THE IDEA OF POSTMODERNISM AS REFLECTED THROUGH PI’S PHILOSOPHY ON HINDUISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM IN YANN MARTEL’S LIFE OF PI

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra
in English Letters

By
GISELA SWARA GITA ANDIKA
Student Number: 084214076

ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAMME
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
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Dr. F.X Siswadi, M.A.
“How many paths are there to God? There are as many paths to God as there are souls on the Earth.”

-Rumi, a Persian Poet-
I dedicate this work for those

who are still floating about in a brittle lifeboat on a

sea of doubt and hesitancy,

who are still searching a land of a peace of mind,

who are searching for God, Ultimate Truth, and

divine consciousness.
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN
PUBLIKASI KARYA ILMIAH UNTUK KEPENTINGAN AKADEMIS

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Pada tanggal 1 Agustus 2012

Yang menyatakan

(Gisela Swara Gita Andika)
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ABSTRACT


Many novels have been brilliantly polished with religious theme, and Martel’s Life of Pi is one of them. The novel uniquely serves three important religions in India: Hindu, Christianity, and Islam in a character named Pi who practices the three religions in the same time. Through Pi’s religious philosophy and practice the readers of the novel are inspired to love God in an unconventional way. This undergraduate thesis assumes that the way Pi practices his religions is a manifestation of postmodernism, as what is reflected in his religious philosophy.

The writing of this undergraduate thesis requires library research to conduct. The source of data is collected through books, magazines, and web-based articles. The approach used in the research is moral philosophical approach. The approach is used as the undergraduate thesis examines the religious philosophy of the character along with postmodernism which is a product of philosophy.

There are three problems formulated as the basis of the research. The first problem questions the description of the main character. The second problem questions the religious philosophy of the main character. The third problem questions the ideas of postmodernism as reflected through the religious philosophy of the main character.

The findings of the analysis are as follows: the main character, Pi, is an Indian boy who has three religions: Hindu, Christianity, and Islam. He practices the three religions in the same time. He has the open-mindedness, humbleness, and the fondness to spirituality so that he can learn and love the three religions. His aim, however, is not the religions themselves. His philosophy reveals that his only intention is to love God and find the divine consciousness that makes a devotee feels peace. He finds it in Hinduism’s moksha, Islam’s fana, and Christianity’s peace and communion. These are the concept of the union of a devotee with God. Pi’s practice opposes his modern surroundings. By being religious, he opposes his secular family, his atheist teacher, and his agnostic friends. His religiosity also opposes the excessive use of reason. His practicing three religions in the same time also indicate pluralism, which is a notion of postmodernism. Therefore, it can be concluded that Pi’s religious philosophy, which manifests in his practice, reflects the ideas of postmodernism.
ABSTRAK


Penulisan skripsi ini menggunakan studi pustaka. Sumber data yang dikumpulkan adalah dari buku-buku, majalah, dan artikel-artikel internet. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan moral-filosofi yang digunakan karena skripsi ini mempelajari filosofi religius dari karakter tersebut, bersama dengan postmodernisme yang merupakan produk filsafat.


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A. Background of the Study

When human beings started to question their modern living habit, postmodernism rose as the dawn of the new era. When reason was found limited and the enlightenment of Aufklärung went dim, postmodernism led people to the realm which is beyond modern.

Modernism had led human beings into industrialized, structuralized, civilized pack of creatures who depend a lot on their reason. Using the wit inside their head, modern human beings build their society according to science. Superstitions such as traditional beliefs and religions were pushed aside. Their places were then in horror movies. Traditional beliefs were diminished, religions were losing their values. Philosophical products of modernism, such as atheism, secularism, and agnosticism, were on their ultimate glory.

However, in the 1960’s, a group of avant-garde artists in New York issued a new term for a new era that they want: Postmodernity. The era of postmodernity comes after modernity, and it refers to the incipient or actual dissolution of those social forms associated with modernity (Sarup, 1993: 130). The culture for postmodernity is postmodernism.

The idea of postmodernism spread from the art societies to the other sides of the world. It is now adapted into a lot of fields and studies, one of which is the study
of philosophy. There are a lot of philosophical theorists who study the idea of postmodernism, such as Lyotard, Lacan, Foucault, and others.

These theorists are mainly European, however their philosophy are spread and regarded around the world. According to Alex Callinicos, the most enthusiastic postmodernists today are Canadians (Callinicos, 1990: 4). This fact can be linked to a Canadian writer named Yann Martel who released a novel that then gained international acclaim, *Life of Pi* in 2001. The book won The Man Booker Prize a year later, a high profile prize in literature. The book tells the tale about a religious Indian boy named Pi Patel, who survives a shipwreck and 227 hard days in the middle of the ocean on a lifeboat, accompanied by an adult Bengal tiger. Unlike novels regarding religions in these days, religions in this novel are not put in the antagonistic side. The story praises religions in a unique way and invites the readers to see religions in a different point of view. In its prolog, the writer claims *Life of Pi* as a story that will make the readers believe in God.

Pi Patel is a rare character and *Life of Pi* itself is unique novel. It is a novel which stands alone in the religious path, when other novels of its era yell the spirit of secularism, atheism, and agnosticism. The theme is served blatantly through the character, Pi, who practices three different religions. The setting of the novel is partly located in India, where the three religions that Pi is conducting met: Hindu, Christianity, and Islam. The novel shows how this boy practices his religion in postmodernism, or even controversial, way, without harming the values of the religions. While postmodernism tries to criticize modernism, Pi’s attitude towards
his religions, in his own unique and delicate way, criticizes the modern values conducted by his secular family, his atheist Biology teacher, and his fellow human who are agnostics.

Furthermore, unlike academic studies about religions which dig the moral values of the novel, this undergraduate thesis will not dig moral values. *Life of Pi* is a novel which discusses religious faith, but never does in this novel the main character discuss *sin*. This undergraduate thesis focuses more on how the religions and the idea of postmodernism are served in the novel as the product of philosophy.

Considering the nature of postmodernism, also considering Pi’s characterization and his religions, it is assumed that the idea of postmodernism fit the religious attitude and behavior of the main character in the object of the study perfectly. Therefore, this undergraduate thesis aims to emphasize the spirit of postmodernism as is shown by the way Pi thinks of his three religions without staining one religion or another. *Life of Pi*, considering the facts given above, is perfect for a research on the topic.

B. **Problem Formulation**
1. How is the main character described?

2. How is the philosophy of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam viewed by the main character?

3. What are the ideas of postmodernism reflected through the main character’s philosophy of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam?
C. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this undergraduate thesis is to prove that the main character’s religious philosophy reflects the idea of postmodern. In order to find the evidence of this religious postmodernism in the novel, problem formulation has to be formulated.

It is very important to understand the main character, because this undergraduate thesis focuses on the character, and studies how the character put his philosophy of the religions into the concept of postmodernism.

In the novel, the religions are all described through the main character’s point of view. The thoughts, soliloquies, the acts, and the dialogues of the main character picture the three religions and build his philosophy of them. His philosophy on the three religions will be elaborated in this section.

After a map on the religious philosophy is drawn, a question on postmodernism rises. Here, the life history of the main character should be considered besides his religious philosophy. The main character is born to a secular family, he idolizes an atheist biology teacher, and when he studies zoologist in the university, he considers his scientist partners who are agnostics as his brothers and sisters. However, his delicate though strange religious practice and ideology criticize the ideology of secularism, atheism, and agnosticism. In the end, this undergraduate thesis tries to prove that Pi’s attitude shows the spirit of postmodernism, where Pi, refuses the modern values that worship reason and deny religions, and instead, stick with what is conventional in a controversial way. He personalizes the values of his
religions that are considered conservative, in pluralism that is considered controversial.

D. Definition of Terms

There are some terms that should be explained so that the title of this undergraduate thesis becomes clear to the readers. First of all is *philosophy*. The philosophy discussed in this thesis is religious philosophy thought by the main character. The main character’s religious philosophy is similar to an academic branch of philosophy called *philosophy of religion*. This kind of philosophy concerns with questions regarding religions, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, analysis of religious language and text, the relationship between religion and science, and the problem of evil (Alston, 1967: 285). However, the religious philosophy thought by the main character does not cover all of these concerns. What will be discussed mainly in this thesis are the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, the relationship between religion and science, the problem of evil, along with some other concerns such as the power of faith in deadly situations, and the problems caused by the diversity of religions.

The second term is *religion*. Religion, according to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values (Geertz, 1993: 88). John Hicks adds details in this definition by considering
the role of God or Ultimate Reality in religions. In his essay *The New Map of the Universe of Faiths*, Hicks defines religion as an understanding of the universe, together with an appropriate way of living within it, which involves reference beyond the natural world to God or gods or the Absolute or to a transcendent order or process. In his definition, Hicks accommodates beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and many branches of Hinduism and Buddhism. Hicks differentiates these religions with purely naturalistic systems of beliefs such as communism and humanism in his definition, though he admits that these beliefs are alternatives to religious faiths (Hicks in Rowe and Wainwright, 1989: 295).

In this undergraduate thesis three religions are discussed. These are Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.

*Hinduism* is the indigenous religion of the Indian subcontinent, which philosophies and practices are based on the notion of karma, dharma, and societal norms. Instead of being based on a common set of beliefs, this religion is based mainly on intellectual or philosophical points of view that are flexible and not rigid (Faris, 2012: 62).

*Christianity* is the second religion discussed here. According to a report by BBC UK, Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in canonical gospels and other New Testament writings. This religion has the most followers among other religions, about 2.1 billion people worldwide.
The third religion is *Islam*. Islam is a monotheistic religion which is based on Qur’an. The followers of Islam, whom are called Muslims, regard Muhammad as their biggest and final prophet. The religion prescribes rigidly to the followers how to live their lives, even to the parts of life which are secular (Keene, 2006: 120).

In this undergraduate thesis, these religions are combined together in the frame of postmodernism. *Postmodernism*, according to Madan Sarup in *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, is the name for a movement in advanced capitalist culture, particularly in arts (1993: 131). Now postmodernism is no longer exclusively used in arts, it is now covering limitless number of field: politics, philosophy, literature, music, pop culture, literature critic and theory, anthropology, sociology, and even geography (Featherstone, 2001: 3-4).

Through the spectacle of philosophy, postmodernism is the reaction against modernism (Jameson in Kaplan, 1988: 18). To understand this idea, the term *modernism* has to be understood. According to Sarup, modernism is the culture of modernity, a period of history which came in Europe along with Renaissance and The Age of Enlightenment (1993: 131). Supporting this notion, Hall and Gieben states that among the spirits that overarched the Age of Enlightenment and Renaissance, anti-clericalism and empiricism were the most popular. Anti-clericalism, provoked by Voltaire to oppose the corrupt Church, led many *philosophes* to be atheists. Belief in empirical and material knowledge, proposed by Locke, inspired the *philosophes* to maximize the value of reason. They believed only in experimental experiences, which
then made them deny religious miracles. The values of anti-religious attitude and the ultimate power of reasoning become widely popular in the modern societies (1992: 21-22). Therefore, modernism opposed by Jameson’s postmodernism in this undergraduate thesis is the totalitarian of the grand narratives in anti-religious attitude and the excessive use of reason.

Postmodernism also suggests personal deconstruction of grand narratives prescribed by powerful groups to be followed by individuals (Sarup: 1993: 137). Therefore in this undergraduate thesis, postmodernism is also seen in the way the main character personalize the philosophies of his religions.

In personalizing his religions, the main character uses Religious Pluralism. *Religious pluralism* is an attitude which expresses extreme inclusivism between religious groups, which goes beyond mere toleration. A religious pluralist will consider some elements in a religion to be true to other religions. In its maximum form, a religious pluralist will claim that all religions are equally true. Moreover, religious pluralism emerges as the dawn of postmodernism as the manifestation from the exhaustion caused by religious wars and anti-religious attitude in the modern era (Silk, 2007: 64-81).
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Review of Related Studies

*Life of Pi* is an award-winning adventure novel with religious theme overarching it. Pi is described as a teenager who is very religious. Not only does he practice one religion with strong faith, but he also has three religions: Hindu, Christianity, and Islam. His religious practice is strange for his surroundings. According to Rendy Yoewono in his thesis *The Messages Revealed through the Main Character’s Way to Survive in Yann Martel’s Life of Pi*, Pi has several dominant characteristics as a main character in the novel. He is intelligent, open-minded, spiritual, and has strong determination. The qualities of his character help him to survive three crises: the shipwreck, his casting away on a lifeboat for 227 days, and being alone with a Bengal tiger which is always hungry. According to Yoewono:

He survives through several ways: by recognizing and using his strength which is made possible by his intelligence; by being realistic about the situation which is facilitated by his open-mindedness; and by adopting positive attitude which is facilitated by his spirituality and strong determination (2008:ii).

From the above quotation, it can be concluded that Pi absorbs good qualities from his religions. These good qualities (strength, determination, open-minded, etc) help him to survive the catastrophe. Yoewono considers religion as a key point to the novel, but unlike this undergraduate thesis, Yoewono does not focus on Pi’s religion.
Yoewono focuses mainly on the plot of the story. Meanwhile, this undergraduate thesis focuses on Pi’s religion mainly and Pi’s character as the turning point.

There are other essays that focus on Pi’s religions, one of which is Rena Sherwood’s essay. However, in this essay Rena Sherwood states that she does not agree that the novel is religious. Her essay, *Religion and Spirituality in Life of Pi*, states that Martel wants to say that God does not exist in reality:

And that is how people prefer to go through life – with a tiger in it, even when they know better. Because they like the tiger, or God, in a story, God then only exists in stories and not in real life (Sherwood, 2010:2).

