



## Research article

# Colour as Symbols in the Select Works of Yann Martel

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### Abstract

Colours can draw an identity to all living things. Natural colours can either calm down or disturb a person's inner Self. At the times of crisis, it tends to give the individual soul wit and hope. Colours also have alchemical significance and can impact every man's mind in certain ways. Colour representations have been used by many symbolists throughout literary history from the past to the present. Symbolists point out the importance of symbols in the poems of symbolist poetry. Moreover, the use of colour symbolism in literature contributes to the treasure of literary forms. In Canadian literature, Yann Martel holds a prominent position for his adaption of symbols and uses them to portray the inner quest of his characters. Frequently, his symbolism embodies a deep search for a spiritual quest with a religious component. Colour is one of the most important aspects in deciphering the psyche of his heroes. He has constructed various symbolic interpretations that exhibit the spiritual longing of individuals. Many colours like red, black, white, green, orange, etc have been used as symbolic representations to decode the mindset and religious beliefs. Among them, black and white colours play a vital role in an in-depth portrayal of the leading characters. The religious quest of the characters has been satisfied through the identification of colour representations and ancient relics. They were satisfied at the end. Hence, his works depict that colours have symbolic dramatic elements that naturally novelize the central theme of the search for Self. It also emphasizes the development of the Self with the supremacy of faith in the Almighty God. This paper deciphers the black and white colour symbols in the novels, "Self", "Life of Pi", "Beatrice and Virgil", and "The High Mountains of Portugal" of Yann Martel.

**Keywords:** Colours, Symbols, Black and White, Yann Martel.



## 1. Introduction

Colours have a magical allure that captivates the essence of every living being. They can evoke emotions and can create a soothing or disturbing atmosphere. This intrinsic quality of colours has been recognized by alchemists, symbolists, and artists throughout history. Colour symbolism in

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literature is a daring and powerful technique that enriches the narrative and intensifies the characters' inner struggles and emotions. One of the most celebrated Canadian writers, Yann Martel, is renowned for his masterful use of colour symbolism. His heroes are imbued with various symbolic interpretations that reflect their Self. Martel's depiction of colour, especially Black and White, is evocative and dramatic, playing a crucial role in his characters' journeys of self-discovery. This article will explore Martel's use of colour symbolism in his works and examine its significance in portraying the central theme of finding oneself amidst the power of faith in God.

The psychological method aims to recognize a person's psychic aptitude. It focuses primarily on the unconscious mind. The foundation of Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory is interpretive techniques. In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he claims symbols are prevalent in everyday life. Everyone is transported to the other world of symbols by thought. The symbolic theories of M.H. Abrams and Earnest Jones state that symbols convey different hidden meanings depending on the situation. Symbols may produce different expressions or meanings for other people. The symbol and the matter it represents have an unbridgeable difference. In his novels, Yann Martel has used enormous colour symbols wherein Black and White play a prominent part in portraying the characteristic traits of the characters. The colours reveal the emotion and feelings of the characters.

This research aims to study the colour representations found in the four novels of Yann Martel. *Self*, *Life of Pi*, *Beatrice*, *Virgil*, and *The High Mountains of Portugal* are the four novels wherein the novelist, through the use of colour symbols, tried to imply the eternal presence of God in the lives of human beings. The negative colours represent the struggles and negative emotions of the characters. These colour representations, especially black and white, form the main focus of this research. A careful reading of the novels and the available research findings and research and critical opinions on the works of Yann Martel paved the way for the research gap.

## 2. Review of Literature

Visvaganthie Moodley (2016) examined symbols and symbolisms in various literary genres in her article, "Symbols, Symbolism, and Significance in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. Specific Content Knowledge for Teacher Development." Moodley views symbols and symbolism as potent rhetorical tools that enhance the writer's narration and convey deep meaning beyond narrative descriptions. However, to combine the education methods and improve learners' cognition, the interpretations must be context-based and involve an in-depth understanding of certain symbols and symbolism. This article sought a specific experience by analyzing literary allegory, symbolism, and its importance in Martel's *Life of Pi*.

