

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Human's life goes by their own choices in terms of their actions towards something that they achieved. People nowadays would listen or follow what their surroundings had suggested, but sometimes would follow what they believe to do in their own lives. It is known as a philosophical belief called existentialism, which is a belief that humans are responsible for creating their purpose and meaning in their lives. Existentialism existed when someone was in lost and in the progress of searching for their meaning or purpose of living by their own. It existed in real life, and also was portrayed in literature.

Literature throughout the centuries has been vaguely defined as compilation of texts which produce written works. Literature is not just compilation of texts as it needs to have significant values that includes creative expression and manifests historical and social values in it. The values then provide aesthetical values and delivers thoughts, meanings, and purposes. With that being said, literature is any written works which delivers aesthetical values or lasting values (Klarer, 1999).

There are many branches of literature, one of which is novel. Novel is a branch or genre of literature that developed from the fiction and epic. Novel is considered as superior form of fiction due to its realism and individualisation which enables it to be more realistic. This better form of

fiction is established by its characterisation, structured plot and certain point of view techniques (Klarer, 1999). This superiority enables us to analyse and critic the literature works through many criticism approaches. The criticism towards novel can be also approached with philosophical views as the philosophical view can delve into the character ideology or thoughts. This philosophical approach towards literature works can be the existentialism approach.

Existentialism is often times becomes the part of the examinable aspect in literature. Although sometimes it is not directly said that a literature might concern about existential issues, the aspect can emerge as we read through the storyline. Typically, the portrayal of existentialism includes existence, freedom, and choices. One of the novels that portrayed existentialism is “Life of Pi” written by Yann Martel, in which the existentialism is well pointed out by the author with the fictional events that almost seen as real-life events with its in-depth realism.

Yann Martel, who was born on June 25th 1963, is an author from Canada who had written the novel entitled “Life of Pi” that had him to win the prize of Man Booker. The novel is also the bestseller book internationally that had published and distributed in more than 50 places, and had widely sold around 12 million copies in the world. He had also won few of literary prizes, included Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature in 2002, The Boeke Prize in 2003, and Hugh MacLennan prize in 2001. He is an author of the other novels, such as “The High Mountains of Portugal”, “Self”, and “Beatrice and

Virgil". He also wrote a collection of stories in a book entitled "The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios", and collection of letters of Canada's Prime Minister with the title "101 Letters to a Prime Minister".

"Life of Pi" novel written by Yann Martel, was published in 2002 with 352 pages which is divided into three parts, and a hundred chapters. It depicted the experience of an Indian boy who survived for 227 days from a shipwreck on the Pacific Ocean in his trip from India to Canada along with a Bengal Tiger. In his survival, many struggles were experienced by him as the story unwind on how he survived. Along his survival, he reflects existentialism values.

Piscine Molitor Patel –known as Pi, the main character— survival is told with two different versions. One with how he survived alongside of animals from the zoo which was on the shipwreck and the other one where he survived with his mother, a sailor and a chef. Both of the stories expressed on how Pi have to make choice in order to defend his existence and not forsaking his own survival.

The author reflected the existentialism thematic view through the stories, such as, existence and freedom. The thematic view give insight on how the main character defend its existence and survival. Through the main discourse of existence precedes essence, the main character Pi has gone through a subjectivity starting point in where he is put in the subjectivity of survival and by that he had the realisation of defending his existence. As each individual sees the world in their own subjective view, Pi himself view that

he is rather hopeless. With that he has to come up with something to make up his survival, and by this he has defended his existence. "I had to stop hoping so much that a ship would rescue me. I should not count on outside help. Survival had to start with me"(Martel, 2007, p. 189).