This attitude contradicts Martel’s statement that this is the story that will make people believe in God. Sherwood interprets the Japanese characters’ preference to the story with a tiger in it as people’s preference to story with God in it, but they do not believe that God exists in the real world. Sherwood interprets the tiger as God. In my opinion, this is an over-interpretation which often occurs in studies on religious text and literary works. This undergraduate thesis considers this novel as a religious novel. Moreover, the main difference between this undergraduate thesis and Sherwood’s essay is the object of the study. While Sherwood is trying to prove whether the novel is truly religious or not, this undergraduate thesis is trying to relate the religious philosophy in the novel with the spirit of Postmodernism.

As this novel focuses on the character, there are also scholars who study the novel with the characters as the turning point. The characters from the novel that are
very popular are Pi and the tiger. The tiger, Richard Parker, is Pi’s sailing companion. A lot of scholars and readers say that Pi absorbs quality from this Royal Bengal tiger during their journey. Jaclyna Perez is a scholar who sees this novel with Richard Parker as her turning point. In her academic paper which is posted in suite101 online journal, she says Richard Parker is not a mere companion pet, but he is a special character that is created as the portrayal of Pi himself. Richard Parker is actually a physical representation Pi’s id, his primal instincts (Perez: 2009). Furthermore, Perez also stated that Richard Parker influences Pi in several sides, one of them is the eating habit. Pi is at first a strict vegetarian, but in the end the situation urges him to kill and eat sea animals. He then adopts Richard Parker carnivorous eating habit and eats the flesh raw. Perez also says that Pi’s blindness is partly caused by Richard Parker’s blindness that happens earlier. She says it is due to Pi’s own id inside the tiger. She also interprets the blindness as not a mere literary blindness, but instead, moral blindness.

In this point, Perez makes her statement confusing. Instead of being influenced by Richard Parker, Pi is forced to be a meat-eater because of the situation. He cannot find any vegetative in the middle of the ocean, therefore in order to survive the starving he has to eat animal meat. Also, blindness is not contagious; therefore it is non-sense if Pi’s blindness is caused by the tiger’s blindness. Her interpretation about moral blindness is also far too imaginative, because moral blindness is different from physical blindness as is served in the novel. Perez’s essay focuses on the
psychoanalysis on Pi’s personality. Meanwhile, this undergraduate thesis sees Pi’s perspective on his religions using moral philosophical spectacles.

B. Review of Related Theories

This undergraduate thesis has three things as the turning points: the main character, the religions, and postmodernism. Therefore, the undergraduate thesis needs theories on the three fields in order to answer the problem formulations.

1. Theory on Character

The postmodern yet religious philosophy in the novel can be seen by disclosing the major character. According to Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs in *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, a character can be disclosed by considering these factors: what the character say (and think), what the character do, what other characters say about him/her, and what the author says about him/her (1989: 147-148). Therefore, we may reveal Pi’s characteristics and, of course, his religious and modern values, using these factors.

2. Theories on Religions

Prior to understand the religions mentioned in the novel, theories on each religion have to be collected. These theories are needed as the background knowledge about the religious elements in the novel. There are three main points in this section. The theories discussed are about the philosophical ideas of the religions, the theories
on the relation between one religion to each other in India, and also the connection between religions and literature.

a. The Philosophy of the Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam

The following theories are standardized or ideal idea of the religions. These theories provide the frame for Pi to fill with his personal philosophy, which will then lead him to postmodernism.

i. Hinduism

As what has been explained earlier, Hinduism is the indigenous religion of the people in the Indian subcontinent (Faris, 2012: 62). According to Michael Keene in his book *World Religions*, Hinduism can be considered as a monotheistic religion whose followers believe in one God, called Brahman or ‘the absolute spirit’ (Keene, 2006: 14). For Hindu people, Brahman is above everything, He is the source of every creation, He is the ultimate mystery, the ultimate happiness, and the almighty.

Hinduism is usually considered as a polytheistic religion because Hinduism has a lot of deities to represent the form of Brahman. Keene estimated that there are approximately 330 million deities in Hinduism (2006: 16). These deities are created and represented in the form of *murti* (deity statue) so that God can be tangible to the followers.

G.T Garrat in his book *The Legacy of India*, says that for Hindu people, the contact with the ultimate reality through religious experience plays the same part which contact with nature through sense perception plays in our knowledge of nature.
(1937: 268). This fits Michael Keene’s statement in his book, that Brahman is the reality that can be seen in the entire universe. Brahman is the world that surrounds us, but also the world inside us (Keene, 2006: 14-15). Brahman who dwells inside man is the man’s soul, or what is called Atman.

Hindu people believe that Atman is destined to endure Samsara. Samsara is the circle of life or reincarnation. Atman is believed to reincarnate for 8,400,000 times before it reaches nirvana and free from the sufferings in the world. After samsara ends, Atman will unite again with Brahman. Hindu people believe that the highest happiness will be reached when Atman finally meets Brahman, or what is called Moksha.

According to Keene (2006: 19) Hindu people believe that they have to be born and die again in the circle of reincarnation due to the cause and effect law: karma. They believe that every good and bad deed in one’s life is counted. Good and bad things done by a person will be paid in the next life. If someone has done good things in life, he or she will be born into a better life after they die. And vice versa, if someone is bad, they will be born again into a miserable life.

In his book, Keene says in order to avoid the miserable next life, or even, to shorten the never ending circle of samsara, Hindu people have four ways to reach redemption (2006: 32). These are bhakti, karma, jnana, and yoga.
Reaching redemption through *bhakti* means to practice faithful rituals and offerings to one of the deities. Usually people worship Shiva, Vishnu, or their avatars. The rituals can be done in the temples or at home. Every Hindu family, rich or poor, always have a chamber in their houses to do a personal ritual called *puja*.

The second way to reach redemption is *karma*. *Karma* way teaches every Hindu follower to always do good things, because every deed one does will be paid in one’s next life. Faithful Hindu followers are always careful in doing things so that they will not harm others. They always try to do good things only, because they do not want to be miserable in their next life. To avoid bad karma, most Hindu people in India are vegetarian. They refuse killing animal to get the meat because killing is violence and it can affect the calculation of their good and bad deeds. This also can be related to the teaching of Ahimsa or the non-violence teaching (Tahtinen, 1976: 107-109).

The third way is *jnana*. According to Keene (2006: 32), this is the most difficult way to reach *Moksha*. A person who practices *jnana* has to break his or her bound to the earthly life. They wear so little clothing, only a plain white cloth to cover the genital areas. They also fast, meditate, and do yoga so that the deities will not punish them for their sins. These people also have to accomplish the Holly Books perfectly. People who practices *jnana* are considered holly by the society. Because they do not work to earn their living, people help them by giving food and money.
The fourth way is *Yoga*. The original Hindu *yoga* is not a mere physical exercise by learning certain gesture and breathing method. People who want to reach *moksha* by yoga have to learn to control themselves, avoid cruelty and greed, also being honest and true. During the *yoga* sessions, *mantra* (words that are believed to have divine power) are chanted to increase the person’s consciousness of his or her being with Brahman (Keene, 2006: 33).

**ii. Christianity**

People who practice Christianity believe that Jesus Christ, who lived approximately 2000 years ago, is The Son of God as well as The Son of Man. Jesus Christ lived in the area that is now named Palestine and practiced Jewish tradition. He became a revolutionary figure, produced a number of miracles (most of which is healing people from diseases), and gained followers named The Apostles. He influenced the people in his hometown politically as well as philosophically. According to the Gospels, the heads of Jewish people took Him as a threat to the established Jewish social system therefore they produced a plot to vanish Him. Jesus was then taken to the Roman court (which was ruling in the area), and was punished with the death sentence by crucifixion. His death became a great agony to his early followers. However, three days later the Apostles saw Him resurrected from the death.

According to Keene (2006: 92), Christians see Christ’s death as the redeemer for man’s sins and His resurrection as the assurance that death is not the end of life.
The Christians believe that after death, they will live together with Christ in the heavenly everlasting life. This redemption is the reconciliation between God and human beings that is reached through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

To profess their faith, early Christians composed Creed. Creed is a prayer that expresses the faith to the story of Jesus Christ as what is written in the Gospel. When one is chanting a Creed, one is stating that he or she believes that Jesus’ death is his sacrifice to free man from the grip of sins. According to Keene (2006: 100) there are two major Creeds in Christianity: The Nicene Creed and The Apostle’s Creed.

Below is a copy of the English translation of The Apostle’s Creed as issued by The Catechism of the Catholic Church (vatican.va).

―I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.‖

In the Creed, Christians express their faith in Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians believe that God has these three personalities. Father is God as what is believed and described in The Old Testament. Son is Jesus, God’s incarnation in the form of man. Christians believe that Jesus is really God, a divine being, and is
really Man, an earthly being. The Holy Spirit is the personality of God who roams in the world in this time being. After Jesus resurrected, the Christians believe that The Holy Spirit came down to earth and since then has been around to accompany, guard, and help those who believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit also has been believed to inspire the writers of the books in the Bible.

Though the belief about Jesus along with the Holy Trinity is the core point in Christianity, it is not the main thing that makes Christianity unique. The Great Commandment of the law of love is, along with the reformation brought by the New Testament which frees the followers away from the strict Jewish law.

The Great Commandment is the reformation for the Ten Commandments brought by Moses. The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke (Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28) recorded that Jesus said the most important law from the Commandments is the law of love. Jesus said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and then "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

This makes love as the most important philosophy for faithful Christians. Jesus’ perspective for the traditional Jewish rules that are very strict also influences his followers. Jesus faithful followers believe that obeying strict rules are not as important as being at peace and loving situation with God and fellow human beings.
Besides its perspective on love, one main feature that is important in Christianity is the Sacraments which are the liturgical rituals or ceremonies. Keene (2006: 10) says that there are seven Sacraments admitted in Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Church: Baptism (Christening), Confirmation (Christmation), Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion), Penance (Confession), Anointing of the Sick (Last Anointing), Holy Orders, and Matrimony (Marriage). Reformist Church, however, does not consider sacraments as important as the other two Churches.

Among the Sacraments, Holy Eucharist is the core of the act of devotion in the Christianity (Keene, 2006: 106). Bread (usually unleavened) and wine are used to symbolize the flesh and blood of the sacrificed Jesus. According to Keene (2006: 106) the followers of the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, and Orthodox Church believe in that the bread and wine really turn into Jesus’ flesh and blood during the consecration. However, the followers of Reformist Church only use the bread and wine as the means to help them memorize and give thanks to Jesus’ death for their sins.

Baptism is also important in Christianity. When a person is baptized or christened, he or she officially enters the Church and be involved in the circle of the Christ’s followers. Most churches allow baptism to infants, while some others, such as Baptist church, only allow baptism to adults (Keene, 2006: 108). However, every baptism ceremony includes holy water as the core element to the sacrament. The holy water symbolically washes the person from their sins. Only after the person is
cleaned, he or she can be “resurrected with Christ” and started a new life in the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Now Christianity is said to be the biggest religion in the world. It is estimated that 2 billion people on earth are Christian who practice Christianity in approximately 20,000 different sects or churches (Keene, 2006: 86). There are three major Christian churches: Roman Catholic Church, the oldest of churches which is based in Vatican; Orthodox Church which is based in Constantinople; and Protestant Church or Reformist Church which is spread around the world and contains of many churches and sects with different philosophies.

iii. Islam

Islam is one of the newest religions in the world, yet the number of its followers grows rapidly. Keene (2006: 120) reported that there are approximately 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, most of which are the people of North Africa, the Middle East, and South East Asia.

The basic philosophy of Islam follows the ideology and life history of Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, circa 570 CE (Keene, 2006: 124). Keene reported that Muhammad was a very religious person, but he strongly opposed the practice of idolatry in the Kaaba which was widely practiced by the people in Mecca. When he was 40 years old, Muhammad got a vision of the Archangel Gabriel. The angel called Muhammad Rasul or Prophet, and gave him sacred texts which were then called the Qur’an. The people of Mecca rejected
Muhammad and the Qur’an, but it was welcomed in Medina. Muhammad along with his new troops of Medina conquered Mecca and cleaned Kaaba from the statues used for idolizing. Since then, the Kaaba became the most sacred symbol of Islam, where the dignity of Allah, the Almighty God, was straightened back again.

Muhammad taught his followers to pray to God and practice a clean and straight lifestyle which will please Allah. Keene (2006: 132) reported that there are five points that should be practiced by faithful Muslims, The Five Pillars of Islam. These Pillars have to be practiced so that their faith will not end up spiritually only, but also can be seen in the earthly form. The pillars are Shahadah, Salah, Zakah, Sawn, and Hajj pilgrimage.

Shahadah is a faith testimony or oath uttered by each Muslim. This oath is similar to the Christian’s creed as it expresses the followers’ belief to God. This oath is uttered by Muslims in their prayers, whispered by a father to his newborn child, and announced by a non-Muslim who wishes to convert into Islam. Shahadah stated that there is only one God, Allah, and that Muhammad is the Prophet Allah sent (Keene, 2006: 132). The belief that there is only one God is crucial to the Muslims. The following is Shahadah in the original Arabian words: "Ashhadu an la ilaha illa 'llah; ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasulu 'llah. The English translation will be "I witness that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" (Answering-islam.org).

The second pillar is Salah. This is a special prayer that is prayed by faithful Muslims five times a day: at dawn, at midday, in the afternoon, in the evening, and at
night (Keene, 2006: 135). *Salah* includes the ritual of washing the body parts, facing the direction of Mecca, and whispering sacred words while doing some gestures. *Salah* is obligatory. Although they are in the middle of an activity, faithful Muslims will leave their works when it is the time to pray. In Muslim countries *adhan*, the praying time announcement from the mosques, are reverberated five times a day. Muslims in secular countries have to arrange their own praying schedule. Besides *salah*, Muslims can do personal prayer called *Du’ā* anytime. Usually *du’ā* is prayed before and after meal, before sleeping, and so on.