Rashmi Doke and Dr Arunaprakash (2017) distinguished between reality and fiction in "Multiple Adventure and Thrilling Experience of Pi in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*." The novel *Life of Pi* is interpreted internally as an allegory, magical fable, or realism fable. One could read about the marine adventure there. Both the approach and the subject are endearing and rife with mystical awe. Doke and Arunaprakash have found a variety of phrases that support the novel's development in a gripping manner.

The restrictions of symbolism in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* was the investigation by Hamza Karam

Ally in "Which Story do you Prefer?: The Limits of the Symbolic in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*;" published in 2020. *Life of Pi* is criticized psychoanalytically and phenomenologically for being a carbon copy of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The self-actualization and fulfillment of the main character Pi were highlighted by Ika Rahmawati Diniar (2015) in her article "Pi Patel's Self-Actualization in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. The study used Abraham Maslow's theory to evaluate the character's level of self-actualization. A person who has attained the proper level of actualization, in Maslow's view, can develop into a mature human. Diniar's research has assessed Pi's mental state. Diniar discovered that Pi Patel is far more successful than the average person at achieving self-actualization and meeting his demands in life. He is a self-actualized person because he has faith and trust in God.

Junwu Tian (2020) examined Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* in the context of biblical reference, maternal cannibalism, shipwreck tale, and spiritual journey in her article titled "The Metaphor of House and Post-Colonial Identity Formation in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*." In this article, the metaphorical houses were debated. It also represents the protagonist's identity, loss, and development during survival. While Pi's house in Toronto represents his achieving third-space identity as an adult, the house images in Pondicherry, India, represent Pi completely losing his identity as an innocent youngster. In her thesis "Bamboozled: Chaos Theory and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*" from 2010, Marie Tichborne examined how stories about hope are created and how readers react to them concerning the Chaos Theory.

In "A Howl and a Black Cat: Allegory, Nonsense, and Ethics in Yann Martel's *Beatrice and Virgil*," Jenni Adams (2012) examined the protagonist as the author's satirical alter ego. The relationship between the author's experience, representation, and the traumatic history of a society or culture is questioned by non-realist techniques like magical realism, fantasy, and surrealistic approaches. The study examined how non-realistic symbolic forms and the ability to write about trauma relate to one another.

In his article "Animal: Representing the Seeing Animal in Yann Martel's *Beatrice and Virgil*," published in 2017, Brazier-Tompkins addressed how writers sometimes appropriate symbolic representations to fit particular objects or creatures into their distinctive forms. Martel uses refined language, writing style, and diction in his works. Yann Martel's *Self* was explored by Joseph Arul Jayraj (2010) in "A Study on the Physiological, Psychological and Spiritual Perspectives of Different Selves in a Self" with attention to the selected issues. Using various situations, it examines how Martel classifies the hidden Self, the physiological, psychological, and spiritual viewpoints.

In his article (2021), "Symbolism of Chromatism in *Life of Pi*," Dr Arul examined the significance of colours used in literature as symbols to express feelings and implications beyond what is said. According to his research, every person's existence involves colours on an emotional level. Language and literature have much in common with colours; authors often use them as symbols to convey deep meaning. Colours have the power to reflect sentiments and emotions. In the novel, Pi Patel gets his passion and vitality from particular hues that he sees at special times. He feels spiritually energized when he first sees the hue orange. The following colour, a golden shade, denotes success. The final colour, a green shade, indicates brand-new ways of living. *Life of Pi* surely developed a greater meaning and knowledge through colours that may be interpreted as symbols.

### 3. Definition of Symbol

Etymologically, the word "symbol" derives from the Greek word '*symbol*' (*symbol*), meaning a 'token,' a watchword, or a sign by which one infers permission. It is the mix of '*syn*' meaning 'together' with '*bole*' meaning 'a casting.' It means 'throwing things together'; it could be understood as 'contrasting' or 'comparing' (*symbol*) to determine if something conveys genuine meaning. Probably, it refers to the outward sign of something, so its purpose stands for something else.

