

## Psychoanalysis of the Effects of Loss of the Maternal Bond

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You're in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there are three other people with you. Apart from your mother, your whole family is dead. Then, she gets decapitated before your eyes as she was trying to protect you. How psychologically affected would you be? This was the situation Pi Patel, of the novel Life of Pi by Yann Martel, found himself in and his tragic struggle to survive on a life boat after the ship he was on sank is described in the book. The innocent Pi turned murderer after he killed the cook, who had killed his mother and ate another human being. Throughout the novel, it was evident that Pi was willing to go to greater lengths for

survival, however, his capability to kill a man was unexpected. In Part 3 of the novel Life of Pi, the protagonist's greatest loss was his mother as a strong maternal bond had been broken, which led him to commit the brutal act of murder. The maternal bond between Pi

and his mother was extremely strong and as she was his last family member, losing her would have been devastating. Due to the psychological effect of losing one's mother, one can be driven to murder.

"God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers," the famous quote once uttered by author, Rudyard Kipling, with much fondness (Kipling). In like manner, the maternal bond which Pi has with his mother is extremely strong. Throughout the book, faith is key to Pi's survival and a fair part of this significant introduction involves his mother. As she is part of a process which leads him on to a journey to find two other religions and subscribe to them simultaneously, Pi definitely holds her dear. The following quotation displays this "we went on this Hindu rite of passage, Mother carrying me, Auntie propelling her." (Martel 62). This furthers the reader's understanding of his mother's importance as it

displays how closely involved she is. Even though it was Pi's aunty who first introduced him to Hinduism, he mentions his mother first, which indicates his view of her as the leader on his journey of faith. Furthermore, the author utilizes the word "carry", from this it can be inferred that his mother was a ship and he a mere passenger exploring Hinduism. Similarly, it can be viewed as a means of protection. Events such as the one depicted in the quote, would have caused the existing maternal bond to be strengthened substantially. This was also why it remains a fond memory and a momentous <sup>instance</sup> instant in Pi's mind. More importantly, Pi's mother is very protective over him, which would have led him to view her as his, in <sup>layman's</sup> terms, guardian angel. The protectiveness of the maternal figure over the infant often indicates strong maternal bond (Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde and Marris 66). This <sup>effort</sup> ~~thrive~~ to keep Pi secure is particularly apparent in chapter 8; when Pi's father is about to show his two sons the level of danger a tiger poses, the mother protests about Pi's youth. Although Pi's brother, Ravi, is only two years older than him, the mother does not seem to worry too much about him. During the violent scene, where the tiger pounced on the goat, Pi's mother grasped him and this expresses her desperation to keep him safe. A strong maternal bond would have been the reason for such an action. Finally, the bond between Pi and his mother would have been able to develop into a strong relationship due to her being a housewife. A study by Thompson et al. displayed that while maternal employment could lead to a stressful family relationship, non-employed mothers had a greater likelihood of having a stable infant-mother attachment (Owen et al. 2). This final piece of evidence explains her role in the family and how it was comparatively stronger to an employed mother. Conclusively, these various aspects of; introduction to faith, protectiveness and unemployment, would have led to the forming of a strong maternal bond between Pi and his mother. Moreover, the strength of the bond would have led to an additionally devastating impact when it was lost.

You were treading to a point of over explaining the bond, but I feel that you did end off on a reasonable point. Furthermore, your use of transition words established for me when all your supportive points were going to end, so that was good.



The previously stated argument explores the strength of the maternal bond between Pi and his mother, which leads on to the discussion about his greatest loss. As Pi's mother was the

last family member he had, losing her would have left him orphaned, with no hope or no

safety net. The sudden loss could even have caused him to feel lost and become unsure of his direction. After having lost two of his family members when the Tsimtsum sank, Pi's

REPEATITIOUS!

mother was his last remaining hope. Once he had lost her too, he became an orphan, cast

away and without a family. He would have greatly struggled during these times and it might

have caused his sometimes faltering faith. As she was the last to be lost to him, losing her would have been most significant as it marked the moment where he was completely alone.