The third pillar according to Keene (2006: 133) is *Zakah*. This pillar commands the Muslims to surrender 2.5 percent of their wealth for the poor. The Muslims believe that 2.5 percent of the money they receive naturally belongs to the poor therefore *zakah* is not an act of philanthropy. In Muslim countries, the government organizes the withdrawal and distribution of *zakah*. Besides *zakah*, Muslims can do *Sadaqah*, material donation to the poor that is given anonymously, as an act of philanthropy (Keene, 2006: 136). There are no amount and time restriction to this donation, it can be done anytime and how much money given is not bound to the rule. Muslims believe that giving donation can cleanse their wealth and avoid them from being dependant on material wealth.

The fourth Pillar is *Sawm*, or fasting during the fasting month or *Ramadhan*. According to Keene (2006: 137) faithful Muslims have to fast during the day. They are restricted from food, drinks, sexual intercourse, and cigarettes. They are even prevented from using toothpaste. Muslims believe that fasting can unite the
individuals in *Ummah* (Muslim community of the world) and make them similar with the angels who always do perfect deeds to please *Allah*. Fasting also put them in the solidarity with those who are poor and hungry.

The fifth Pillar is Hajj. Every Muslim has to make a pilgrimage trip to Mecca and visit Kaaba, at least once in a lifetime. Going to Mecca is a dream for every faithful Muslims. Every year millions of people visit Saudi Arabia to practice this pilgrimage and it makes this occasion to be one of the most enormous annual religious events in the world (Keene, 2006: 138).

Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, Director of the Islamic Society of Orange County in California, in an interview posted in Spiritualworld.org said that every Muslim is required to practice the Five Pillars, in order to seek *fana*. *Fana*, according to Dr. Siddiqi, is the highest state of consciousness about God. He said

*Fana* means that you totally forget yourself. You forget who you are. You feel that you are not doing an activity but rather that the action is being done through you…. So, in all your activities, you commit yourself completely to God. You give yourself to God, and that’s what Islam means (Saddiqi, 2000).

The consciousness about God and the oneness of God is very crucial in Islam. This religion strongly opposes idolatry. However, according to Dr. Saddiqi, faithful Muslims can see God everywhere because everything exists because of God, as God is the Ultimate Cause. In the interview he said,

You cannot point to any person or any figure and say that he or it is God. God is always beyond. But whatever exists exists because of God, so God is present in everything. At the same time, nothing exists in this world without God. It is God who is the Cause of causes. It is God who is the Ultimate Cause, but God himself is transcendent. He is beyond. You cannot point to
him, you cannot say that ‘Here is God’ because the moment you do that there is some danger of, a risk of, idolatry — taking some person, some being, some object, as divine. A Muslim wants to become an instrument of God and live under God’s consciousness, forgetting this ‘I’ which is a deception. (Saddiqi, 2000)

Besides The Five Pillars of Islam and the search of *fana*, faithful Muslims consider the teaching of Qur’an as the basic prescription for their life. They believe that Qur’an is the exact words of *Allah*, a copy of the original Book that is kept in heaven therefore they have to respect it with the highest honor (Keene, 2006: 129). Qur’an that is spread around the world uses Arabic language. Although it has been translated into many languages, Arab is still used in prayers and chants. Qur’an teaches Muslim how to surrender totally to Allah, how to pray, and how to face the Final Judgment when they die. Muslims strongly believe in the resurrection of the body after death. They believe that after death, there will be heaven for those whose life is pleasing *Allah*, but hell is for those who sets *Allah* in anger by their bad deeds during life. The Final Judgment will justify their bad and good deeds, and decide whether they will enter heaven or hell.

Besides those prescriptions, Qur’an also prescribe them the strict Muslim lifestyle, including how to make friends with people of different sex, what food that people should not eat, how to organize wealth, how to conduct marriage and divorce, how to treat women and children, how to do politic and war, and so on and so forth. Many Muslim rules touch the areas that are considered secular to other religions, but faithful Muslims always follow these rules carefully so that their deeds and life will please *Allah*. 
However beyond these prescriptions of lifestyle, faithful Muslims always have to remember the teaching core of Islam, *peace, perfection, truth, and kindness*. According to Dr. Saddiqi in his interview in 2000, peace is not only the state of not being in a war. Peace is the state within a person’s soul. When a person is at peace, it means that his or her heart has the qualities of wholeness, completeness, being without any defect, without any inadequacy, being perfect, and being full (Saddiqi, 2000). Therefore, perfectness can be reached when he or she has been at peace within.

Truth and kindness, however, is a commitment that has to be followed by each Muslim. “God told us to follow the way of truth, and the way of kindness,” say Dr. Saddiqi. Moreover, Dr. Saddiqi said that this commitment has to be looked upon when a Muslim is determining his or her attitude toward a person from different religion. He or she, still and always, has to be true and kind to every human being of whatever religion.

After studying the basic philosophy of the religions, we can see that among the features of the different religions, there are many similarities occur. For example, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam are monotheistic religions. Although they call God with different names, Brahman, Father, and Allah, they refer to the same concept of God all the same.

They also believe that God is everywhere. Hindu faith believes that Brahman dwells in nature, has many forms and cannot be described with words. Islam also believes the same thing with Allah, while Christianity believes the same thing with the Holy Spirit.

Hindu faith believes in Atman, a piece of God which dwells inside a person as his or her soul. Christianity believes in the Kingdom of God inside a person’s heart. Moreover, Christianity’s Holy Trinity is quite similar with Hindu’s three famous deities: Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma.

Christianity rooted in the Middle Eastern Jewish tradition, as well as Islam. The two religions have same prophets, and they also require creeds as the announcement of faith.

Considering the facts above, it can be concluded that Yann Martel wants to highlight these similarities in his character, and present it to the readers as his criticism.
b. Theories on the Relationship between Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam in India

India is known as the birthplace of many major religions in the world. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism were founded here. Among these religions, Hinduism is the religion of the majority. According to the 2001 census of India, 80.5% of the population are Hindu, 13.4% are Islam, and 2.3% of the population practices Christianity.

Hinduism can be said as the country’s national religion. As a matter of fact, the religion is only part of the Hindu system which has been applied in the country since ancient civilization. Keene reported that Hinduism occurs in India, approximately in the year 1800 BCE (2006: 10). The word Hindu was used as the term referring to every Indian people in general. Therefore, it can be concluded that actually earlier there were no distinction between the cultural system and religion in that area.

Historians believe that this established indigenous system had to face an infiltration from outside in the first century CE when St. Thomas the Apostle landed on the coast of Kerala, in the southern part of the subcontinent, as reported by Lynn Johnson in March edition of National Geographic Magazine (2012: 52). St. Thomas converted many people into Christianity and built some churches, making Christianity as the first foreign religion practiced in India. Indian people are proud of
the fact that Christianity was brought to them by one of the Apostles, a part of Christ’s inner circle, not by colonial missionary as what happened in the most Asian countries. Johnson reported that there are 27 million Christians in India now (2012: 40). They pray in churches and prayer houses which are decorated with Indian exotic interiors (2012: 47).

As what usually happen in the rest of the world, new religion means new conflict. St. Thomas met his death in India; he was speared after converting people into Christianity (most of which are people from the lowest caste). His faithful followers also have to face cold shoulder from the major Hindu population until now. An extreme example happened in 2008 when extreme nationalists killed at least 60 Christians, torture the others with cruel beatings, and displaced some 60,000 in Odisha state only (Johnson, 2012: 40). In Odisha state now faithful Christians have to hide themselves when they want to gather and pray.

After Christianity, Islam was introduced to India by Arab traders in 7th century. Since then, the religion grows rapidly that it became the second largest religion in the country. Even, India became home for Taj Mahal, one of the most popular Islamic architectural heritage. According to 2001 census in India, more than 138 million people in India are Muslims. It makes India the home for the third largest Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan.
However, it is reported that Muslims in India suffer from being in the lowest place in the social and economical stratification. They also tend to be in conflict with the Hindu communities. Carin Zissis in her essay *India’s Muslim Population* states that “Muslims experience low literacy and high poverty rates, and Hindu-Muslim violence has claimed a disproportionate number of Muslim lives” (Zissis, 2007). She elaborates further as below:

The Muslim literacy rate ranks well below the national average and Muslim poverty rates are only slightly higher than low-caste Hindus, according to a November 2006 government report. Muslims—mostly Sunnis—make up 13.4 percent of India’s population, yet hold fewer than 5 percent of government posts and make up only 4 percent of the undergraduate student body in India’s elite universities (Zissis, 2007).

From the facts given above, it can be concluded that although India is rich in the diversity of religions, conflicts caused by extremist and social prejudice are common here. It has caused a lot of sufferings to both the majority and the minority. Considering these, we can conclude that this is one of the things that want to be criticized by Yann Martel in his novel.

c. Theories on the Relation between Religion and Literature

First, a quote from Mangunwijaya (1988: 11) is studied: “*Pada awal mula, segala sastra adalah religius.*” He says that in the beginning, every literature was religious. Furthermore in the book, he claims that every literature in the dawn of every culture’s literary works dealt with gods in the form of mythology. This study is continued by an idea from Thwing while in modern times, religious literature seeks to explain, to
justify, to reconcile, to interpret, and even to comfort and to console (Thwing, 2004). Religious literature in our time has the duty to prove that religions are still the answer for human’s problem, due to the atheism and agnosticism onslaught. From the above theories, it can be concluded that every religious literary work, in the past and in present times, has its own objectives which are to carry thoughts, idealism, and explanation.

3. Theories on Postmodernism

The philosophical spectacle this undergraduate thesis used to analyze the religions in the novel is postmodernism. According to Madan Sarup in An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism, postmodernism is the name for a movement in advanced capitalist culture, particularly in arts (Sarup, 1993: 131). Furthermore, he stated that the term was originated among New York artists and critics in the 1960s, before being taken up by European theorist in the 1970s.

Therefore, why does this undergraduate thesis use an artistic term to criticize a literary work? The answer is because the term has been changing in meaning for decades. Now postmodernism is no longer exclusively used in arts, it is now covering limitless number of field: politics, philosophy, literature, music, pop culture, literature critic and theory, anthropology, sociology, and even geography (Featherstone, 2001: 3-4). The term is related tightly with its negation (or its pair) modernism. To understand postmodernism, we also have to understand what modernism is.
Modernism, according to Sarup, is the culture of modernity. Meanwhile, modernity is the period of history which came in Europe along with Renaissance and The Age of Enlightenment (1993: 131). The spirit of modernism is tightly related with industrialization and the power of reason. According to Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, modernity requires enlightenment, and enlightenment tends to question the traditional beliefs and prejudice toward religion. Therefore, from this statement a conclusion can be drawn that the spirit of modernism is the power of reason and the prejudice toward religion (1992:21).

The form of prejudice toward religions in Martel’s *Life of Pi* is served in the term of secularism, atheism, and agnosticism. Secularism, according to *Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus*, is the noun for adjective ‘Secular’ which means “concerned with the affairs of this world; not spiritual nor sacred. Not concerned with religion nor religious beliefs”. Etienne Borne in *Modern Atheism* states that atheism is the deliberate, definite, dogmatic denial of the existence of God, and specifically of the God of the religious consciousness (1961: 8). In the same book Borne explains that agnosticism is a philosophy which condemns man to an eternal doubt on fundamental questions (1961: 7-8). In this context, agnostics refuse to believe the answers of fundamental questions as is served by religions. This term, moreover, emerged in the nineteenth-century debate on religious belief (Hepburn, 1967: 57)

Now, postmodernism is the culture which came after modernism. It is the culture of postmodernity period (Sarup, 1993: 131). According to Mike Featherstone,
postmodern is “an epochal shift or a severance from modernity which involves the rise of a new social totality with different principals of arrangements (2001:7)”. Some philosophers are still in debate whether postmodernism is a part of modernism or a negation of the term.

The general spirit of postmodernism is that it criticizes what is incorrect from what modernism offers us. According to Exploring Christianity (Christianity.co.nz, 2011), when modernism depends a lot of reason, postmodernism questions whether a mere human reason is reliable and applicable in one’s life. When modernism says “I know”, postmodernism says “I feel”. Postmodernists are also egocentric in deciding what is right and what is good in one’s life. Postmodernism treat religion like cafeteria, one takes the element of the religion that one like and disregard the elements that do not go with one’s taste. In this sense, a postmodernist will personalize the values of his or her religion so that he or she and feel more comfortable with it. In this personalization, postmodernism allows people to filter the values they want it their life, to get rid the values that do not fit them and use the values that fit them. However, Postmodern is tolerant, especially on religion, and respects differences.

According to Fredric Jameson in his essay Postmodernism and Consumer Society, postmodernism emerged as the reaction against the established forms of high modernism. The key point to the spirit of postmodernism is the reaction against anything modernly organized (Jameson in Kaplan, 1988: 18). Meanwhile, modernism
is the spirit comes along with Renaissance and The Age of Enlightenment, most popularly anti-clericalism and empiricism (Hall and Gieben, 1992: 21-22). Anti-clericalism or prejudice toward religions was provoked by Voltaire to oppose the corrupt Church. This attitude led many *philosophes* to be atheists. Belief in empirical and material knowledge was proposed by Locke and raised the reliance in science. This attitude inspired the *philosophes* to maximize the value of reason. They believed only in experimental experiences, which then made them deny religious miracles. The values of anti-religious attitude and the ultimate power of reasoning become widely popular in the modern societies (1992: 21-22). Therefore, modernism opposed by Jameson’s postmodernism in this undergraduate thesis is the totalitarian of the grand narratives in anti-religious attitude and the excessive use of reason.

In this sense, postmodernism allow people to analyze what modernism has prescribed in their lives, especially in the term of the excessive use of reason in the society. People then can personalize these values in their lives and live according to what they feel is right.

Jameson’s argument fits the concept of Postmodernism proposed by Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition*. According to Madan Sarup (1988: 132), Lyotard proposed the concept of Postmodernism as the philosophy which attacks the legitimating myth of the modern age, the myth Lyotard called as the ‘grand narratives’ or ‘meta narratives’ (the narratives that are accepted totally by the society, which ethically and politically prescribe to them how to regulate decision-making and
provide to them of what is considered truth). Lyotard also opposed the progressive liberation of humanity through science, and the idea that philosophy can restore unity to learning and develop universally valid knowledge for humanity. Then, we can conclude that Lyotard with his postmodernism was trying to approach what is traditional by attacking modern prescriptions.

