

## ***Life of Pi: A Story of Suffering and Liberation from Buddhist Interpretation***

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### **Abstract**

*Life of Pi* is a fantasy adventure novel written by Yann Martel. Published in 2002, it won a big award and was later adapted into a much acclaimed movie by Ang Lee. A shipwreck story with a boy and tiger coexisting on a lifeboat invites various interpretations. This paper explores its meaning from Buddhist perspective, aiming to prove that it is not only an intriguing survival story but a universal allegory of human predicament and the ways to be liberated from it.

The contents of this study are divided into two parts. The first part illustrates Pi's experiences as the embodiment of samsara. His suffering reflects the first of the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha. The ocean on which he drifts symbolizes human life full of sorrow and uncertainty. The shipwreck signifies the inconstancy of life that falls prey to trials and tribulations. Pi's ordeals can be classified into eight different types of suffering common to humanity. The second part explores the path to nirvana. The moment Pi reaches the land implies the attainment of nirvana. The ways leading to the end of his suffering enact the last of the Four Noble Truths. For this part,

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Buddhist doctrines on meditative stability and emptiness are discussed.

Buddhism is not one of the three religions Pi embraces, nor is Pi a Buddhist disciple practicing the ways to nirvana. Yet, his story is rich in Buddhist implications. His adventure bears witness to the remedy of suffering as prescribed by the Buddha. Suffering and the cessation of suffering are not only the Buddha's central teaching but the eternal theme in literary works.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, suffering, liberation, wisdom, faith

## 以佛法的觀點詮釋《少年 Pi 的奇幻漂流》： 有關苦難與解脫的故事

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### 摘要

《少年 Pi 的奇幻漂流》是 Yann Martel 於 2002 年所寫的奇幻小說，出版後獲獎，李安導演之後改編成電影亦備受好評。印度少年 Pi 在救生艇上和老虎共存並得救的故事留下無限的解讀空間。本文嘗試以佛法的角度檢視此小說的義涵，看到它不只是引人入勝的冒險故事而已，而是生命存在的寓言，呈現出苦諦及解脫的智慧。

本文內容分兩部分，第一部分闡釋 Pi 所經歷的苦難反映眾生沉淪生死苦海，也就是佛陀所說的四聖諦當中的第一道諦——苦諦。大海是生命的象徵，充滿無常之苦，而船難是生命中無所不在的試煉。第二部分探討解脫的方法，此小說多處指涉禪定及空性的概念。Pi 上岸得救可視為到彼岸成就涅槃的象徵，而通向解脫之路需要智慧，四聖諦當中的道諦說明此道理。

Pi 不是修行的佛弟子，佛教也不是他所信奉的三個宗教之一。但是他的故事充滿佛法的寓意。在不自覺中他見證了佛法最核心的思想，也是文學作品恆久的主題——苦難及解脫。

**關鍵字：**佛法、苦難、解脫、智慧、信念

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