### 4. Theoretical Framework

M. H. Abrams (1999), in his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, states that a symbol is "anything which signifies something; which in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term 'symbol' is applied to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself." (311). Hence, symbols can perform various roles in a literary work, such as conveying the writer's idea, connecting the world's reality, mystifying the work, or adding beauty. It may also be used in different ways to polish characterization, theme, plot, portray conflict, or what the writer wants to communicate to the audience. For example, colours are used as symbols to convey different hidden meanings depending on the situation. The colour red symbolizes bravery, blood, or death. The black colour indicates suffering, death, and mystery; blue indicates sea, sky, soul, and peace; white indicates hope, peace, purity, faith, etc; and saffron means sacrifice, hope, etc. The colour green suggests life, energy, hope, etc. The colour symbol is also very flexible and may have different expressions or meanings for other people.

Ernest Jones' *The Theory of Symbolism* examines the influence of symbols on human action and intellect. According to Jones' hypothesis, symbols have a solid and innate power over the subconscious, and their interpretation and meaning can significantly impact behaviour and attitudes. Additionally, his research provides evidence for using symbols in ritual, art, and other kinds of cultural expression to convey and express emotions and feelings. Jones lists six steps to identify them:

1. A symbol is a representative or substitute of some other idea from which, in the context, it derives a secondary significance not inherent in itself. It is important to note that the flow of value is from the primary idea to the secondary to the symbol. Hence, a less critical one typically symbolizes an essential concept. Thus, a shred of material called a flag may represent all sorts of essential things.
2. It represents the primary element by having something in common with it. Thus it would be a stretch of language to call a mnemonic knot in a handkerchief a symbol of the idea that has to be remembered, although some writers do so. The association may be an internal or an external one. However, an association that is superficial to the reason may often be significant in feeling, especially in the unconscious.
3. A symbol is characteristically sensorial and concrete, whereas the idea represented may be relatively abstract and complex. The symbol thus tends to be shorter and more condensed than the concept meant. The explanation of bowing given above illustrates this well.

4. Symbolic modes of thought are the more primitive, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, and represent a reversion to some more straightforward and earlier stage of mental development. They are, therefore, more often met with conditions that favour such a reversion; for example, fatigue, drowsiness, bodily illness, neurosis, and insanity, and, above all, in dreams, where conscious mental life is reduced almost to a minimum. A simple observation in this connection is that a tired man usually prefers looking at an illustrated paper, where ideas are presented on a sensorial plane, to reading.
5. In most uses, a symbol is a manifest expression for an idea that is more or less hidden, secret, or kept in reserve. Most typically, the person employing the symbol is unaware of what it represents.
6. Symbols resemble wit in being made spontaneously, automatically, and unconsciously in the broad sense of the word. (Jones 183)

Symbols can thus play a variety of roles in a literary work, including the portrayal of the author's intentions and emotions, tying the world's reality together, and enhancing its beauty. Jones' symbol theory is thought-provoking, clear, and engaging to pursue research.

## 5. Black and White Symbols

Rabelais claims that White symbolizes happiness, comfort, and enjoyment in the tenth chapter of Book 1 of *Gargantua*. For him, all around is white as his spirit is dazzlingly filled with delight. Rabelais points out that White also reflects the light of Christian insights. According to Plato's *Laws* 956a, the colour white symbolizes the gods. Everyone is amazed by the whale's whiteness in Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Black has negative connotations in Greek and Latin and is used as a symbol. In Homer, death is depicted as black symbolically (*Iliad* 2.834). Black has been regarded by Christians as a colour omen, representing mortification, the necessity for purity, and an impending need for salvation.

Martel has employed different colours to portray various emotions and life situations in his works. He has deciphered the deepest recesses of the mind using Black and White colours. He picked the hue white to symbolize Christianity in *Life of Pi*, which stands for a person's purity and love. The main character Pi, who lives in a secular environment, has a spiritual quest that leads him to combine his faith in Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam during his time as a castaway. Pi's family departs for Canada, but the ship sinks in the Pacific. Pi is a castaway and spends 227 days at sea with Richard Parker, the most dangerous Bengal tiger.

The revelation of Christianity is a white light. I can well imagine an atheist's last words: "'White, white! 'L-L-Love! My God!'" and the courageous act on the dying. (LP 64). In Canada, Pi experiences God's presence as he claims, "'One other time I felt God come so close to me.'" Snow is falling, and it is a winter day; "All nature was blanketed in white'" (LP 62). Pi returns home and, as he relates, "In that falling golden dust in that sun-splashed clearing, I saw the Virgin Mary" (LP 62/63), sees the Virgin Mary in the woods. He explains, "Her skin was pale. She was wearing a white dress and a blue cloak; I remember being struck by their pleats and folds". According to Pi, the colour white in this context stands for both love and beauty: "She looked beautiful and supremely regal. She was smiling at me with loving kindness." (LP 63) Given that it has a divine

nature, the colour white in this context represents godliness, love, joy, and purity. As Pi states, "The presence of God is the finest of rewards" (LP 63); he is graced by the fact that God exists.