Louis Hoffman, postmodern psychologists, argues in his academic website that postmodernism is not a method of doing philosophy, but rather a way of approaching traditional ideas and practices in non-traditional ways that deviate from pre-established superstructural modes (2006). This argument fits Pi’s non-traditional attitude in practicing his traditional religions and his way on deviating himself from the modern establishment in his surroundings.

In the field of religiosity, postmodernism cannot be deviated from religious pluralism. Religious pluralism is an attitude which expresses extreme inclusivism between religious groups, which goes beyond mere toleration. Mark Silk in his book *Defining Religious Pluralism in America* says that some elements in a religion are considered true to other religions. In its maximum form, religious pluralists claim that all religions are equally true. Moreover he explains that religious pluralism emerges as the dawn of postmodernism as the manifestation from the exhaustion caused by religious wars and anti-religious attitude in the modern era (Silk, 2007: 64-81). Apparently, this attitude becomes popular because it expresses positive attitude regarding the diversity of religions in the world.
In his book *Pluralism, Challenge to World Religions*, Harold Coward states that religious pluralism can be best understood by seeing God as The One but having many forms (1985: 169). Coward’s example is Hindu Brahman who is believed to have many forms in order to be defined by the followers. Coward assumes that an open minded Hindu can accept Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and Moses as Brahman’s avatars (1985: 172).

In his book, Coward relates religious pluralism with interfaith conflicts caused by fundamentalists and religious fanatics. According to Coward, many religious groups, such as Christian fundamentalists and Muslim fundamentalists, are too reactive in facing the diversity of religions by producing extreme exclusive attitude and even showing ‘the cruelty of religions’ (Coward, 1985: 177).

Harold Coward states that there will be problems occur in an area with many different religious groups if each group thinks that their own religion is absolute. Coward suggests that to avoid this kind of problem, each group has to change their mindset and think that God is absolute, instead of the religion. This way of thinking is refused totally by fundamentalists and religious fanatics that tend to believe the absolutism of their religion (Coward, 1985:171). Coward states that these fundamentalists and fanatics tend to think that the rites and rituals of the religions, therefore, are absolute. However, Coward believes that a pluralist will see the rites and the rituals of a religion, and even the religion itself, as mere tools and instruments for a devotee to reach God (Coward, 1985: 171).
Considering the facts above, Pi’s religious perspective can be defined and studied using the religious pluralism theory, which is the part of postmodernism. Here we can see how a person being a true devotee to God in a postmodern religious pluralism.

C. Theoretical Framework

Theories on character proposed by Roberts and Jacobs are used to reveal the characterization of the main character. By revealing the characterization of the main character, we will answer the question of the main character’s description and the question on how the main character views his religions.

Theories on the philosophy of the religions, the relationship between Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, and the theory on religiously arched literary works are used to map the religious philosophical ideas of the main character. These theories are also needed to see what problem that is criticized in the novel.

The postmodernism theory by Lyotard, Jameson, Madan Sarup, Silk, Coward and other theorists are used to see the spirit of postmodernism reflected by the main character on how he thinks philosophically about his religions. Therefore, we can see how this novel teaches the readers on how to see religions in a new perspective: postmodernism.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

*Life of Pi* is a novel by Yann Martel, a Canadian writer. Martel studied Philosophy in Trent University, Ontario. Became a full-time writer at the age of 27, Yann Martel failed to catch readers attention on his first books, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* (1993) and *Self* (1996). In 2001, he released *Life of Pi* and came to international breakthrough. The book won a lot of awards, among which was The Man Booker Prize in the year 2002, just one year after the initial publishing. Six million copies of the printed story are sold worldwide, while the read and shared e-book version is uncountable. As for the study, this undergraduate thesis is using a printed copy published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, a Harvest International Edition.

According to various reviews, this novel can be classified into many genres. Some prefer to see the novel as an adventurous novel, referring to the fact that this novel mainly talks about an unintended adventure of an Indian boy who spends 227 days on the Pacific Ocean accompanied by an adult Royal Bengal tiger. Some say that this is a postcolonial novel, due to the fact that this novel is written by a Canadian but the setting is the post-Independence India. Some also say that this novel is a fantasy, because of the appearance of the unbelievable peculiar island with
human-eater trees in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The story of *Life of Pi* can include all of these elements of genres, and make a unique, heart-warming, but yet thrilling, story.

The story is about an Indian boy, Pi Patel, who is born Hindu, but then discovers Christianity and Islam and decides to practice the three religions all together. This boy is a son of a zoo owner. The boy, the family, and the zoo animals move to Canada on a ship, but the ship sinks. Pi, the only human survivor, ends up in a lifeboat with a Royal Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The pair have to endure 227 days of pain, thirst, hunger, loneliness, and hopelessness on the fierce ocean before reaching a Mexican coast. After surviving, Pi moves to Canada by himself and start a new life there.

**B. Approach of the Study**

The novel is analyzed using the Moral-Philosophical Approach. This traditional approach is perfect for analyzing the topic, because when we talk about postmodernism and religions, we will talk a lot about morality and philosophy. According to Guerin (1992:25) in *A Handbook to Critical Approaches to Literature*, Moral Philosophical approach is an approach which interprets literature within a context of the philosophical thought of a period or group. This approach assumes that the larger function of this literary work is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues. Since this undergraduate thesis assumes that *Life of Pi* teaches a unique way
on being a religious person, it is possible to do a research using this approach. Moral-philosophical approach enables us to dig deeper about the main character’s religious philosophy which reflects postmodernism.

C. Method of the Study

This study was written using library research. Library research, a research that is based on studying documents, is the most relevant method to use among other methods. The object is a fiction work in the form of book, and the philosophical topic is learned from books and web-based articles. The primary source of the study is *Life of Pi* (2001) by Yann Martel. Secondary sources for the study are a book on literary research, *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* (1989) by Roberts and Jacobs, a book on Postmodernism by Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (1993), a book on religions by Michael Keene, *World Religions* (2006) and also a documentation of religions in India, *The Legacy of India* (1937) by Garrat. There were more printed and web-based sources that played important roles in finishing this study.

There were steps taken in order to finish this study. Firstly, the primary source was read. As the novel was read, worth-studying elements of the work popped up and raised the intention to study the elements deeper. A list of worth-studying elements were made, included in the list were the character development, religions, and human-animal bond. Afterwards, secondary sources were read. Due to the reading of
these sources, list shortening in order to narrowing the study could be done. It was decided that this undergraduate thesis would dig more about the main character’s philosophy on religions and relate it with postmodernism. Problem formulations were made as the guidance for the analysis. Firstly, the undergraduate thesis discussed the description of the main character. Secondly, the thesis closely examined the main character’s philosophy on religions as appeared in the novel. Thirdly, the thesis observed the relation of the main character’s religious philosophy and postmodernism as appeared in the novel. Finally, after getting through all of these steps, the conclusion of the study was drawn.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

In this part of the study, the answers to the problem formulation are explained. This chapter is divided into three subchapters respectively. The first subchapter elaborates the description of the main character. This subchapter mostly consists of the character’s life timeline, which includes the characteristics of the main character and the main character’s perspective towards the things happening in his life. The main character’s perspective can be seen in the contexts he is in, which will then reveal his qualities. Understanding these helps to draw a pattern on how the character deals, sees, and acts towards his religions and draws a philosophy out of it. The next subchapter deals with the main character’s philosophy of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam along with his philosophy about God and religiosity in general. The subchapter elaborates the philosophy in detail, so that it can be used to reveal the idea of postmodernism as reflected through the philosophy in the last subchapter.

A. Description on the Main Character

The description of the main character, Pi, is elaborated using Roberts and Jacobs theory. According to Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs in Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing, a character can be disclosed by considering the following factors: what the character says (and thinks), what the character does, what other characters say about him/her, and what the author says about him/her (1989:...
Therefore, here the character will be disclosed by applying the theory using the quotations from the novel as the main source of data.

To describe the character, the life timeline of the main character is elaborated. This timeline will explain the contexts and events in which the character is in since his childhood to his adulthood.

1. Childhood

Piscine Molitor Patel is a son of a zoo owner. He spends his childhood in 1970s Pondicherry, India, when Indira Gandhi served as the Prime Minister. Piscine is born into a very secular family, so that he describes The Patel family as anything but orthodox (Martel, 2002: 82). The family consists of Santosh Patel, Gita Patel, Ravi Patel and Piscine Patel. Piscine is born three years after Ravi. It is estimated that Piscine was born in 1961, because it is said that in the year 1977 Piscine is sixteen years old (Martel, 2002: 144).

While his family members never consider religion as something necessary, Pi develops different view from them. Doing spiritual activities is one of Piscine’s interests besides reading, learning, and observing animals.

a. Personal Interests: Books

Piscine’s fondness to books is descended from his mother. During childhood, Piscine pleases his mother by reading many books; some are Hindu comic books and illustrated children Bible (Martel, 2002: 83). When he is 15, he has read books from his mother’s collection including Conan Doyle, Robert Louis Stevenson, and R. K.
Narayan (Martel, 2002: 92). His interest in books and written texts links to his ability to learn. This will help him in learning his religions.

b. Personal Interests: Animals and Vegetarianism

Piscine’s fondness to animals and his observing nature are descended from his father. It is said that Santosh Patel runs a zoo in Pondicherry due to “an abiding interest in animals” (Martel, 2002: 16). For Piscine, the zoo is “…a paradise on earth” (Martel, 2002: 17). His childhood is filled with the fondest memories of growing up in a zoo. The following quotation states how Piscine enjoys being in his father’s zoo and observing the animals in it.

In zoos, as in nature, the best times to visit are sunrise and sunset. That is when most animals come to life... I spent more hours than I can count a quiet witness to the highly mannered, manifold expressions of life that grace our planet. It is something so bright, loud, weird and delicate as to stupefy the senses (Martel, 2002: 19).

During his childhood he obtains excessive knowledge about animals by observing, that in the age 16 he knows how to face and tame a fierce tiger. This knowledge is very important for his survival.

Besides learning animals as biological beings, Pi also loves animals as the concrete form of God’s almightiness. Later when he encounters Islam, his fondness to animals as the trace of divine being is confirmed. Islam sees natural elements – animals included – as the trace of divine intervention (Saddiqi, 2000).

Killing animals is personally restricted for him, and moreover he is a life-long vegetarian. Even when Pi is a child, he always shudders when he snaps open a banana because it sounds to him like the breaking of an animal’s neck (Martel, 2002: 249).
Being a vegetarian is part of Hindu diet which applies the teaching of Ahimsa, or the non-violence teaching. To obtain its flesh as food, people have to kill an animal, while killing is a violation to this teaching (Tahtinen, 1976: 107-109). Pi has to abandon his vegan diet during his time in the ocean, but he returns to vegetarianism once he is back to civilization.

c. Personal Interests: Religions and Spirituality

Besides his interests in books and animals, Piscine also has exquisite fondness for religions and spirituality. His spiritual interests are somewhat opposing his family’s modern perspective about spiritualism. This will later be explained in the third subchapter as a sign of postmodernism in relation to Jameson’s theory that postmodernism is the reaction against modernism (Jameson in Kaplan, 1988: 18).

Born Hindu, he is introduced to the rites and rituals in his early age by his auntie, Rohini, who is very religious. Auntie Rohini brought Piscine to a temple in Madurai and Piscine’s interest to spirituality has grown since then. Commenting this, Piscine says “A germ of religious exaltation, no bigger than a mustard seed, was sown in me and left to germinate. It has never stopped growing since that day” (Martel, 2002: 59). Piscine also says that since he could remember, religion has been very close to his heart (Martel, 2002: 34).

Later, he understands the religions better because of his fondness for reading and observing. This habit helps him to determine his attitude and create a philosophy of the religions that will help him to find a peace of mind in his life.
d. Education

In India, Piscine attends Christian schools because his family considers Christian schools as the best choice for education (Martel, 2002: 95). The family wants their children to get the best education possible. It is mentioned in the novel that Piscine’s middle school is St. Joseph’s and his high school is Petit Séminaire, which is “the best private English-medium secondary school in Pondicherry” (Martel, 2002: 27).

This perspective facilitates Piscine well because he is a person who is eager to learn and study. It can be estimated that Piscine is considered as a bright student, because his friends often want him to help them with the homework (Martel, 2002: 103). His academic achievements are also good. Later when he studies in Canada he gets many academic awards even in the Canadian standard of education that is higher than that of Indian. According to the Education Index report by Human Development Index, Canada is the sixth best country for education, while India is number 134 in the rankings (Hdrstats.undp.org). This is evidence that Piscine is academically bright.

2. Adolescence

a. Changing Nickname

Piscine’s adolescence starts when he enters St. Joseph middle school. He enjoys his school times, but he has major trouble with his nickname that his friends and teacher call him Pissing instead of Piscine. Piscine does not like this, but this situation does not make him hateful and make him want to revenge. Again he shows his Ahimsa attitude of non-violence here. He waits until he graduates and continues
to high school, Petit Séminaire. Here he attempts to change his own nickname into Pi Patel.

I got up from my desk and hurried to the blackboard. Before the teacher could say a word, I picked up a piece of chalk and said as I wrote: My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as Pi Patel. For good measure I added $\pi = 3.14$ and I drew a large circle, which I then sliced in two with a diameter, to evoke that basic lesson of geometry (Martel, 2002: 28).

His plan works and people call him Pi, instead of Pissing. Passively letting people call him with the undesirable nickname before actively changing his own nickname is a problem solving for young Piscine.