At this point, he would not have been in a stable condition, as he would have been

traumatized. Following this, Pi killed the cook, and this depicts her importance to him and

shows the extent he would go to for his mother. As she was the last person he had, Pi's

mother had been his only safety net. Numerous occurrences in the novel describe the

protectiveness which Pi's mother had over him. One particularly powerful scene came

during the last moments of her life in Part 3: the cook hit Pi because he wasn't able to hold a

turtle, his mother then hit the cook, which led to a fight between the two to ensue. In an

attempt to save Pi, she ordered him to leave the boat, while sacrificing her life for him

(Martel 415). The extent to which his mother goes to to save him shows her immense love

and her protectiveness towards him. This sacrifice which she makes shows how great a loss

she is. Following that, Pi displays two of the five stages of grief; denial & isolation and anger

(Axelrod). According to Part 3, Pi does not display any of the five stages of grief towards the

loss of his father and brother but he does after his mother's death. This shows that she was

more important and her loss had a much greater impact on him. Due to Pi's mother being

his last hope and his safety net, a sudden loss of her would leave him orphaned and without

a guardian. The grief which he shows towards her loss, was not the same with the rest of his

family, which causes one to believe that she was particularly important. In essence, Pi's

I understand that denial and isolation is considered one stage, but it still doesn't warrant the use of the "&" symbol in your scholarly writing.

Where is your evidence of this?

mother was his greatest loss and such a traumatic event could have led him to commit even an act he did not approve.

Loss can be one of the most significant events in one's life and, at times, could be one of the most traumatic (Thompson). The psychological effect of losing one's mother, could cause one to turn into a murderer. In the novel, Pi watches the cook violently stab and decapitate his mother. Such a devastating event would have greatly impacted him and would have been traumatic. The event could probably lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, and this has been proven through various studies which is apparent in the following quote.

“Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children has now been studied in relation to witnessed... parental murder” (Hendriks et al. 11). PTSD, being a disorder caused by exposure to traumatic events, affects hundreds of thousands of people with varying intensities. Furthermore, the evidence makes it obvious that children who ~~bore~~ witness to the murder of a parent are highly likely to face PTSD. As the event Pi was held witness to involved his mother, the effects would have been of a much greater intensity as “children suffer more intensely and persistently when the catastrophe they witness is caused by a person or people rather than resulting from a natural disaster” (Hendriks et al. 11). Through this, it can be inferred that the loss of his mother would have placed a heavy burden and would have a strong emotional effect on him. PTSD suffered by children, causes effects which also affect adults in a similar way (Hendriks et al. 11). Due to this, the effects displayed by adults who have PTSD can be replicated by children. In the Kandahar Massacre, a US soldier went on a killing spree, murdering 17 Afghan civilians, which also included 9 children. A large proportion of soldiers suffer from PTSD and the mass killing is most likely due to this (Sheehan, and Sheehan 1). PTSD sufferers display varied symptoms and the effects of it depends on the person and the trauma which they had faced. Murder, for example, is not uncommon and numerous shootings have been the ~~cause of those with~~ <sup>related to being the outcome</sup>



of those  
who are  
coping with

PTSD. The loss of one's mother, a prominent figure most have seen since birth and

commonly the caring and supportive figure in one's life, would be extremely traumatic. In

Part Three, Pi describes the feeling as "No whip could have inflicted a more painful lash." An

CITATION!

individual can decipher this as a metaphor indicating his emotions towards the killing of his mother. He depicts the pain to be immense and unbearable. This intense amount of trauma

could easily lead to extreme effects of PTSD. In many cases, these effects can lead to

murder. As parental murder can cause post-traumatic stress disorder in children, which

effects would be similar to that of adults, Pi watching his mother being killed would

definitely have instilled PTSD in him. This ~~would~~ <sup>could</sup> then have led him to murder as the loss of

his mother significantly impacted him.

Conclusively, the objective behind writing the essay was to explain Pi's final, brutal act of murder by putting into perspective ~~the impact which losing his mother would have caused~~ <sup>how it was the result of the range of outcomes he would have faced haing witnessed the murder of his mother.</sup>

This perspective was divided up into three separate arguments. Firstly, the maternal bond between Pi and his mother is strong due to the early development. Secondly, the numerous

events and occurrences on the boat, indicate that a traumatic experience would have

followed the murder of his mother as she would protect him and keep him from becoming

lonely. Furthermore, the psychological effect which is caused by the loss of a maternal figure

could lead one to commit acts such as murder. On the other hand, some might believe that

rather than his mother, Pi's innocence was the greatest loss. At the same time, others could

believe that even losing a mother could not lead you to commit murder. However, this

varies depending on one's perspective. If the psychological effect of losing a close bond is so

overwhelming, a large amount of killers could be empathized with. The essay also gives a

keen insight into the reason Pi could have led himself to commit such an act. On the whole,

it displays the severity of the actions which one could commit when placed under ~~the~~ <sup>extreme and trying</sup>

circumstances. At times these actions ~~these actions~~ could even go against your morals.

There needs to be a greater amount of research carried out on the topic as it could change

the fate of certain murderers as the murder could be caused by a psychological condition  
and this can even impact others' views on them. <sup>society's view and judgement on them.</sup>

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Formatting not completely accurate.