Martel has used White as a pivotal colour to represent the thoughts and sentiments of the main characters in *The High Mountains of Portugal*. In the novel, he uses white to denote innocence and love, representing the divine bond between Peter Tovy and Odo, the chimpanzee. Odo and Peter Tovy's connection is depicted cryptically. After six months after the death of his wife, Tovy discovers Odo in a zoo. Odo travels to Portugal with Peter for his origin and spiritual fulfilment. He develops a strong attachment to the company. Peter perceives Odo's fondness for him as mysterious and senses a spiritual bond between them. Odo reciprocates by showing a great deal of care for Peter's companionship. Peter finds Odo at the Institute for Primate Research at the University of Oklahoma.

The word "White Lily" is employed as a symbol in *The High Mountains of Portugal*. It stands for the harmony between humans and animals, and purity. Due to its ethereal white hue, the white lily is the flower that appears in literature, the second most often used flower after the rose. The lily symbolizes beauty, brevity, and other high ideals in Latin literature. St. Cecilia receives another lily from Chaucer's nun. It is described as "'hevenes lillie,' / For pure chaastnesse of virginitee" (*Second Nun's Tale* 87–88). The lily has been associated with Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Virgin Mary because of its whiteness, which connotes purity, and its beauty, which connotes unmatched perfection.

With no regard for his status as a Canadian Senator, Peter pays the Institute a sizable sum to own the ape and transports it to his native Portugal. Odo and Peter had a spiritual connection from the beginning, as Peter himself says of Odo, "He's been aware of me all along" (HMP 237). Peter enjoys Odo's companionship. Peter often finds it very puzzling that Odo always wishes for his presence, as he asks himself, "Why Odo wants his presence, his in particular" (HMP 289). Odo has been with him until Peter's death. Martel used the white flower to symbolize their love's enigmatic feeling and sincerity. As the narrator says, "The lovely cut flowers so graciously left on the table by Dona Amélia? Before devouring them, Odo extended a white lily to him" (HMP 291). It shows how much Odo cares for Peter. Martel tries to show that Peter and Odo's relationship is a true love between two humans rather than a love between a human and an ape.

In his novels, Martel makes symbolic use of white and black clothing. Pi travels to Munnar and stops at a church, where the interior is painted white, and the priest is attired in White. White stands for serenity and faith in God. Pi says, "The vestibule had clean, white walls; the table and benches were of dark wood; and the priest was dressed in a white cassock-it was all neat, plain, simple. I was filled with a sense of peace" (LP 52). According to Pi, a priest's primary responsibility is to preach and spread love because that is what a priest's life is ultimately all about. In describing the role of the priest, Pi registers:

But more than the setting, what arrested me was my intuitive understanding that he was there-open, patient-in case someone, anyone, should want to talk to him; a problem of the soul, a heaviness of the heart, a darkness of the conscience, he would listen with love. He was a man whose profession it was to love, and he would offer comfort and guidance to the best of his ability. (LP 52)

Martel uses the “white shirt” motif in *The High Mountains of Portugal*. The white shirt is portrayed as the heavenly colour that comforts Tomás in his great distress and crisis. It stands for hope. Tomás encounters many difficulties and sufferings on the way to his quest, including bandits, vehicle malfunctions, a lack of gasoline, inclement weather, fire, etc. Tomás experiences hell when the robbers chase him. He feels like heaven whenever he overcomes obstacles and threats.