Martel’s choice of word Pi as his new nickname is symbolical. Pi is a mathematical symbol in a form of irrational number which is symbolized by the form $\pi$. Pi finds that the symbol $\pi$ resembles a shack. For Pi this shack is a refuge from the humiliation he has to endure when he is called Pissing (Martel, 2002: 30).

b. New Religions

Changing his own nickname is not the only big event in the high school time of Piscine (now known as Pi). In these times, he encounters two religions that are new to him, Christianity and Islam. Finding that the religions make him comfortable and at peace, he adds the two religions into himself, instead of converting from Hinduism into one of the religions.

His experience with religions leads him to have dialogues with people of different religions. His first encounter with Christianity led him to have a
conversation with a priest named Father Martin (Martel, 2002: 63-72). He encourages himself to see the priest, asks questions and even, argues with the priest.

A year later Pi meets a humble Muslim baker, Mr. Satish Kumar, who then teaches him how to be a good Muslim, how to pray in Arabic, and how to read Arabic Qur’an. Here, Pi needs courage to have a dialogue with a person he just knows about a sensitive topic such as religions.

Besides courage, it can be concluded that Pi has the humbleness, open-mindedness, and intelligence to learn from other people. The teenage Pi has the ability to lower himself and open his mind before a person whom he considers as one who can teach him good things, and then uses his wit to understand the new knowledge. However, Pi does not intend to show his intelligence off when he is involved in an argument with this kind of person, instead he argues and asks questions in order to learn more and more. It can be concluded that Pi likes to absorb good qualities from other people in order to enrich his own.

3. The Trial in the Pacific Ocean

The year 1977 is the end of Pi’s time in India. As Indira Gandhi’s reign has threatened the zoo business, Santosh Patel decides to move the family to Winnipeg, Canada. Along with some of the zoo animals, they leave Madras on June 21st, 1977, on a Panamanian registered Japanese cargo ship, Tsimtsum (Martel, 2002: 114). However, the ship sinks and Pi is left alone in a lifeboat as the only living survivor; his family has died in the wreck. His only companion is an adult Bengal tiger named
Richard Parker. At first there are a zebra, an orangutan, and a hyena on the lifeboat but all are dead and become food for Richard Parker.

During his trial, he has to endure many obstacles including physical and mental burden. Physical burden, such as starvation, thirst, sun exposure and coldness are not as torturing for Pi as the mental burden he has to endure which are desperation, hopelessness, boredom, fear, disappointment, sadness, and dehumanization.

However, Pi learns many things from his sufferings. The trial also makes him closer to God because he always feels that God watches him and will save him from the catastrophe. Religious rituals that he does in the lifeboat help him to feel comfort and safe (Martel, 2002: 241, 263).

Pi also managed to befriend Richard Parker. With his wit and creativity, Pi becomes the source of food and water for the tiger, and he lets the tiger knows it so Richard Parker understands who is the boss and will not attack Pi. It is seen that in taming an animal, moreover in a special situation as Pi’s, one needs knowledge, intelligence, courage, and love. These qualities are reflected by Pi through his successful training for the tiger.

The existence of the tiger in the lifeboat is metaphorical and symbolical in the novel. Pi’s successful tiger training resembles his harmonious relationship with God. The unbelievable relationship between the fierce beast and the weak boy resembles the relationship between God and a devotee which is usually considered unreasonable
for modern people. This issue will be elaborated in the third subchapter which regards the religious but postmodern ideas which opposes some modernism ideas.

Besides training the tiger, Pi has some survival tricks in order to survive the 227 days trial. He also has his own attitude towards the sufferings in order to cheer himself up. These are the reflections of his religious philosophy and postmodernism, that will be elaborated in the next subchapters.

His sufferings as a castaway ends when he lands in the coast of Tomatlán, Mexico in February 14th 1978. Pi stays in Mexico to recover his health. Afterwards he decides to continue to Canada. He does not want to go back to India, because there is nothing there for Pi but sad memories (Martel, 2002: 399). Pi relies on the goodness of people in Mexico and Canada, so that “…from the beach in Mexico to the home of my foster mother to the classrooms of the University of Toronto, there was only one long, easy corridor I had to walk down.” (Martel, 2002: 362). He marries and settles down as he continues his second life in a great gratitude for God that has saved his life.

After studying the life timeline of the main character, Pi’s characteristics are revealed. As what has been elaborated, he is a vegetarian Indian boy who is bookish, observant, and religious. He is humble, intelligent, courageous, and love to learn and study. He believes in life, God, and miracle. His qualities help him to find a peace of mind when he encounters the three religions and helps him to survive his trial while being casted away in the ocean.
B. The Philosophy of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam as is Viewed by the Main Character

Pi is a unique character that practices three religions at the same time with equal devotion. Considered strange, Pi is asked by the chiefs of the religions why he wants to practice the three religions. His answer is “Bapu Gandhi said, ‘All religions are true.’ I just want to love God,” (Martel, 2002: 87). From this quotation we can see his intention that his goal in his religious practices is to love God. For him the religions are considered as a mere means to reach God. For Pi God is more important than the religions.

Nevertheless, by practicing the three religions the main character draws philosophies from the religions as well as philosophies about religiosity in general. Below is the elaboration of the religious philosophy, included in it are Pi’s personal philosophies on the religions and his philosophies on the religiosity in general. The religious philosophy is accordance with the definition of religious philosophy by Alston, which includes the nature and existence of God, examination of religious experiences, the relationship between religion and science, and problem of evil (1967: 285). Along with this, Pi’s philosophy will also include problems caused by the diversity of religions and the role of faith in deadly situation. These elements of religious philosophy will reveal Pi’s postmodernism in the next subchapter.
1. **Pi’s Philosophy on Hinduism**

Hinduism is Pi’s first religion, and he sees it as something congenital. Being introduced to Hinduism since he is a small baby, the religion has been his spectacle to understand the universe. He says “the universe makes sense to me through Hindu eyes” (Martel, 2002: 60). Here we can conclude that Pi sees things in the world according to what is prescribed in Hinduism.

Because loving God is Pi’s intention in practicing his religion, Hinduism helps him understand God. As a life-long Hindu boy, Pi thinks God is logical through the picture Hinduism draws for him as follows:

There is Brahman, the world soul, the sustaining frame upon which is woven, warp and weft, the cloth being, with all its decorative elements of space and time. There is Brahman nirguna, without qualities, which lies beyond understanding, beyond description, beyond approach….But there is also Brahman saguna, with qualities, where the suit fits. Now we it Shiva, Krishna, Shakti, Ganesha; we can approach it with some understanding we can discern certain attributes –loving, merciful, frightening... Brahman saguna is Brahman made manifest to our limited senses, Brahman expressed not only in gods but in humans, animals, trees, in a handful of earth, for everything has a trace of the divine in it (Martel, 2002: 60-61).

Pi’s philosophy on Brahman’s nature and existence above fits the description of Brahman according to Keene’s theory. According to Michael Keene in his book *World Religions*, Hindu people believe in one God, called Brahman or ‘the absolute spirit’ (Keene, 2006: 14). For Hindu people, Brahman is above everything, He is the source of every creation. He is the ultimate mystery, the ultimate happiness, and the almighty.
Hinduism is usually considered as a polytheistic religion because Hinduism has a lot of deities to represent the form of Brahman. Keene estimated that there are approximately 330 million deities in Hinduism (2006: 16). These deities are created and represented in the form of *murti* (deity statue) so that God can be tangible to the followers. Moreover he says that that Brahman is the reality that can be seen in the entire universe. Brahman is the world that surrounds us, but also the world inside us (Keene, 2006: 14-15).

G.T Garrat in his book *The Legacy of India*, says that for Hindu people, the contact with the ultimate reality through religious experience plays the same part which contact with nature through sense perception plays in our knowledge of nature (1937: 268). It means that Hindu people see Brahman in everything in nature, just like what Pi believes.

Strangely, Pi’s Brahman also fits Dr. Saddiqi’s explanation about Allah in Islam. According to Dr. Saddiqi in an interview in 2000 everything has a trace of Allah’s divinity in it (Saddiqi, 2000).

Pi also realizes that he is connected to Brahman through Atman-Brahman connection. He says “The truth of life is that Brahman is no different from atman, the spiritual force within us, what you may call the soul…” (Martel, 2002:61). Pi tries to understand the connection of Atman and Brahman by describing that Atman is the finite being while Brahman is an infinite being. How Atman and Brahman dwell
together is the way “the finite within infinite, the infinite within the finite” (Martel, 2002: 61). This fits Keene’s theory on Atman, that Atman is Brahman inside human’s soul (Keene, 2006: 14-15).

As a Hindu person, Pi also seeks the ending of samsara to reach moksha or the union with God. According to Keene, there are four ways to reach moksha which are bhakti, karma, jnana, and yoga (2006: 32). Pi’s way to reach moksha is bhakti and karma. Pi’s bhakti is seen through his praying in the temple for darshan and offering puja (Martel, 2002: 84). Pi’s karma is seen through his understanding on liberation as follows:

The paths to liberation are numerous, but the bank along the way is always the same, The Bank of Karma, where the liberation account for each of us is credited or debited depending to our actions (Martel, 2002: 61).

Not only does Pi understand the world and God through Hindu eyes, he also sees himself and his position in the universe in the world (Martel, 2002: 62). Pi understands that within him is Atman, a piece of God in a mortal body. Pi understands that as a human being, he is subject to the circle of samsara (Keene, 2006: 19) and therefore he has to practice bhakti and doing good deeds to avoid bad karma. Pi also understands that Hinduism is a part of Hindu culture that builds India, in which he takes part of. Pi says he owes to Hinduism to his original religious path. Hinduism teaches Pi that God takes a lot of shapes to be understood by the followers. Therefore, to add Jesus and Allah as other forms of God is easier for him.
Hindu faith is crucial for Pi in the deadly situation he faces in the Ocean. The philosophy helps him to feel comfort because he feels that God is near and helpful because he can see a trace of Brahman in many things. For example, he is grateful for Vishnu’s avatar in a form of fish, Matsya, whenever he catches a fish to eat (Martel, 2002: 279).

He also always relates his own experiences with many Hindu stories, for example when he is awed by the vastness of the dark ocean in the middle of the night that reminds him of the story of Sage Markandeya. He feels like he is the Sage who is safe in the protection of Vishnu as what is elaborated in the quotation below

The volume of things was confounding –the volume of air above me, the volume of water around and beneath me. I was half-moved, half terrified. I felt like the sage Markandeya, 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….For the first time I noticed –as I would notice repeatedly during my ordeal, between one throne of agony and the next –that my suffering was taking place in a grand setting. I saw my suffering for what it was, finite and insignificant, and I was still. My suffering did not fit anywhere, I realized. And I could accept this. It was all right. (Martel, 2002: 223)

He believes that he is protected by Brahman that manifests in many forms in the Ocean. This belief is one thing that helps him survive.
2. Pi’s Philosophy on Christianity

Pi encounters Christianity in a Catholic church in Munar when he is 14. Using Hindu perspective, Pi thinks that at that time a form of God leads him to meet another form of God. Pi thinks it is Lord Krishna’s wisdom and perfect love that leads him to meet Jesus Christ (Martel, 2002: 63). It is perfect love that is devoted by Christians that moves him to know Jesus Christ better.

Before knowing Jesus Christ, Pi’s view about Christianity is similar to those unfamiliar with this religion. They think that Christianity is a religion with a few gods, great violence, but has good schools (Martel, 2002: 64). Great violence is what Pi sees when he first enters a Christian church and sees a cross with Jesus’ figure crucified on it. He thinks it is about human sacrifice for an angry god who has to be pleased with blood (Martel, 2002: 65).

The violence seems unrelated with the value of love promoted by Christians. Pi sees love expressed by the priest he sees in the church, Father Martin. Pi’s first impression on Father Martin is that he is a person whose profession is to love and to offer comfort and guidance to those in need with his best ability. When Pi first looks at Father Martin his intuition says that the priest is a person that is open and patient to listen to people’s grievance (Martel, 2002: 65).

Pi has conversation with Father Martin, who patiently answers his questions and tells him the story about Jesus Christ. Pi’s first impression is disbelief and
amazement because Jesus is very different with any Hindu gods he knows. According to Pi, a god has to be with shine, power, and might (Martel, 2002: 70). Any Hindu gods Pi knows, such as Krishna and Rama, are powerful, unbeatable, and glorious. Pi never heard any Hindu gods dying (Martel, 2002: 68). Comparing those Hindu gods, Jesus seems very insignificant. Below is Pi’s thought about Jesus

This Son, on the other hand, who goes hungry, who suffers from thirst, who gets tired, who is sad, who is anxious, who is heckled and harassed, who has to put up with followers who don’t get it and opponents who don’t respect Him—what kind of God is that? (Martel, 2002: 68)

Pi also thinks that the story on how Jesus withers a fig tree because it bears no fruit shows that Jesus is petulant (Martel, 2002: 72). With his Hindu paradigm, Pi says that Jesus is more than a manifestation of Brahman with “serious case of stage fright” (Martel, 2002: 71). He says this is an ungenerous and unfair Brahman that practically unsuccessfully manifests (Martel, 2002: 71).

Pi asks about Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross that costs Him His life. Pi thinks that it is not right for a god to die, because death will destroy something so decent and beautiful. Moreover, Pi thinks that if humanity sins are paid by The Son of God it shows a practically illogical psychology (Martel, 2002: 67). Father Martin’s answer to all this is love. It is the power of love that makes Jesus sacrifices his life for the salvation of human souls. According to the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke Jesus says that love is the most important thing in life. This makes love as the most important philosophy and the core of life way for faithful Christians.
Jesus’ unique character, love and humanity, moves Pi to be a Christian. He finds that Jesus is a manifestation of God’s nature that he never encounters in any Hindu gods. Although he does not understand Jesus’ humanity as what is elaborated earlier, he finds it very compelling (Martel, 2002: 73). When he asks Father Martin to make him a Christian, the priest says “You already are Piscine –in your heart. Whoever meets Christ in good faith is a Christian. Here in Munar you meet Christ” (Martel, 2002: 72-73). Pi believes that he has already been a Christian because he is sure that it is in the heart a person’s spiritual journey begins. Without having a proper baptism, he believes that he is already involved in the Church’s inner circle.

