

# Yann martel's life of pi

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One has often felt a source of temptation in everyday life, whether it is lust for an individual or the desire to eat the last chocolate bar in the pantry. However, temptation runs on a deeper scale in a human's inherent reliance on false salvation. In Yann Martel's fictional narrative, *Life of Pi*, protagonist Pi Patel arrives on a mysterious floating island with an abundance of food and shelter.

At first, the island seemingly serves as salvation from Pi's ordeal; paradoxically, it also serves to be a temptation and, ultimately, a test of Pi's faith in God. Nevertheless, Pi soon realizes that he must leave the island after discovering that it is carnivorous and contributes to spiritual death due to providing false salvation. Because the island provides false salvation, it represents temptation and the Garden of Eden; this leads Pi to realize that he must accept reality rather than trying to escape it, which greatly affects the plot and Pi's consequent development.

For example, because Pi loses his innocence and gains terrible knowledge after opening a "fruit," the carnivorous island symbolizes temptation and the Garden of Eden. Like the carnivorous island, the Garden of Eden provides the illusion of paradise. This is illustrated when Martel implies that Pi's physical needs were met on the island because "there [was] more fresh water than he could drink in his lifetime [and there were] more meerkats and fish than he could ever desire" (Martel 279).

These factors tempt Pi with false salvation, giving him a reason to delay his journey and to stay on the island for a prolonged time. However, Pi ultimately falls to the island's allurements when he discovers a black "fruit"

on a tree, initially believing that it is as delicious as the algae on the island. Despite the fact that the tree is too high for him to reach, Pi is unable to resist his curiosity and attempts to eat the fruit, which is, in reality, a "dense accumulation of leaves glued together in a ball" (Martel 280).

This parallels the Garden of Eden, in which Eve succumbs to temptation and eats the "forbidden fruit." Nevertheless, after Pi opens the fruit and discovers a human molar inside of it, Pi realizes that the island is carnivorous and, as a result, his illusion of paradise is finally destroyed. Consequently, his innocence is lost and Pi gains terrible knowledge of what the island is capable of doing to the human spirit. Thus, the island parallels the events that occurred in the Garden of Eden and represents temptation as a whole.

Moreover, when the floating island is revealed to be carnivorous, Pi undergoes a momentous change in character, which affects the plot of the narrative greatly. According to the reading guide, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, "geography can... define or... develop character" (Foster 167). This is exemplified in *Life of Pi* when the island's geography and landscape leads to Pi's spiritual maturity after he discovers the human molar in the "fruit." Upon witnessing this, Pi concludes that another individual "had arrived on [the] shores before him... [and] must have died in the tree [which]... digested the body" (Martel 282).

This revelation forces him to leave the island, as Pi "preferred to perish in search of his own kind than to live a lonely half-life of physical comfort and spiritual death" (Martel 283). Because Pi chooses to endure the hardships of humanity rather than depending on the island for survival, it is indicated that

Pi has grown spiritually as a character, favoring hope or faith over physical gratification. Consequently, by seeking harsh reality as opposed to relying on false truth, Pi develops significantly as a character due to the island's geography and composition.

In the film adaptation of *Life of Pi*, the scene involving the carnivorous island is portrayed similarly as in the novel. For example, when Pi sees "hundreds of thousands of meerkats... [that] seemed to feel no fear [when he approached them]" (Martel 266) in the novel, the film portrays the scene in the same way, showing that the meerkats are domesticated. Additionally, the film uses visuals to convey the message that the island is a test of Pi's faith in God. This is depicted when a shot of the island is shown to be shaped as a man.

The particular image of a human indicates that Pi is putting his trust in the needs of man as opposed to focusing on God. Furthermore, the shape of the island implies that the island is a living organism, thus why it is carnivorous. The use of soft neon lights illuminated on the island also conveys that while the island may seem beautiful and aesthetically appealing to the eye, the true intention of the island is disturbing and extremely inhospitable. As a result, the film helps convey the message that the island is carnivorous and is a test of Pi's faith in God while adhering to the novel's plot.

Due to enticing Pi with the illusion of paradise and salvation from his journey, as well as leading Pi to lose his innocence after opening the "forbidden fruit," the island in *Life of Pi* serves to be a symbol of temptation and the Garden of Eden. Moreover, after gaining terrible knowledge about the island and how it is carnivorous, Pi essentially develops as a character. To illustrate,

Pi learns that he must avoid relying on factors that will give him brief pleasure and, instead, must experience the true world and complete his journey. As a result, rather than escaping the trials and ordeals that he is given, such as surviving on the Pacific Ocean, Pi continues to endure his tribulations, ultimately fulfilling his faith in God and his fundamental purpose as a human.