After Arez, Tomás switches the route into a designated track to continue his search. He has faith in his map that it will guide him. Unfortunately, he got off track and turned into a few other confusing routes. Due to the abundance of rocks, the tracks’ quality degrades. The narrator speaks, “He becomes confused. Surrounding him in all directions is the same rocky, dry, silent countryside, with silver-green olive trees as far as the eye can see and bulbous white clouds boiling up high in the sky”. The narrator adds, “He’s lost, a castaway. And the night is coming” (HMP 90). Tomás reaches a strange land at night, and the car hits and struck into a large tree. He observes the exquisite winter blossoms on the rock-strewn ground in utter solitude. The narrator registers them as “Pink, light blue, red, white -he doesn’t know what kind of flowers they are, only that they are beautiful. He breathes in deeply” (HMP 91). Tomás feels extremely helpless and desperate in this place. Tomás exerts a lot of effort to cut down the tree but still finds it difficult to get his automobile moving again. Tomás is physically and mentally helpless until a peasant with a white shirt suddenly arrives on his facade as a God-sent deliverance. His coming instills confidence in him. The narrator describes the entry of the peasant:

He hears the voice just before a hand touches his shoulder.

“My friend, you are hurt.”

He looks up, startled. A peasant has materialized out of the air. Such a bright white shirt he is wearing.

Tomás chokes on his last sob and wipes his face with his hand.

“You’ve been thrown so far!” says the man.

“Yes,” replies Tomás. (HMP 98)

Simão is the peasant’s name, and he acts as Tomás’s guardian angel. The narrator describes how the peasant comforts Tomás with one of his arms. Simão sets him down on the footboard of the car after half-carrying him there. In Simão’s presence, Tomás senses the existence of the all-powerful God. Simão assists in guiding the vehicle back onto the correct route. Simão is shown in this view as a peasant wearing a vivid white shirt. White is a colour of salvation and hope. Simão is a divinely sent angel who gives Tomás the motivation and energy to continue his mission. Tomás saw Simão’s crucial assistance as the active intervention of God. With joy, Tomás shouts, “Thank you, thank you again” (HMP 103). Simão waves goodbye and moves away from Tomás. Tomás overjoys and believes that he will succeed in his mission.

In *Self*, Martel uses the colour white as a representation of pride. The white kerchief is a potent symbol used in the novel to represent a culture’s pride, attained through killing an innocent animal (a bull). The main character, a travel writer, travels to many nations with various people. She travels to Mexico’s well-known tourist destinations with Françoise, a Frenchwoman. They participate in *fiesta taurina*, an event featuring bullfighting and animal torturing, where the bullfighters’ victories are declared by waving white handkerchiefs. The narrator finds the bullfight a barbaric one. On the other hand, the entire community celebrates the win, shouting, “Olé, olé, olé.” The narrator

continues, "White handkerchiefs waving" (S 236). The white kerchief represents pride in this instance, representing the people's pride in their triumph over the strong bull. It is a cultural sign suggesting that a group of people has triumphed and that success resembles white.

The custom of wearing a black colour dress or robe in mourning is depicted when Theseus encounters the march of widows "clad in clothes black" in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. (899) Black symbolizes bad omens, loss, mourning, death, and the pursuit of spiritual unity in *The High Mountains of Portugal*. Three different images of women in black have been utilized in the novel. When Tomás is out searching in the first chapter, "Homeless", in the town of Ponte de Sor, he comes across a woman dressed in black. She is clothed entirely in black. Black is represented here as a symbol of ominous signs, as a man addresses the woman as, "Oh, here comes Demetrio and his mother. She's not one you want to cross" (HMP 70). The locals of Ponte de Sor view the older woman, the mother of the town fool Demetrio, as a bad omen and forbid Tomás from approaching or conversing with her. The woman's yell gives Tomás a mystic impression. The elderly mother yells at Tomás because she believes that the only reason her son is sobbing is because Tomás may have taunted the youngster. The black outfit the older woman wears here represents the novel's discussion of loss, death, and grief. Tomás learns about the villagers' customs and the difficulties widows face in Portugal. Tomás and his wrecked car leap out and flee Ponte de Sor rapidly, louder. Black is a colour that represents death and pain. The dark outfit also represents her mental decline and insecurity after losing her husband.

Martel also utilized the colour black to represent Tomás's sorrow and loneliness. The narrator states that the darkness and isolation start to wear on him "when the sun has set, and the sky is inky black" (HMP 93). The unexpected deaths of his father, wife, and kid make Tomás much more isolated. Travelling to a distant land with many obstacles and worries makes him lost. The loss of his loved ones is symbolized by the sunset (the orange colour setting and the black colour emerging), while the pitch-black sky and nighttime represent his mental anguish, misery, and isolation. To find peace in his miserable life, this negative influence drives Tomás to embark on a quest-an inward study of his 'self' directed towards the Almighty God.

