

# Faith in yann martel's life of pie



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Faith is known as a belief or confidence in a thing, person or concept. In religion, one's faith is defined as confidence or trust in a particular system of religious belief. Throughout Martel's *Life Of Pi*, Pi appears indecisive about choosing a religion to follow but, Pi's faith in his religion is an incredibly meaningful and well-developed set of personal beliefs that are key to his survival. Pi's faith in his three religions, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam ultimately help him in his journey to survive. Pi's faith in Christianity is a powerful source of faith that helped him in his journey.

The Christian faith focuses on beliefs regarding the life, birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (" Christianity"). Pi's faith in Christianity forced him to create routines of praying every morning, midmorning, sunset and at night. " I kept myself busy. That was the key to my survival." " Sunrise: wake up, prayers." " Mid-morning: prayers, lunch." " Sunset: ...prayers. " " Night: .. fitful sleeping, prayers." (Martel, 210). Given this evidence, it is clear that Pi used his faith as a coping mechanism during his hardships. Pi even states himself " That was key to survival" as he knew that following his regular routines and even going beyond them was something to do, which gave him sanity. With nothing to do day and night, one would easily go insane without tasks to complete. One who has faith in something or in religion will often portray many positive and optimistic outlooks on life, as they too believe there is something more to reality, there is something good and holy in this world. Just like Pi although he does not have one particular religion he follows, the gifted mindset that he has to be open to three religions transfers into his success in surviving. Pi's faith in Christianity helps him overlook the reality of his situation and he can treat the disaster much

like he treats the disaster of the world, he looks beyond it and prays for a meaning and a reason to stay alive. His religious rituals allow him to feel a sense of calmness and give him the will to go on. Pi even states during the novel, " They brought me comfort, that is certain. But it was hard, oh, it was hard. Faith in God is an opening up, a letting go, a deep trust, a free act of love- but sometimes it was so hard to love." (Martel, 231). Pi admits that it was hard to put his trust in God when it seemed like he wasn't listening, but continues praying, staying faithful and practising his religious rituals throughout the entire 227 days. Pi's faith ultimately contributes to his survival and keeps him sane. Another powerful example of faith that Pi used to his benefit in surviving the disaster was his faith in Hinduism.

Hinduism is an ancient religion of India that combines a rich variety of rituals that share common themes but do not enforce a unified set of beliefs or practices. (" Hinduism"). Pi's everlasting faith in Hinduism helps him get through his journey. One moment in the novel Pi wakes up in the middle of the night and is overwhelmed with feelings of insignificance due to his situation and is embodied with fear and depression. These emotions are dismissed when he remembers a Hindu story of a character named Markandeya that he would have learned through his belief in Hinduism, Pi mentions " I felt like the sage Markeandeya, who fell out of Vishnu's mouth while Vishnu was sleeping and so beheld the entire universe, everything that there is. Before the sage could die of fright, Vishnu awoke and took him back into his mouth. (Martel, 177). In this story, Vishnu saves the sage which brings a positive motivation to Pi, he wakes up revitalized to continue fighting for his life. The nights often took away belief and hope from Pi, yet

sunrise brought Pi to his senses about wanting to live. It is clear that Pi continues to draw strength from his faith and mixing religious prayers and practices. Pi uses his strong faith in Hinduism to bring out the best in every situation and look at things from a different perspective. As he remembers the beauty of the story that he learned when he was young and specifically the ending, he becomes optimistic and continues his daily chores and rituals. He also reasoned that his situation wasn't quite as breathtaking as Markandeya's was and realized by having a positive outlook on his situation and maintaining religious practices to compass each day, he keeps his mind active and his hope alive. Finally, the last source of faith that Pi used to his benefit in surviving the disaster was his faith in Islam.

The Islamic faith is based on revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad and submitting to the will of God. It also focuses heavily on animals and that all creatures are one entity and should be treated with kindness and mercy. ("Islam"). As Pi realized that all of his solutions to survive alongside Richard Parker would go against his beliefs, he went into the depths of his faith which was to tame and care for Richard Parker. Pi begins to have faith in this plan and comes to the conclusion that this one was it, "I had to tame him. It was at that moment that I realized this necessity. It was not a question of him or me, but of him and me. We were, literally and figuratively, in the same boat. We would live-or we would die-together" (Martel, 181). Given Pi's faith in the Islamic religion, he knew that he had to kindly and respectfully coexist with Richard Parker according to the teachings of Islam. In this quote, Pi's Islamic and kindhearted faith comes out for Richard Parker and realizes that he must not only keep him alive but control him. Pi recognizes that he and Richard

Parker are stuck together for the rest of his journey in which Pi must learn to put his faith in his religion and in the Richard Parker to survive. Pi believes that, due to Islamic beliefs, the tiger is his brother and despite his hatred and envy of the tiger, he remembers this belief. By relying on his past beliefs of treating creatures with kindness and respect he puts forth his instincts and his belief for animals to ultimately survive on the boat. With time, Pi soon realizes that without the companionship and taming of Richard Parker he would have never survived, he mentions " He pushed me to go on living. I hated him for it, yet at the same time, I was grateful. I am grateful. It's the plain truth: without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story. (Martel, 186). This goes on to prove that not only was the taming and kindness towards Richard Parker an important aspect of the novel, it perfectly demonstrates how without him, Pi would have never survived. Another significant source of his Islamic faith would be the extended lengths that Pi takes to recreate his ritual norms when he states " At such moments I tried to elevate myself. I would touch the turban I had made with the remnants of my shirt and I would say aloud, " this is God's hat!"... despair was a heavy Blackness that let no light in or out it was hell Beyond expression I think. It always passed (Martel, 209). This hat is due to the Islamic turban that he normally wears every day. In this case, when he uses his shirts instead of his normal turban it brings his ways of life back to a situation and things become like they used to. As he creates an atmosphere much like he was accustomed to, he softens the reality of his situation and brings light to everything that is dark. His commitment to this religion and the three different religions as a whole show that Pi shares great love and

Faith within himself, it also proves to be the very source from which he draws the strength and the desire to survive his ordeal.

Throughout Martel's *Life Of Pi*, Pi appears indecisive about choosing a religion to follow but, Pi's faith in his religion is an incredibly meaningful and well-developed set of personal beliefs that are key to his survival. By analyzing Pi's faith in all three of his religions, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam this overall helps in the understanding of the driving forces that allow him to survive the life-altering disaster. The most interesting point of faith to take away from this novel is when Pi suggests an alternate version of his story by replacing all the animals with people. Given both versions, this forces readers to think which they prefer, the one with the animals in which a tiger was tamed throughout the course of 277 days or the one with genuine real people. Of course, everyone's opinion is different, but the question is directed to serve as theological reflection. Does one that prefer to believe in logical reasoning or things that one physically sees? Or does one prefer to believe in faith and in miracles? The argument is that if one preferred the story with animals, one is choosing to believe in the impossible, one is choosing to have faith, one believes in a world where magic and unbelievable things exist, a world where people are aided by " God" in whatever form one accepts. This would satisfy the story's main intent which is to make the reader believe in God. But in any case, no matter how one tells the story of God (through Christianity, Hinduism or Islam), God remains the same. God simply changes the story to fit the person or the culture.

## Works Cited

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