Nevertheless, he gets a proper baptism a year later as the formal initiation for his entering the Church. He is baptized as an adult. He says that as the holy water trickles down his face and neck, he feels his soul is refreshed (Martel, 2002: 98). Pi needs to be baptized in a proper way because Catholic Church considers baptism as a very important sacrament (Keene, 2006: 10).

Years later in Canada, Pi gets an extraordinary religious experience which is a vision of Virgin Mary. The vision is very strong that Pi stops, squints, and has his heart beats with fear and joy. He takes this presence of God as a very fine reward for his devotion (Martel, 2002: 79). Marian apparition is a religious experience shared only with Christians who are highly devoting to God. From this experience, Pi realizes that God’s presence is very precious. In the Marian Apparition he gets, Pi experiences the divine consciousness that is promised in moksha as well as the peace
brought by the presence of Holy Spirit. By realizing that God is around, Pi feels joy beyond happiness. This is also what he learns from Islam values that he encounters when he is 15 years old.

Philosophy in Christianity helps Pi survive his trial in the Pacific Ocean, moreover in the term of life and death. As a Christian who is inspired by the way Jesus defeats death, Pi believes that he also can defeat death with all of his humanity. However hopeless he is, Pi still has the will to live, to defeat the approaching death, and to survive. Pi realizes that there is something in him that does not want to give up on life. That part of him is unwilling to let go of life and wants to fight to the very end (Martel, 2002: 123). Pi believes in life and miracle, and he believes that God will save him. Below is Pi’s soliloquy that states that he refuses to die.

“I will not die. I refuse it. I will make it through this nightmare. I will beat the odds, as great as they are. I have survived so far, miraculously. Now I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day. I will put in all the hard work necessary. Yes, so long as God is with me, I will not die. Amen.” (Martel, 2002: 186)

From the above quotation, it can be seen that Pi believes that God is with him and protecting him. This is accordance with the Christian Creed (Vatican.va) that believes in Holy Spirit who roams to accompany, guard, and help those who believe in Jesus. As a Christian, Pi also believes in miracle. Miracle is very important in Christian faith because the Bible states that Jesus’ life is full of miracle. Therefore, Pi believes that Jesus can help him to make miracle as something that comes in routine. The miracle for Pi is that he can endure the mental and physical sufferings and
manage to survive the ordeal. For him, salvation is the biggest miracle and happiness that can happen to a human’s life (Martel, 2002: 295-296). Pi’s salvation is when he lands in the Mexican coast and finds the help he needs. Pi connects it with the salvation from Jesus’ redemption by being crucified in the cross to redeem human’s sins.

3. Pi’s Philosophy on Islam

Pi learns the values of Islam from a humble Muslim baker, Mr. Satish Kumar, who lives near Patel’s zoo. Like other Indian Muslims, the baker lives in a Muslim area. They live side by side with other citizen, but separately. Most of them live in poverty and under prejudice which can lead to prosecution and conflict (Zissis, 2007). Pi’s previous attitude about Islam before he practices the religion is similar to those of the Hindu people in general. He says “Islam had a reputation worse than Christianity’s—fewer gods, greater violence, and I never heard anyone say good things about Muslim schools” (Martel, 2002: 73).

Pi is interested in Mr. Kumar’s religion after watching the baker practices shalal​ah at noon in his hovel. It is the first time he saw a Muslim pray. Pi’s impression to the ritual is “quick, necessary, physical, muttered, striking” (Martel, 2002: 76). He thinks shalal​ah is similar with some Hindu rituals. He says “…Hot wather yoga for Bedouins. Asanas without sweat, heaven without strain” (Martel, 2002: 76). Pi sees shalal​ah as the communion of a devotee with God, just like Christianity Eucharist that unites the devotee with God (Keene, 2006: 106). It is so impressing to Pi that makes him back to the Muslim area, get to know the baker, and learn Islam from him.
From the baker he learns that the goal of every Muslim is *fana* or the union with God. It is similar with *moksha* in Hinduism. From Mr. Kumar, Pi learns that the relationship between Allah and the devotees are personal and loving. Mr. Kumar tells Pi “If you take two steps towards God, God runs to you!” (Martel, 2002: 77). Seeking *fana* becomes Pi’s basic notion of Islam since then, and it is accordance with Dr. Saddiqi’s theory that the very goal of every Muslim is to seek *fana*.

With Mr. Kumar, Pi learns to pray and sing the Quran verses in Arabic. They also practice *dhikr* together (Martel, 2002: 78). *Dhikr* is the recitation of the ninety-nine revealed names of God (Keene, 2006: 132). Here we can see that in *dhikr* Muslims give names to Allah. It is similar with Hindu’s Brahman nirguna. God has to be interpreted not only with one word, because a mere word cannot embody the whole quality of God. Pi also comes to every Friday prayer in the mosque (Martel, 2002: 84).

The activities in it make the humble bakery hovel became a very sacred place for Pi. He always feels religious experiences there. He says “I sometimes came out of that bakery feeling heavy with glory” (Martel, 2002: 78). It is evidence that his religiosity leads Pi to find a trace of divine power in everything. Pi also finds the divine trace when he practices *shalah* in his yard at home. Liking to pray outside, Pi likes to unroll his prayer rug in a corner of the yard behind his house. The spot is secluded, surrounded by coral tree and bougainvillea. He says the prayer rug helps him to remember that the patch of ground beneath the rug is the creation of God and is sacred the same all over (Martel, 2002: 96-97). The realization of the trace of
divine power, or the divine consciousness, is easily found by Pi in natural environment. For Pi, the miracle in Islam is the essential miracle of existence that can be seen in the landscape of surroundings.

One day after some of the refreshing sessions with Mr. Kumar, Pi feels a very important religious experience which is the union with God. He is bicycling and stops on the top of a hill when the beauty of the landscape strikes him with the grace of divinity. He says he feels like he is in heaven. He says

The spot was in fact no different from when I had passed it not long before, but my way of seeing it had changed. The feeling, a paradoxical mix of pulsing energy and profound peace, was intense and blissful. Whereas before the road, the sea, the trees, the air, the sun all spoke differently to me, now they spoke one language of unity. Tree took account of road, which was aware of air, which was mindful of sea, which shared things with sun. Every element lived in harmonious relation with its neighbor, and all was kith and kin. I knelt a mortal; I rose an immortal. I felt like the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a much larger one. Atman met Allah (Martel, 2002: 78).

Here we can place Pi as Atman and the landscape as the divine avatar from Allah, Holy Spirit, or Brahman. When Pi says that he feels that his Atman soul meets Allah, he feels the beauty of fana or moksha. Pi compares this joyful divine consciousness as similar with the Marian Apparition he gets in Canada years later.

The philosophy of Islam is also crucial in his survival. His surrendering to God as a Muslim is seen in how he is drifted by the sea current. Pi does not know which way to go and does not know in which part of Pacific Ocean he is on because he lacks the seafaring knowledge. Therefore, he decides to be drifted by the wind and sea current (Martel, 2002: 244). Here his attitude in letting himself being drifted away is just like a devotee being surrender for the fate God has planned for him. It is
accordance to the teachings of Koran which prescribes the devotees to surrender totally to Allah.

Pi’s philosophy in seeing Allah’s miracle in nature is also seen in the way he spends his time in adoring the beauty of nature. As what is said by Dr. Saddiqi in an interview in 2000, the belief that a devotee can see a trace of divinity in everything is crucial for Muslims. Pi experiences it because the beauty of nature around him helps him to forget his suffering. The greatness of nature, for example the vastness of the sea and the beauty of underwater ecology make him feels calm. It seems like God comforts Pi using the grandness of His creation. Pi feels relieved from his suffering by admiring the beauty of God’s creation, as what is elaborated in the quotations below

With just one glance I discovered that the sea is a city. Just below me, all around, unsuspected by me, were highways, boulevards, streets and roundabouts bustling with submarine traffic…For the first time in five days I felt a measure of calm. A little bit of hope –hard earned, well deserved, reasonable –glowed in me. I fell asleep. (Martel, 2002: 222)

The landscape Pi sees from the lifeboat is always magnificent for him. However, nearly being stroke by lightning is the most impressive natural phenomenon for Pi. One day, a fork of lightning nearly hits the lifeboat. Instead of trembling of fear, Pi is grateful for the experience and praise God for it, as what can be seen in the following quotation

The effect on me was completely the opposite. It was something to pull me out of my limited mortal ways and thrust me into a state of exalted wonder…“Praise be o Allah, Lord of All Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Ruler of Judgment Day!” I muttered. To Richard Parker I shouted,
“Stop your trembling! This is miracle. This is an outbreak of divinity. This is... This is...” I could not find what it was, this thing so vast and fantastic.... But I was smiling. I remember that close encounter with electrocution and third-degree burns as one of the few times during my ordeal when I felt genuine happiness. (Martel, 2002: 294-295)

Pi’s belief that Allah manifests in the nature around him is crucial to his survival. The feeling that God is near and controlling makes him peaceful and calm.

4. Pi’s Philosophy in Practicing Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam

Pi’s unconventional religious practices are considered strange to his surroundings. To continue doing his spiritual activities, he needs a strong background philosophy that convinces him that what he is doing is right. His religious philosophy indicates that his intention to do spiritual activities is to love God and to find divine consciousness.

As what has been explained earlier, Pi refers to a quotation by Gandhi “All religions are true” when he is asked to choose only one religion. He also says that he just wants to love God (Martel, 2002: 87). Here, we can see that his only intention is to love God. For Pi, God is more important than the religions. Religions are just a means of transportation to reach God. The main aim of this novel is to make its readers to believe in God (Martel, 2002: ix). Therefore what is important here is God instead of the religions.

For Pi, religion is more than rites and rituals because there is something for what the rites and rituals stand for (Martel, 2002: 60). The rites and rituals of the religions are the tools for devotees to meet God. This is accordance with Harold Coward’s opinion. Harold Coward in his book Pluralism, Challenge to World
Religions stated that the rites and the rituals of a religion, and even the religion itself, are only tools and instruments for a devotee to reach God (Coward, 1985: 171).

Pi believes that it is the meeting with God that is important. The meeting with God here is interpreted as the union or communion with God that will fill a devotee with ultimate joy. This is called the divine consciousness, a realization that God is around and inside a devotee that will make the devotee feels loved, protected, comforted, and at peace. Christianity teaches the communion with God happens when a devotee has Eucharist host and feels the peace and love of God. Marian Apparition or the vision of Jesus is also an event of a presence of God that leads to divine consciousness. Hinduism teaches the union between Atman and Brahman in moksha, while Islam teaches the union of a devotee with God can be reached if he or she seeks fana. Therefore, the rites and rituals are not as important as the Presence of God and the Divine Consciousness itself. For Pi, the presence of God is the finest reward for a devotee (Martel, 2002: 79). Regarding the above facts, Pi’s practicing three religions in the same time help him to love God and to find divine consciousness.

His unconventional religious practice also leads to his religious philosophy regarding the problem of evil. Problem of evil is an element in the religious philosophy according to Alston (1967: 285). As for Pi, the problem of evil that becomes his focus is the problems caused by the diversity of the religions and undignified attitude from religious fundamentalist, fanatics, and literalists.

His unique religious philosophy and his attitude towards fundamentalists, literalists, and fanatics blatantly criticize interfaith conflict that happens around him.
According to Coward, many religious groups, such as Christian fundamentalists and Muslim fundamentalists, are too reactive in facing the diversity of religions by producing extreme exclusive attitude and even showing ‘the cruelty of religions’ (Coward, 1985: 177). In this notion, Pi believes that interfaith conflicts are provoked by fundamentalists, literalists, and fanatics in many part of the world, including India and have tainted the beauty of the diversity of religions in these regions.

India, Pi’s homeland, is the homeland for many faiths, but still there are religious conflicts happen in the country. Christians in this country has faced cruel objection from the Hindu majorities since the time of St. Thomas to this day (Johnson, 2012: 40-52). Muslims face terrible prejudice that place them in the lowest part of the social stratification and make them have only limited access to social service (Zissis, 2007). This country is only a tiny example of religious battlefields that scatter all around the globe.

Practicing Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, Pi is a devotee for three most important religions in the subcontinent that forever are surmounted by prejudice. Pi’s family also have this kind of prejudice. Pi’s father personally thinks that it is normal if Pi practices Hinduism. For him, Christianity is strange though still acceptable, but Islam is totally out of traditions (Martel, 2002: 95). This shows the general attitude between the people of India. For them, Hinduism comes first in the top of the social stratification. Christianity comes after, and Islam stands in the lowest part of the stairs.
Christianity is accepted as a given religion for modern Indian society, because Christianity has a deep root of history in India. St. Thomas is famous for stretching the track of the Apostles to India. The Indians are proud of the fact that Christianity was brought to them by one of the famous Apostles, not by missionaries. Missionaries and other saints only continue what have been built by St. Thomas.

Muslim people belong to the marginalized group. They live in poverty and live separately from the others. They are frequently involved in religious conflicts. Prejudice usually is the cause for long lasting conflicts in the subcontinent. Religious prejudice is also a cause for major conflicts all around the globe.

Interfaith conflict, though not very severe, is also served in the novel regarding Pi’s unconventional religious practice. His practicing three religions all together is considered strange by his family, but the ones who feel disturbed and insulted by Pi’s actions are the chiefs of the religious groups: The Pandit, Imam, and Priest (Martel, 2002: 81-88). They are involved in a hateful interfaith dialogue to prove that their own religion is the only one that is true.