The second section, "Homeward", again uses the colour black as a symbol in the form of black clothing. Here, the black dress stands for mystery, search, and death. Maria Dores Passos Castro arrives late at night in São Francisco, the city's main hospital. Eusebio Lozora is the principal pathologist of São Francisco. When Eusebio Lozora opens the door, Maria is standing there strangely, wearing all black and holding a large bag. The narrator describes:

This woman is older. A black-dressed widow. A stranger. She eyes him. There is a large beat-up suitcase at her feet. Surely the woman hasn't been travelling at this late hour? He notes something else. Hidden by wrinkles, blurred by time, hindered by black peasant dress, but shining through nonetheless: The woman is a great beauty. A luminous face, a striking figure, a graceful carriage. (HMP 171)

Maria Castro looks weird, and her eyes search for a strange fact. Maria Castro needs Eusebio's assistance to perform the autopsy on her husband, Rafael Miguel Santos Castro, whose body is kept in the bag. She wants to understand "how Rafael lived" by unravelling the mystery, not how he died. As they converse:



“And what do you want me to do with him, Senhora Castro?”

“Open him up, tell me how he lived.” (HMP 184)

By talking about her past life and her love for her husband, Maria persuades the hesitant Eusebio to perform the autopsy. Rafael was a church caretaker, and he and his wife lost their little kid in an accident (who was hit by Tomás' automobile in the novel's opening section), which the villagers still regard as an unusual death. When Eusebio checks Rafael's dead body, he discovers several odd items, including a flute, playing cards, a crimson cloth, and other things, adding to the story's mystery. Martel uses black to symbolize sadness and loss, explicitly connecting it to Portuguese culture. The narrator says, “She's wearing black, but so does every woman over forty in rural Portugal who has lost some relative somewhere.” The narrator adds, “The apparel of mourning is a permanent dress for rural women.” (HMP 181/182) Maria Castro is shown to be a woman who is grieving and lost. She lost two priceless lives, her beloved spouse and her only son. The grief on her son's death is expressed as, “What's the point of being a mother if you have no one to mother? It's like being a flower without a head. On the day our son died, I became a bald stem” (HMP 202). The world appears empty and dark to her.

When the autopsy is completed, Maria moves all the strange items (obtained from Rafael's corpse) into a suitcase. Maria eventually removes her black dress and submits herself to Rafael's lifeless body. Eusebio sews the stitches of Rafael's body as he hears Maria's faint voice, as it is said, “He hears her only faintly as he finishes the torso: “Thank you, Senhor doctor.”” (HMP 209) Maria Castro acknowledges that her home is her husband's body. The narrator says, “Leaning over Rafael Castro's body, nudging here and there, pushing and wiggling, making space where there seems to be none, filled as he is already with two creatures, Maria Castro carefully settles into her husband's body.” She repeats, “This is home, this is home, this is home.” (HMP 208/209) It serves as a reminder that Adam and Eve were created from his ribs. Maria's spiritual journey reveals her deepest desire to be united with her husband.

Martel again focuses on using the colour black to represent death in the third chapter of the novel “Home”. He discusses the widows' black clothing and connects it to the ape's black colour. Odo's darkness is displayed to explain the deeper meanings of colour symbolism. In this section, Martel depicts the Portuguese tradition of widows donning black clothing to signify death and sadness. The narrator describes, “As a result, the village widows who at first shrank away from him, retreating into surliness, transform into the most devoted ones to him.” The narrator adds, “It's a good fit, the short, stooped woman dressed in black and the short, stooped animal with the black coat. One might be forgiven for mistaking one for the other from a distance. (HMP 306)

Martel is keen on the traditional and cultural merits of the black colour. It is typically portrayed as the colour of sorrow, death, and loss. The black dresses worn by Portuguese widows convey a lot about the loss-related pain they are experiencing. The black colour is a metaphor for Peter's grief at the recent loss of his beloved wife. Even chimpanzees are black; they do not emit any negative vibes. Odo's life had tragic experiences in the zoo, and with Peter, he enjoys complete freedom and has a spiritual connection with him.

