity of the indigenous.

"Subaltern, meaning „of inferior rank“, is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes" (Ashcroft et al. 198). The bestial component, either in creatures or people, legitimizes the most extreme provincial wrongdoings. This viewpoint varies and creates through different stages in the postcolonial talk. The animalistic feature, either in animals or humans, justifies the utmost colonial crimes. This perspective differs and develops through various phases in postcolonial discourse.

Throughout ages, animalizing people had been a method for making the „Other“, an element to oppress the colonized subjects as contradicting to the acculturated colonizers. Making the „Other“ is likewise a fundamental method for laying out the Self. Another crucial branch of postcolonial theory is the study of the effects of colonialism on the human's vision of animals known as Zoocriticism. The perspective changes in like manner when comparing creatures with people in their survival rights is to be regarded and put on the needs. This is the thing that Pi calls, "*Animalus anthropomorphicus*, the animal as seen through human eyes" (31). Human traits and emotions are attributed to animals which eventually generates a feeling of empathy and sympathy.

Everything changes when Pi and his creatures move toward becoming on equivalent balance confronting the best life challenge, the battle for survival. Animals are therefore viewed as equivalent as people with undeniable partiality in privileges of survival and attesting territoriality. However, Richard Parker in a few depictions is viewed as better than Pi. Pi says, "It

was gigantic. It looked at the size of the planet Jupiter to my dazed senses. His paws were like volumes of *Encyclopedia Britannica*" (132). The tiger's name is a typical British full name; this brings to mind the colonial presence in comparison to Pi's symbolic nickname. Richard Parker, in this sense, represents the colonizing influence though Pi speaks to the colonized. In this way, the author inverts the utilization of creature, not to allegorize the carnal subalterns but rather to allegorize the colonizing powers.

Pi is distracted by sparing Richard Parker from the ocean, encouraging it, giving it water and fundamental consideration. Asserting domain, the canvas, and restricting Pi from drawing nearer to it or else he would hazard his life, introduces an apparent case of a colonizer-colonized relationship, or as it were. Richard Parker's perilous company puts Pi in a critical experience; he says "next to Richard Parker, I was deaf, blind and nose-dead" (108). Pi winds up unaware of his environment, including his family's catastrophe, with the exception of the tiger. In a postcolonial point of view, Pi settles his eyes on the present snapshot of serving the tiger while overlooks his nation and his family that he deserted, on the grounds that he possesses no recreation energy for that. This condition symbolizes the distracting state delivered upon the colonized. Being absentminded, Pi is caught in a minor space with a hazardous requesting tiger which challenges his convictions he has been building up since his high school. A steady sentiment of dread and risk has bound him to respect the tiger's advantages.

Martel, in this manner, reveals insight into the carnal quality in people by and large and the colonizer specifically. The colonizer's wild internal mind is turned back to front to take a state of the most fierce creature, a tiger with a British name. The colonized subject vacillates among restricting and not-contradicting the colonizer; despising it however cherishing it in the meantime. Pi says, "I love you! The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The feeling flooded my chest. „Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker.“ If I didn't have you now I would die of hopelessness" (236). These words express love and sheer respect and gratitude, yet there is fear at the same time. However, such awkward love results in imitating Richard Parker in his behaviour, perhaps out adaptation as a means of survival.

Embracing Richard Parker's carnal frames of mind in his survival approaches, Pi changes conduct from a human to a creature. As the two are on equivalent balance, cross-fertilization happens between them reviewing the wonder of mimicry. Pi utilizes each means in restraining Richard Parker to make it increasingly household. Despite the fact that such techniques are powerful in diminishing Richard Parker's brutality, Pi, then again, is impacted by the tiger as it were. Pi ended up more out of control and develops to be an executioner. He says, "It was the first sentient being I had ever killed. I was now a

killer. I was now as guilty as Cain. I was sixteen years old, a harmless boy, bookish and religious, and now I had blood on my hands" (231). Even Pi's way of eating has changed and become more vicious; he says, "It came as an unmistakable indication to me of how low I had sunk the day I noticed, with a pinching of the heart, that I ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate" (284).

Martel investigates through cannibalism as a basic strategy in the colonialist venture. Cannibals or man-eaters typify the western view of the aboriginals as a beast and savage animals that remain between being people and being creatures. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Caliban and Friday speak to the savage or the non-human animal that will be instructed and developed so as to be a typical person as indicated by the western standards.

In *Life of Pi*, cannibalism isn't confined to the conduct of creatures however stretches out to "human" creatures too. Cannibalism is attributed to Richard Parker, as an outline of the colonizer in his most savage extraordinary. The colonizer is a cannibal in a figurative sense in light of the fact that colonizing powers devour and control similarly the savage eats and lives on other individuals of his own sort. Notwithstanding, the starkest awful model is in Pi himself when he eats people out of starvation.

All around, yet it is subtle in the trait, postcolonialism contains a lot of debated ideas which help in reflecting colonialist extends all through hundreds of years. Postcolonial writing breathes life into such terms in striking encounters; be that as it may, the postmodern hypothesis has contributed to advancing such show. *Life of Pi*, by Yann Martel, is a certified model of a postmodern novel which testing legitimacy of both the hackneyed dichotomies and the reception of metanarratives. Through a wreck story, Martel achieves postcolonial talk in human-animal relationship structure as a purposeful anecdote of colonizer-colonized relationship. People and creatures are determined to break even with balance as a representation of a postmodern viewpoint on the postcolonial hypothesis.

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Corresponding Author

Abhijith M. S.*

Independent Scholar

abhijithms13@gmail.com