Facing this hateful interfaith dialogue, Pi questions himself why people are very defensive if it is related with God and religion. He thinks

There are always those who take it upon themselves to defend God, as if Ultimate Reality, as if the sustaining frame of existence, were something weak and helpless…These people fail to realize that it is on the inside that God must be defended, not on the outside. They should direct their anger at themselves. For evil in the open is but evil from within that has been let out… The main
battlefield for good is not the open ground of the public arena but the small clearing of each heart (Martel, 2002: 89).

He opposes religious people who think that it is necessary to fight on the behalf of God. It is no need fighting with each other to defend God, because Pi thinks “To me, religion is about our dignity, not our depravity” (Martel, 2002: 90). Defending God and religion is the major cause for religious conflicts. Severe battle in the name of religion and God only put the devotees in depravity and pain.

Here, fundamentalists and literalists are criticized because they tend to believe that their own religion is the only religion that is true while the other religions are wrong or even served as forms of blasphemy. Fundamentalists and literalists tend to be possessive with God and want to have God as their own. However, Pi thinks that God is everybody’s to love and to devote. If everybody takes this as their spiritual notion, there will be no religious conflict in the world.

Harold Coward stated that there will be problems occur in an area with many different religious groups if each group thinks that their own religion is absolute. Coward suggests that to avoid this kind of problem, each group has to change their mindset and think that God is absolute, instead of the religion. This way of thinking is refused totally by fundamentalists and religious fanatics that tend to believe the absolutism of their religion (Coward, 1985:171).

Pi thinks that fundamentalists, literalists, and religious fanatics sometime forget what the core of their religion is. They forget to be good people, and even put
themselves in depravity for the sake of religion (Martel, 2002: 81-88). Below is the example of undignified way to show their respect in religions as is served in the novel …a religious freak who cut a snake’s head off… We caught a man with a knife climbing into the pen for mouse deer; he said he was going to punish evil Ravana (who in Ramayana took the form of a deer when he kidnapped Sita, Rama’s consort) (Martel, 2002: 37).

From these notions, Pi criticizes many religious fanatics who forget the basic notion of religiosity: to love God and find a peace of mind.

Pi has had this attitude since he is a teenager, but he maintains this view until he grows up and lives as an adult in Toronto. The adult Pi even decorates his Toronto house in a religiously unique manner. He has many Christian and Hindu statues, along with many Islam objects, that the author states that the house resembles a temple (Martel, 2002: 56). Pi’s action in decorating his house in Toronto with religious articles from the three religions is very symbolical. By doing this he says that the three different religions, which are always involved in conflict, can be together peacefully in a tiny dwelling house.

Here Pi’s religious philosophy is reflected through his attitude and perspective towards interfaith conflict. Pi thinks that religious conflicts are evil, and do no good to the greatness of God. Practicing three religions make Pi realize that these conflicts are not necessary.
C. The Ideas of Postmodernism as Reflected through the Main Character’s Philosophy of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam

Pi’s unconventional religious practice supposedly conveys messages from Yann Martel, the author of the novel. Both Mangunwijaya (1988: 11) and Thwing (2004) believe that every piece of literature is used to convey messages to the reader. Mangunwijaya particularly believes that the primary function of the earliest literary work is to pass on religious values to the readers. This undergraduate thesis aims to emphasize the messages through the philosophical perspective, and the result is that it fits the idea of postmodernism served by postmodern theorists.

Postmodernism is a complicated term that can be simplified as the opposition of modernism (Jameson in Kaplan, 1988: 18). It occurs firstly among New York artists in the 1960s, before being adopted as philosophical spectacle by European theorists in the 1970s (Sarup, 1993: 131). Postmodernism is used widely in many fields: arts, politics, philosophy, literature, music, pop culture, etc (Featherstone, 2001: 3-4). In this undergraduate thesis postmodernism will be linked with philosophy.

Pi’s religious philosophy as is served in the novel opposes modernism, as it opposes secularism, atheism, agnosticism, and excessive use of reason. Modernism is tightly related with industrialization and the power of reason. Modernism occurs along with Renaissance and The Age of Enlightenment (Sarup, 1993: 131), while
enlightenment tends to question the traditional beliefs (Hall and Gieben, 1992: 21). The question to the traditional beliefs will then lead to the distrust toward religions (Hall and Gieben 1992: 21). Secularism, atheism, and agnosticism are the manifestation of the distrust toward religions, while the excessive use of reason is a common practice in the modern era which relies on the power of reason.

Opposing the modern elements above, Pi’s postmodernism is expressed through his religious philosophy. His unconventional religious philosophy leads him to think about God and life in an unconventional way. The manifestation of this unconventional religious philosophy occurs in his religious practice and in his daily lifestyle. This fits Louis Hoffman’s theory that postmodernism is a way of approaching traditional ideas and practices in a non-traditional ways that deviate from pre-established superstructural modes (2006). Religions are considered as traditional ideas in Pi’s family (Martel, 2002: 91), but Pi practices them in an untraditional way.

In Pi’s case, postmodernism is explored in the term of religiosity. Religiosity in postmodernism is identical with religious pluralism. According to Mark Silk, religious pluralism emerges in the dawn of postmodernism from those who were exhausted with religious wars from traditional groups and anti-religious attitude from modern group (2007: 64-81). He says religious pluralism is an attitude beyond mere religious toleration. It expresses extreme inclusivism between religious groups. According to Silk a religious pluralist will claim that some elements in a religion are
considered true to other religions, while in its maximal form a pluralist will claim that all religions are equally true (Silk, 2007: 64-81).

Considering Pi’s belief that all religions are true and his religious practice where he practices three religions at the same time with equal devotion, it can be concluded that his attitude expresses religious pluralism. His pluralist ideas also inspire the readers to accept the universality of God and to learn interfaith toleration so that there will be no unnecessary religious conflicts in the world as what has been explained in the previous subchapter.

After studying these notions, in this part of the study Pi’s postmodernism which is expressed in his opposition to modernism along with his religious pluralism will be explored. To start with, Pi’s opposition to modernism is explained in the following section.

1. **Opposition to Modernism**

As what has been explained earlier, Pi’s opposition towards modernism can be seen through his attitude towards secularism, atheism, secularism as the modern attitudes of the distrust towards religions, and excessive use of reason. Secularism in the novel is represented by Pi’s family. Atheism is mostly represented by Pi’s favorite Biology teacher. Agnosticism is represented by Pi’s college friends in Toronto. Excessive use of reason is represented by Japanese staffs of the shipping company. Below is the elaboration of Pi’s opposition to modernism.
a. Attitude to Secularism

To start with, firstly Pi’s postmodernism as is seen in his attitude toward his family’s secularism will be analyzed. Secularism, according to *Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus*, is the noun for adjective ‘Secular’ which means “concerned with the affairs of this world; not spiritual nor sacred. Not concerned with religion nor religious beliefs”.

As what is elaborated in the earlier part of the analysis, Pi’s family is “anything but orthodox” (Martel, 2002: 82). Even when Pi asks for a baptism and a prayer rug, his mother comment is “These are terribly old-fashioned things you’ve taken to” (Martel, 2002: 91). The family regards religions as unnecessary issue to talk about.

Pi’s father, Santosh Patel, is said to “…see himself as part of the New India – rich, modern and as secular as ice cream… spiritual worry was alien to him; it was financial worry that rocked his being” (Martel, 2002: 82-83). Pi’s mother, Gita Patel, is a modern woman who loves to read books. Gita Patel is born Hindu but she attends Baptist school, that makes her “mum, bored, and neutral” about religion (Martel, 2002: 83). Ravi Patel, Pi’s older brother, is described as a boy with “normal interests… All he can think about is cricket, movies, and music” (Martel, 2002: 96). The family considers Ravi’s interests as normal, while Pi’s interests are old-fashioned and unusual.

As what has been elaborated above, it can be concluded that Pi’s family is very secular. Their life interests, lifestyle, and ideologies do not have any connection with
religion, while Pi’s are deeply influenced with his spiritual practices. Here, Pi is taking the opposition by having different interest from the other family members.

b. Attitude to Atheism

Pi is taking the position as the opposition in his attitude towards the atheists. Etienne Borne in *Modern Atheism* states that atheism is the deliberate, definite, dogmatic denial of the existence of God, and specifically of the God of the religious consciousness (1961: 8).

Pi’s opposition to the atheists, however, is not harsh and hateful but simply an attitude of tolerance. Pi says “atheists are my brothers and sisters of a different faith. Like me, they go as far as the legs of reason will carry them –and then they leap” (Martel, 2002: 35).

Even, Pi admires atheists’ ability to believe in the inexistence of divinity and the total power of science and reason (Martel, 2002: 35). He particularly admires the atheist biology teacher, Mr. Satish Kumar. Mr. Kumar comes to the zoo regularly to “take the pulse of the universe” (Martel, 2002: 32). Mr. Kumar sees the animals which for him are “the triumph of logic and mathematics” (Martel, 2002: 32). Mr. Kumar says the zoo is his temple, and every time he leaves the zoo he always feel scientifically refreshed” (Martel, 2002: 32-33). Mr. Kumar has confirmed that science, and biology particularly, is his religion by saying that the zoo is his temple.

Mr. Kumar becomes an atheist after he suffers polio in his teenage time. He says when he is healed from the terrible disease he realized that it is the medicine that saves him, not God (Martel, 2002: 35). His sufferings make Mr. Kumar an atheist. Pi
also suffers a great deal as a castaway, but his sufferings make him closer to God instead of believing that God is dead like Mr. Kumar.

Martel makes the atheist Mr. Kumar has the same name with the Muslim Mr. Kumar. He also makes them to meet at the zoo and adore the same zebra, as what is elaborated in the following quotation.

Mr. and Mr. Kumar looked delighted.
“A zebra, you say?” said Mr. Kumar.
“That’s right,” I replied. “It belongs to the same family as the ass and the horse.”
“The Rolls-Royce of equids,” said Mr. Kumar.
“What a wondrous creature,” said Mr. Kumar.
“This one’s a Grant’s zebra,” I said.
Mr. Kumar said, “Equus burchelli boehmi.”
Mr. Kumar said, “Allahu akbar.”
I said, “It’s very pretty.” (Martel, 2002: 106)

Here Martel wants to say that actually atheism is also a religion. Mentioning the animal’s biology name “Equus burchelli boehmi” is a science devotee’s way to praise the beauty of a creation, just the same expression like a Muslim’s “Allahu akbar”.

Despite all his similarities with a religious devotee, Mr. Kumar strongly believes that God does not exist. His atheistic statement is said as follows:

“There are no grounds for going beyond a scientific explanation of reality and no sound reason for believing anything but our sense experience. A clear intellect close attention to detail and a little scientific knowledge will expose religion as superstitious bosh. God does not exist” (Martel, 2002: 34).
Pi admires his attitude and Mr. Kumar becomes Pi’s favorite biology teacher. He even takes zoology as his major because of the memory of Mr. Kumar (Martel, 2002: 35). Pi’s friends in the zoology department are atheists, and he describes his relationship with them as “never had problems” (Martel, 2002: 6). He even says that they are friendly (Martel, 2002: 6). It shows that he is in a harmonious and loving relationship with his atheist friends.

c. Attitude to Agnosticism

Partly agrees with the atheists, Pi’s expresses his direct opposition to agnostics. According to Borne, agnosticism is a philosophy which condemns man to an eternal doubt on fundamental questions (1961: 7-8).

Pi totally disagrees with agnostics because agnostics are doubtful and have no ability to believe in miracle. Pi thinks “To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation” (Martel, 2002: 36). Pi says human being needs doubt only for a while to detach oneself before making important decision.

He thinks of Christ’s doubt in the garden of Gethsemane where He spends an anguished night in prayer, also Christ’s utterance on the cross “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Martel, 2002: 35-36). Christ’s doubt is an example of humanity quality; therefore Pi thinks that human is allowed to be in doubt though only for a while. Afterwards human must overcome their doubt and choose which way to go.
Pi believes that agnostic doubt will prevent a person from enjoying ‘a better story’ (Martel, 2002: 81), which is the beauty of divinity that is beyond the analytic ability of reason. He believes that while an atheist will finally be faithful to God and find the beauty of divinity in their deathbed, an agnostic will still be in doubt during their deathly agony (Martel, 2002: 81). He thinks that people who are too reasonable such as agnostics will get nothing but the disadvantages because they cannot enjoy the beauty of belief.

Pi prefers belief, whether belief in miracle and the existence of God or the belief in science and the absence of God. He pities the agnostics’ doubt because it will take them to nowhere. Later when he studies religious studies in Canada he will befriend with students who are agnostics which Pi describes as “muddled agnostics who didn’t know which way was up, who were in the thrall of reason, that fool’s gold for the bright” (Martel, 2002: 5). Pi regrets their philosophy but he never has trouble with them.

d. Attitude to Excessive Reliance on Reason in Modern People

Pi loves science and he grows up as a scientist. He is a person who loves to observe and study, as what has been elaborated in the first subchapter. Even during his trial in the Pacific Ocean he makes observation as his routine. He studies the ocean, the marine life, and the tiger in the lifeboat. He even makes a botanical discovery by finding a floating algae island in the middle of the ocean. With his scientific and empirical interests, Pi studies the island and finds out that it is a carnivorous floating organism that eats fish and marine mammals (Martel, 2002: 322-
257). He also uses his reason to independently work on his survival (Martel, 2002: 212). Pi regards reason as a precious and valuable gift for human being.

However, he rejects applying too much reason (Martel, 2002: 375). This attitude is seen in his interview with the Japanese staff of the shipping company which owns Tsimtsum, the wrecked ship.

Fifteen days after his landing in Mexico, two staffs of the Japanese shipping company which issues the sinking ship come to him to inquire Pi about the wreck. They are very modern and reasonable. The staffs remember Pi as ‘very thin, very tough, very bright.’ He admits that Pi’s story is ‘an astounding story of courage and endurance in the face of extraordinarily difficult and tragic circumstances.’ (Martel, 2002: 400-401).