Martel frequently utilized the colour black to represent bitter traits in his works. In *Life of Pi*, he used black to symbolize loss and death. Pi is thrown out to a lifeboat, and he notices the blackness of the ship in the hovering dark whirlwind. Pi says, “When I looked overboard, the drop wasn't

sheer anymore. I could see the ship's great black side" (LP 103). The colour of the ship indicates not only the destruction of the enormous ship but also the fear and hopeless condition of Pi. The ship's black side refers to the darker side of life. Indeed, his lurking heart with a glimpse of hope expecting to be saved by the mercy of God.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Hades, the river of the dead is black (29). The novel also makes use of the symbol 'Black Ocean'. Pi associates the sorrow and suffering from the unexpected loss to the black ocean. Pi says, "There was nothing. Only rain, marauding waves of the black ocean, and the flotsam of tragedy. The darkness melted away from the sky. The rain stopped" (LP 107). Pi is in absolute blackness in the lifeboat on the black sea. The line "I seemed to be floating in pure, abstract blackness" is uttered by Pi (LP 118). Pi is accompanied by four wild animals in the lifeboat, including the deadly hyena and the dangerous Bengal tiger. Pi witnesses the vicious hyena's terrible brutality as it attacks the helpless zebra and innocent orangutan. Pi fears the hyena and especially at night. "Everything about the end of the day scared me," he claims. "At night, a ship would have difficulty seeing me. At night; the hyena might become active again and maybe Orange Juice too." (LP 118) His heart fears and begs God to take him away from the obscenity of the colour black.

Black represents horror. The blackness refers to the horror and grief of the ship's wreckage and its members' deaths. The shipwreck scene is given more catching in the movie *Life of Pi*, by its director Ang Lee. The loud expiration, groans, grunts, and numerous wet mouth sounds in the pitch-blackness symbolize the death cries of his relatives and the passengers of the enormous ship. Pi frequently dives from the lifeboat to save himself during the dark times at sea, especially from the dangerous Parker. Pi feels tragic in the hopeless position of floating in the dark Pacific Ocean. "Being in the water was terrifying," quips Pi. "It was cold, dark, and furious" (LP 106). Here, black symbolizes both the brutal nature of the murky sea and the threat posed by animals. Pi constructs a raft connected to the lifeboat to protect himself from potential threats. He endures excellent hardships when sleeping on the raft, nevertheless, during the nights. "Pitch-black darkness" represents Pi's miserable circumstances and his heart filled with fear of animals and the water, as well as the grief of loss and the passing of his parents. He has moments when he questions whether all his setbacks and hardships result from God's wrath.

On the other hand, Pi chooses not to give up on God and continues to believe, love, and live. Pi says, "Despair was a heavy blackness that let no light in or out. It was a hell beyond expression. I thank God it always passed." He adds, "The blackness would stir and eventually disappear, and God would remain a shining point of light in my heart. I would go on loving." (LP 209) Pi overcomes all the blackness of his sea life through his strong hope and deep faith in God. Pi's words make the statement strong:

And now I leave matters in the hands of God, who is love and whom I love.

I heard the words, "Is someone there?"

It's astonishing what you hear when you're alone in the blackness of your dying mind. A sound without shape or colour sounds strange. To be blind is to hear otherwise. (LP 242)

Martel employed the colour black to represent mystery and death in *Beatrice and Virgil*. Another vital symbol Martel uses in *Beatrice and Virgil*. "black water." The taxidermist includes numerous scenes that depict the misery, brutality, and fatalities experienced during the Holocaust in his

allegorical drama. The taxidermist explains some awful deeds, which a cruel boy and his companions instigate, on some innocent women and their children, which the characters Beatrice and Virgil witness. The same boy who kills Beatrice and Virgil carries out the horrific acts. Here, black symbolizes death and brutality, which neglects compassion and mercy and serves as a catalyst to wish for goodness and benevolence in the name of God.

