

# Religion in life of pi theology religion essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

If you stumble about believability, what are you living for. Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer. What is your problem with hard to believe.

Life of Pi is a tale about survival, belief in God and coming of age that unfolds while the protagonist is floating in a lifeboat on the Pacific Ocean. Belief in God is clearly a major theme in this novel, and has been the most controversial in reviews of the book. Throughout the novel, Pi makes his belief in and love of God clear. This exhilarating story begins with an old man in Pondicherry who tells the narrator, " I have a story that will make you believe in God." The protagonist explores the different issues of religion and spirituality from an early age and survives even 227 days shipwrecked in the ocean. Storytelling and religious beliefs are two closely linked ideas in the novel. On a literal level, each of Pi's three religions, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, come with its own set of tales and fables, which are used to spread the teachings and illustrate the beliefs of the faith. This book defends not only the common spirit behind these three religions, but the rituals and ceremonies of each. It's as if all three religions find harmonious common ground in this character. Seems unlikely, but then again, the protagonist argues passionately that the miraculous happens in our darkest moments. These three religions are really all the same except for small differences in the practice of their faith. Hindus have a great capacity for love; Muslims see God in everything; and Christians are quite devout. In this case, Pi enjoys the wealth of stories, but he also senses that, as Father Martin assured him was true of Christianity, each of these stories might simply be aspects of a greater, universal story about love.

Pi remains unattached to any one interpretation of God. Sure, he believes each religion – but he doesn't guard their specific tenets jealously. Pi shares a rich parable: Each time the milkmaids try to possess Krishna he vanishes. Likewise, each time a religious faith tries to claim sole ownership of God, true religion vanishes. This story reveals a few of the workings of Pi's complex religious beliefs. You may have wondered how anyone could ever hold Hindu, Christian, and Muslim beliefs all at once. Pi's answer: without a trace of jealousy.

Stories and religious beliefs are also linked in Life of Pi because Pi asserts that both require faith on the part of the listener or devotee. Surprisingly for such a religious boy, Pi admires atheists. To him, the important thing is to believe in something, and Pi can appreciate an atheist's ability to believe in the absence of God with no concrete proof of that absence. Pi has nothing but disdain, however, for agnostics, who claim that it is impossible to know either way, and, who therefore refrain from making a definitive statement on the question of God. So Pi sees that this as an evidence of a shameful lack of imagination. To him, agnostics who cannot make a leap of faith in either direction are like listeners who cannot appreciate the non-literal truth a fictional story might provide.

Regarding with the plot of this novel, we begin with a little boy, Pi Patel, who is the main character of Yann Martel's novel Life of Pi. He's the son of a zookeeper who runs a small zoo in India. Despite all his family's ideas of modern secularism, Pi is drawn to religion. In his adolescence he adopts not only the beliefs of Hinduism, but Catholicism and Islam as well. Each religion gives Pi something that he felt was missing in his spiritual life so, because of

this, he never feels compelled to choose one belief system over the other. "Religion will save us," I said. Since when I could remember, religions had always been close to my heart". So, in this case and because of his family, he was first introduced to Hinduism and describes it as the religion of his birth and a deep part of himself. For him, Hinduism is not a religion to be left behind when he discovers another, but rather the intrinsic framework of his own spirituality. Then, when he finds out Catholicism, he studies it through curiosity for what it entails, not because of any dissatisfaction with his current understanding of Hinduism, largely for his own pleasure. The same is true at the time that he later adds the religion of Islam to his quilt of religious beliefs. While the young boy is comfortable with his firm and serious belief in three seemingly disparate religions, the leaders of these religions are obviously not so happy when they learn of his expanded view of religion. As chance would have it, Pi's priest, pandit and imam all happen upon Pi and his parents at the same time. This ensuing conversation captures current religious discord as all of the religious leaders agree that Pi cannot be Hindu, Catholic, and Muslim at the same time and despite their prodding, Pi insists that he simply wants to love and adore God. He says: "I just want to love God" (Martel 69) and will not choose between religions.