The interview with Pi is said to be difficult and memorable because of Pi’s extraordinary answers regarding his story. Pi considers his journey as ‘a terrible trip’ (Martel, 2009: 367). The staffs said that he is very impressionistic and ‘a tough nut to crack’. They do not believe Pi’s story, they think it is scientifically impossible. They particularly disbelieve the existence of the floating algae island and the existence of Richard Parker. Regarding this, Pi says

“If you stumble at mere believability, what are you living for? Isn’t love hard to believe?... Don’t you bully me with your politeness! 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?...I applied my reason at every moment. Reason is excellent for getting food, clothing, and shelter. Reason is the very best tool kit. Nothing beats reason for keeping tigers away. But be excessively reasonable and you risk throwing out the universe with the bathwater.” (Martel, 2002: 375)
Here Martel put the interview as if to show us the argument between reason and feeling, just like the argument between modernism and postmodernism. Here Pi says that if a person use too much of their reason, they cannot enjoy the beauty of the universe. Pi states that although he relies on his reason to survive, using too much reason can risk us to waste the beauty of God’s existence just because our reason is limited to understand it.

However, the Japanese staffs still sticks in their modern narrow-mind and want another story that is believable and can be used as a report about the sinking of the ship. Pi says

“I know what you want. You want a story that won’t surprise you. That will confirm what you already know. That won’t make you see higher or further or differently. You want a flat story. An immobile story. You want dry, yeastless factuality.” (Martel, 2002: 381)

Here Pi describes the narrow mind of modern people which requires reason all the time. He says that modern people who apply only reason will live in a prosaic reality. They waste the beauty of divinity just because they cannot believe in it. Here it is described that modern people only want another story, ordinary story of factuality that will confirm their reason. They reject the story of factuality that is beautified with miracle and divine intervention.

Pi then makes up another story which is more realistic than the reality. This ‘other story’ is without animals in it, because animals symbolize the scientifically irrational things in Pi’s story. Pi replaces the animals in his real story into human characters, so that the zebra resembles a Taiwanese sailor, the orangutan resembles
his mother, Gita Patel, the hyena resembles the French castaway that is killed by Richard Parker, and Richard Parker resembles Pi. In this story, the French man kills Pi’s mother and the sailor, just like the hyena kills the zebra and the orangutan. Afterwards Pi kills the French man, just like Richard Parker kills the hyena.

The staffs believe in this second story, but they say that the first story, the story with animals is the better story (Martel, 398-399). Regarding this, Pi says “Thank you. And do so it goes with God.” (Martel, 2002: 399). Here Pi wants to say that although God is hard to believe, just like his story with Richard Parker and the animals, the story with God in it is the better story. Here Martel concludes that our life story will be better if God is included in it.

2. Religious Pluralism

Pi’s postmodernism is obviously seen in his religious pluralism, in which he practices Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam in the same time. When he is fifteen years old, he is a Hindu boy who is also practicing Christianity and Islam. He encourages himself to talk to his parents that he wants a prayer rug to practice shalāh and he also wants to be baptized he says “…I want to pray to Allah. I want to be a Christian” (Martel, 2002: 91). His willing to practice the three religions in the first place is an action of religious pluralism.

One of his basic references to do the practices is Gandhi’s quotation that “All regions are true” (Martel, 2002: 84). Pi thinks that these religions are actually similarly true and just the same, as what is shown in the following quotation
…that Hindus; in their capacity for love, are indeed hairless Christians, just as Muslims, in the way they see God in everything, are bearded Hindus, and Christians, in their devotion to God, are hat-wearing Muslims (Martel, 2002: 62).

His belief that all religions are true and just the same as what has been elaborated above fits the notion for the maximum form of religious pluralism (Slik, 2007: 72). Pi’s pluralism is also supported by his original religious frame of Hinduism, in which Brahman takes forms as avatars in order to be defined. In this notion, Pi takes Jesus and Allah as forms of Brahman. In this notion, Coward states that an open minded Hindu person can accept that every path can reach Brahman, so they can accept that Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and Moses as Brahman’s avatars (Coward, 1985: 172). Furthermore, Coward states that religious pluralism can be best understood by seeing God as The One but having many forms (Coward, 1985: 169). Pi fits this description perfectly as a devotee who accepts many forms of God.

One of the manifestations of this attitude is the way he decorates his house in Toronto. The adult Pi decorates his house with articles of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam so that his house resembles a temple of many faiths (Martel, 2002: 56). Using drawings, statues, and holy books of the three religions he shows his devotion to God.

Holy book is a form of religious article that is very important for Pi. As a big reader, he considers holy books as the best way to spread faith. He says

I cannot think of a better way to spread the faith. No thundering from a pulpit, no condemnation from bad churches, no peer pressure, just a book of scripture quietly waiting to say hello, as gentle and powerful as a little girl’s kiss on your cheek (Martel, 2002: 262).
Pi sends a big donation to the Gideons, the organization whose mission is the dedication to Bible distribution and evangelism (Gideons.org). Along with the donation, Pi urges them to spread Bibles and holy books of other faiths in hotels and lodges to comfort weary travelers like him (Martel, 2002: 262). This action is the manifestation of his pluralism in which he urges to spread many faiths because these faiths can lead weary people to the comfort from God.

As a weary traveler that has experienced a great ordeal as a castaway, Pi feels that God comforts him in his sufferings. Pi continues his rites and rituals that are adapted to the circumstances as follows

...solitary Masses without priest or consecrated Communion hosts, darshans without murtis, and pujas with turtle meat for Prasad, acts of devotion to Allah not knowing where Mecca was and getting my Arabic wrong (Martel, 2002: 263).

Pi feels that all of the religious rituals bring comfort to him (Martel, 2002: 263). The rituals always remind him that God watches him and will protect him. Pi always thanks to Jesus-Matsya every time he gets a fish to eat (Martel, 2002: 279). His gratefulness to Jesus refers to Jesus’ action of feeding 5000 people with two fish and five piece of bread, so that one of Jesus’ symbol is fish. Matsya is Vishnu’s fish avatar.

In despair, Pi always prays to the deities in his religions. For example, he shouts “…Vishnu preserve me, Allah protect me, Christ save me, I can’t bear it!” in the time when the ship sinks and he is left alone in the lifeboat (Martel, 2002: 122).
All of these actions and practices are the manifestation of his philosophy that what is important is God instead of the religions. Pluralism helps him to get closer to God and find the joy of divine consciousness.

Postmodernism idea conveyed by the main character of the novel suggests that all religions are equally true, as what is expressed by Pi’s pluralism. Pi’s postmodern religious philosophy also suggests the admiration to the beauty of divinity, instead of the blind practice of religious rites and rituals. Pi’s postmodernism also states that to be reasonable, people do not have to be antipathy to religions as what is suggested in modernism.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the novel, this part of the undergraduate thesis concludes the study. Firstly we will review the character of Pi before elaborating his religious philosophy that leads to the notions of his postmodernism.

Piscine Molitor Patel, later known as Pi Patel, is an Indian boy who has three faiths. He practices Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam at the same time. Being a son of a wealthy zoo owner in Pondicherry, he attends the best schools in the area. Academic life and the fondness to read shape his perspective to love learning. As a child he loves learning the animals in the zoo and observing nature. Besides reading books and observing animals, spirituality is one of his biggest interests.

Born Hindu, Pi loves the rites and rituals that shape the country. He understands the universe from the Hindu point of view. He understands that as a human being he is subject to samsara, a circle of life that makes human being reincarnate after death. To end samsara and reach moksha, a person has to do devotion ways. Pi’s ways are bakhti, doing rites and rituals, and also karma, doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds.

Besides prescription to the way of life, Pi has the first concept of God according to Hindu’s Brahman. He understands that God needs to manifest into many
deities so that God can be tangible to the believers. Therefore, after encountering Christianity and Islam Pi can accept Jesus and Allah as manifestations of God.

Pi encounters Christianity when he is fourteen. From Jesus, Pi learns humanity that he can never encounter from any Hindu deities. Pi learns that God manifests in Jesus and lower Himself into human qualities. Jesus sacrifices Himself and dies in humiliation because of his love. Love in Christianity is very unique for Pi. Christianity also teaches the beauty of the communion with God. Finding the communion is very precious, Pi always comes every Sunday for Eucharist in the church.

Pi finds Islam when he is fifteen. He finds that the religion is very beautiful and teaches its devotee to regard the trace of divinity in everything. With Islam, Pi finds his admiration to nature accordance to the teaching of the religion. Moreover, the religion teaches Pi to seek fana, the union of the devotee with God.

His religions help him to survive when he is casted away in the Pacific Ocean for 227 days. The days of solitude, isolation, and suffering make him closer to God. One of the biggest miracles is that Pi can share his lifeboat with an adult royal Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The tiger, once is the biggest life threatening obstacle besides thirst, hunger, and hopelessness, befriends with Pi and even helps him to forget his sufferings. Pi is grateful to God for the companion of Richard Parker that is crucial for his survival.
His religions comfort Pi during his ordeal. However Pi always thinks that what is important in practicing religions is the notion of God. Religion is just a means to reach God. Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam all together help Pi to find comfort and the union with God. Pi finds the union with God makes him feel the joy beyond happiness. Union with God can be sought when he feels the divine consciousness, the feeling that God is around and protecting, that makes him at peace and joyful. Pi experiences this in India once when he is bicycling and feels the divinity in the landscape around him. Pi also finds the presence of God when he got a Marian apparition in Canada. Pi thinks that the best reward of a devotee’s devotion is the presence of God.

His practice, however, madden the chiefs of the religions in Pondicherry. The chiefs are involved in fierce argument; each insists that their own religion is the only one that is true. This reflects the inter-faith conflicts that happen all around the world. These conflicts happen because people forget the core of their religion which is to reach God. They think religion is the most important element of spirituality. Regarding these, Pi condemns religious fanatics, literalists, and fundamentalists whose narrow-mind creates prejudice that can lead to religious conflict. Pi thinks if one wants to defend God, they have to fight in dignity instead of in the bloody battlefield that leads to depravity. With these notions, Pi’s religious philosophy criticizes inter-faith conflicts that happen all around the globe, and regards them as the problem of evil instead of the form of holy fight.
His religious philosophy reflects the ideas of postmodernism on the way how he opposes modernism and expresses religious pluralism. His opposition to modernism is firstly shown on how he considers spirituality as an important issue in a person’s life while his family is very secular and unorthodox. Secondly, he takes opposition to atheism by considering atheists, who believe that God does not exist, as his brothers and sisters of different faith. He regards atheism as a good example of belief, though is different from his own belief. Thirdly, Pi opposes agnosticism by disagrees completely with their philosophy. Lastly, Pi obviously shows his opposition to modernism in his interview with Japanese staffs from the shipping company. The staffs are very modern and rely much on their reason, so that they cannot believe on the miraculous salvation story. Pi opposes their statements and says that if a person excessively uses reason, he or she will miss the divine beauty of the universe. From these notions, Pi’s postmodernism in opposing modernism inspire the readers of the novel to wisely use their reason, to be reasonable but not be anti-religion.

His postmodernism is also shown in the way he practices three religions in the same time that can be considered religious pluralism. Religious pluralism, a part of postmodernism that concerns with religiosity, allows people to go beyond toleration and admit that all religions are true. Pi believes in this notion, and he practices the three religions to find comfort and peace in his life.
From the above review, it can be concluded that Pi’s religious philosophy reflects the idea of postmodernism. His postmodernism opposes modernism and reflects religious pluralism.
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APPENDIX

Review On The Background of the Novel

This section explores why Yann Martel, a Canadian novelist, is interested in making this novel, including why he chose India as the background setting and why he chose the three religions to be practiced by his main character.

The choice of background setting, India, is important, because here is where the three religions meet. Maybe Martel’s attitude toward India is partly influenced by traditional Western view that always thinks that the East is exotic. According to Garratt (1937: 25) since the early historical era, the Westerns are always interested in East fables. They heard about the fables and then created their own stories about it. Hans Anderson, Grimm, and even Chaucer’s stories are influenced by Eastern fables (Indian and Middle Eastern fables). The migration of fables was originally from the East to the West, and not vice versa. This hypothesis is proved by the fact that the animals and birds who play leading parts, the lion, the jackal, the elephant, and the peacock, are mostly Indian ones. This statement, in my opinion, explains why Western people, like Martel, are interested in Eastern theme.

As an Eastern country, India is the part of the setting in Life of Pi. The choice of country is significant, because India is the place where many major religions meet. According to the 2001 census in India, 80.5% of the population are Hindu, 13.4% are Islam, and 2.3% of the population conduct Christianity. In an interview with readers,
Yann Martel states that he chose India because it was the place where every story is possible to happen. In India, his character can meet three different religions and conducts the three of them together. Martel says that he made his character having three religions because he wanted to discuss faith, instead of an organized religion. Therefore, although Pi goes to church mass every Sunday, goes to mosque every Friday, and goes to Hindu temple to serve puja, he frees himself from what ties him to the church congregation, Muslim communities, and Hindu organizations. He is a faithful and religious person, but he takes only what fits him from the religion.

The above facts also lead the use of term Christianity in this undergraduate thesis, instead of Catholicism. Although in the story Pi meets Jesus Christ via Catholic Church, to say that Pi is a Catholic will not fit him. The term Catholic will tie the main character to the vision of The Roman Catholic Church, a large establishment of religious organization which differs itself from the other churches. Meanwhile, Pi’s faith to Jesus Christ is more than the boundaries of the division of churches.

Back to the background of the novel writing, Yann Martel considered the choice of the religions is also significant. The religions have to be in a way that do not cancel each other and can be practiced all together by one single person. Martel states in further interview that he chooses Hindu, Christian, and Islam over other religions because the religions can fit each other in one person. He also has considered Jewish and Buddhism, too, but these religions cannot fit with Hinduism
and Christianity. He says in the interview that Jewish ends when Christianity begins, and Hinduism ends when Buddhism begins. He chooses Christianity over Jewish and Hinduism over Buddhism later according to the consideration that the chosen religions are likely more popular in India than the not chosen ones.