Beatrice and Virgil are standing by the village pond when they see two young women running towards the pond wearing long skirts and heavy peasant boots, fearing the boy and a gang of men. According to the taxidermist, "Terror and the grimmest determination were written on the women's faces." (BV 180) He continues, "The men lining the edge of the pond-there must have been ten or so-far from offering any kind of help, jeered the women on." (BV 181) Because they fear the gang, the young women drop and drown their babies in the dark water. The taxidermist says, "When she was confident that her baby could no longer be alive, yet still clutching it beneath the surface, one of the women, now past her waist in the black water, plunged head first and immediately drowned." He adds, "Neither she nor her baby broke the surface again. They both sank to the bottom." (BV 181) In the gloomy pond of death, the young women commit suicide and drown. The taxidermist writes, "Whereas the first woman's death had proceeded with the swiftness of gravity, the second woman's took longer." (BV 181) He describes their struggle to die. The boy and his group rejoice when the mothers struggle and lose their infants. The black water pond represents the Holocaust-related sorrow and deaths. Even though they had some faith in divine power, they did not relish watching their infants perish at the hands of ruthless men.

In *Life of Pi*, when Pi was a castaway at sea, he experienced heavy white lightning while enveloping the gloom of his sorrows. Frustrated, He groans, "Once there was lightning. The sky was so black, the day looked like the night" (LP 232). His sufferings are represented by black, and his positive energy is represented by white. Pi witnesses a white splinter pierce the water as it falls from the sky. It appears to be a sizeable celestial tree standing in the water with white roots. This scene in the movie *Life of Pi* is presented beautifully by its director. Pi believes it to be a sign of hope, survival, and a direct order of affirmation from God. Pi expresses his excitement and sense of awe by saying, "It was something to pull me out of my limited mortal ways and thrust me into a state of exalted wonder" (LP 233). The whiteness of celestial lightning repeatedly blesses Pi and Richard Parker. Pi details his experience:

For two, perhaps three seconds, a gigantic, blinding white shard of glass from a broken cosmic window danced in the sky, insubstantial yet overwhelmingly powerful. Ten thousand trumpets and twenty thousand drums could not have made as much noise as that bolt of lightning; it was positively deafening. The sea turned white, and all colour disappeared. Everything was either pure white light or pure black shadow. (LP 233)

In the paragraph above, the phrase "the sea turned white" is a potent symbol that highlights the superiority of light, which has a better quality to rid Pi's consciousness of the sea of anguish and suffering. In Christianity, God is white, whereas evil and Satan are black. Here, the white colour's strength dispels Pi and Richard Parker's agony and suffering's dark shadow. Pi says, "I shouted, "Stop your trembling! This is a miracle. This is an outbreak of divinity."" (LP 233) Pi abruptly forgets all of the difficulties and the sadness all around him. Pi is rendered speechless and suffocates in genuine happiness and ecstasy. The white light is a heavenly message of blessing and deliverance.

Thus, the colour white has inspired kind thoughts in Pi's mind, which has helped him understand God's omnipresence and how God's compassion can help him survive.

## 6. Conclusion

Symbolism is employed to explain the ways that go beyond what is communicated. To increase the importance of symbols in work, writers use literary devices like metaphors, similes, and allegories. Symbolism has the power to make sensations and emotions more beautiful. Symbols can also powerfully draw readers' attention. Colour symbolism represents something outside of its literal sense. Colour is an essential tool in storytelling. Writers of different genres have used it powerfully to instantly set the tone and mood and infuse the words' deeper meanings. Besides, the colours are also used to convey subtle messages that reveal the influence of culture, religion, spirituality, and individual perception through the colours. In his novels, Martel has advocated using colours as symbolic representations and incorporated significant hidden meanings through their use. Black and white colours are successfully used by Martel as symbols to symbolize the equally opposing feelings and circumstances of his main characters. The desire for the individual search and hope in God is seen in Martel's protagonists. Through the colours, God is the essential force driving all attempts and deeds, despite denial and violence, and good people can still find the omnipotent God even in the dire circumstances of Martel's prime characters. According to M.H. Abrams and Ernest Jones' symbolic theories, a symbol can effectively communicate inner intentions and emotions. Through the use of colour symbolism, author Yann Martel has been successful in expressing the intentions and feelings of his characters. Further research can be done on Yann Martel's novels from the perspectives of religious, mythic, archetypal, aesthetic, and individual symbolism.

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