Existentialism first emerged from the concern of life existence meaning and it is pioneered by such theorist Soren Kierkegaard along with Friedrich Nietzsche. Through pioneers, the existentialism is developed into further philosophy attained by philosophers in the twentieth century. Panza & Gale (2008) mentioned existentialism is a study of existence itself rather than everything that exists and it is also study what it means to be something as opposed to nothing, to exist at all. Existentialism itself is a study of human existence in how one tries to find meaning in this meaningless life. The meaning of life itself does not show up by itself. Sartre and his fellow philosophers think that existence precedes essence, which in words means there is subjectivity as the starting point (Sartre, 2012)

Existentialism also goes alongside with freedom. As with the stories, freedom can be interpreted in various action. According to Sartre (2012) believes that freedom is a choice which man creates for himself at his own possibility and responsibility. In this case, Pi was questioned by two Japanese officer regarding his survival. Pi has told two different stories to the officers and let them decide which one is more trustable. To Pi however he has the freedom to tell whichever stories due to the fact in both of the stories the ship was wrecked, his family died, and he had to suffer. He created freedom of

choice with the possibilities he has. “You can't prove which story is true and which is not. You must take my word for it...In both stories the ship sinks, my entire family dies, and I suffer” (Martel, 2007, p. 339).

This bizarre experience by the main character, Pi in this novel by Yann Martel has a good research prompt to many researchers. Through similar view of existentialism presented in novel, there are two research has been done. Research done by Wirahadi (2008) focused on existentialism and freedom of life struggles reflected in the novel. With the similar existentialism philosophical theories are applied to the object of observation, the researcher concluded Crusoe's way of defending his existence is much related to existentialism aspect. The second research is done by Rinna (2017). This research focused on the existence of the main character Santiago and the cause and effect of human's existence. Existentialism philosophical theory applied to the research is Soren Keikergaard's theory, the researcher concluded that human secure their existence through the stages of life which are aesthetic, ethical, and religious.

The researcher found that defining existence presented as novel theme is a reflection to real-life. As the book “Life of Pi” itself is a fiction that is related closely to real life experience, it has strongly opened eyes on finding life meaning through existence, as human has an abundant desire in finding peace and freedom in their life. This therefore spark the interest for the researcher to conduct research with a title of “Defending Self-existence and

Freedom as Reflected in “Life of Pi” by Yann Martel: An Existentialism Approach”

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the phenomena presented in the research background, some possible problems are identified:

1. The philosophy reflected in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel
2. Defending existence as reflected in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel
3. Freedom in existentialism philosophy in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel
4. Achievement of defending life existence as reflected in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

1. Defending existence as reflected in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel.
2. Achievement of defending self-existence in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

1. What are the struggles of the main character in defending his existence in the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel?
2. What are the achievements of the main character after defending his self-existence in the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

1. To describe the struggles of the main character in defending his existence in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel.
2. To reveal the achievements of the main character after defending his self-existence in *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel.

1.6 Significance of the Research

1. Theoretically

This research significance in theoretical form is expected to be helpful in providing theories and insight for literary study especially on Existentialism in literary works. Furthermore, this research is expected to aid and develop studies for students and undergraduate students regarding literary criticism particularly in existentialism approach.

2. Practically

This research practical significance is hoped to be an insightful reference for further research in existentialism. This research may also provide information related to literary works criticism in existentialism

spectrum, this includes journey in finding life meaning and understand more what define our existence. Furthermore, it is also hoped that this research could be broadened to give understanding not just in fiction but also in real life conditions.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Existentialism Approach Existentialism approach is a literary criticism approach that mainly focuses on human existence in how one tries to find meaning in this meaningless life. The existentialism is expected in some literature works as literature can be considered as life reflections in fictional worlds. The search of life meaning is reflected by the journey of the character in accomplishing the struggle he faces along it.

Freedom Freedom is the right of oneself in act, speak, or think without any disturbance from outside variable, which is solely left to oneself desire. Freedom can only be defined by oneself as the freedom in doing anything is based by oneself doings without any constraint. Freedom is attained when there is choice upon any decisions made.

Self-existence

Existence of oneself without dependence on anything but oneself nature. The self-existence is self-explanatory due to its relation to life as one can only define what his existence is.