Then, during his adolescence, he also discovers atheism through his biology teacher, Mr. Kumar. Though Pi greatly respects Mr. Kumar, and calls him his favourite teacher, Pi isn't comfortable exploring all the ideas of atheism or seeing how science holds its own beauty without need for a deity. He decides that atheists are his "brothers and sisters of a different faith", but it is not a belief that he understands or chooses to explore. In fact, the concept of

atheism frightens him so much. Pi, who asks many questions when he is presented with other religions, is very silent when Mr. Kumar always offers some of his atheistic views: “ Religion?” Mr. Kumar grinned broadly. “ I don’t believe in religion. Religion is darkness.” Pi answers: Darkness? I was puzzled. I thought, Darkness is the last thing that religion is. Religion is light. Was he testing me? Was he saying, “ Religion is darkness,” the way he sometimes said in class things like “ Mammals lay eggs,” to see if someone would correct him? (“ Only platypuses, sir.”)(1. 7. 9 – 11) and finally explains: “ It wasn’t for fear of angering Mr. Kumar. I was more afraid that in a few words thrown out he might destroy something that I loved.” Pi’s education includes both science and religion; he comes to love both these disciplines but agnosticism – the suspension of belief (e. g., “ I don’t have enough evidence to believe in God so I won’t commit one way or the other.”) – drives the boy bonkers. For Pi, belief is one of the most beautiful actions of human life. To live otherwise is to live statically. One can either choose a rich, dynamic life or a static, uncommitted life. Yet, this religious discussion takes place well before Pi is set adrift in a lifeboat filled with wild zoo animals. Here it is the groundwork that shapes the rest of the story, a wonderful and incredible story that is only and exclusively meant to make listeners believe in god. Part two of the book begins the tale of Pi’s shipwreck and subsequent survival.

When Pi is 16, his family decides to sell the zoo and immigrate to Canada to escape the increasingly undesirable political developments in 1970’s India. They will get a better price for many of their animals in America, so the family and several of the animals of the zoo begin their journey on a

Japanese cargo ship named Tsimtsum. “ Midway to Midway” the ship suddenly and quickly sinks for unknown reasons. When this unfortunate event takes place, Pi finds himself in a lifeboat with a hyena, an orangutan, a wounded zebra, and an adult Bengal tiger. There are no other human survivors, and it is not long before the animals do away with each other-the hyena dispatches the zebra and the orangutan and the tiger dispatch the hyena-, leaving Pi and the tiger alone in the lifeboat.

In the same way, we can clearly assert that Pi Patel wins lots of different challenges covering from his psychic and spiritual learning to his basic and essential instinct and survival throughout his horrific and very hard adventures at sea. The most relevant fact is that his unbelievable believing in God, helps him to survive multiple obstacles that he faces on the lifeboat. His study about all three religions, serves as a great defensive safeguard from the difficult harsh situations of life. It is a very long journey filled with too much danger, loneliness and doubt, but most of all an exploration of faith. This astonishing character maintains all his religious beliefs while on the life boat through his daily ritual prayers, which helps to sustain him. He’s faced with physical difficulty almost all time, ranging from salt-water boils, to the threat of death by a tiger, to cold, to starvation, to dehydration, to dementia and many other difficulties. He continues to pray regularly, and must plead to God in order to survive his ordeal. He remembers the misery he felt after such a long time away from God, saying: “ It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God” (Martel 315). With Pi keeping his ritual prayers going, that helped him to survive. Also, he was able to maintain somewhat the religious

lifestyle that he had prior to the sinking of the Tsimtsum. He also makes many religious relationships throughout his journey and lots of comparisons between Orange Juice and the Virgin Mary. " She came floating on an island of bananas in a halo of light, as lovely as the Virgin Mary" (Martel 111). Truly, Pi's religious faith remained strong throughout his journey on the Pacific Ocean.

Straightway, when Pi eventually washes up on the shores of Mexico, and the tiger dashes off into the jungle never to be seen again, he is nursed back to health by locals. While Pi is recovering, two men from the company that owned the Japanese cargo ship come to visit him. They are very anxious because they are looking for answers about what might have caused the ship to sink so then he tells them the fantastic and amazing tale that he experienced and was presented through the book. Obviously, the men do not believe him so they became very upset and tell Pi that they want to know what really happened. They only want to know a rational truth. After some discussion, Pi agrees to tell them another story, another one that does not involve animals or any marvellous fact. His second boring story involves a handful of human survivors, including one who kills the others, even including Pi's mother. He affirms that at the end of the story he kills the killer and is left as the only survivor. Neither story sheds any light on why the ship might have sunk. Before the men leave, Pi asks him about which of the two stories is the best, since neither provides factual information that they can use. The men who appears at the beginning, who was listening the whole story, agree that the story with the animals was a better story. This is the point of the book. It is the reason why readers are supposed to now believe

in god. When it comes down to a choice between realism and fantasy, or science and religion, which story is the best?

Religious minded readers may find comfort in the notion that it is better to believe in an uplifting story over more believable, but less entertaining facts. However, this argument is unlikely to be persuasive to atheists or encourage them to believe in God.