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THE POWER OF SELF-REALIZATION FOR TRANSFORMATION: A VEDANTIC
INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL "THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI"
BY ROBIN SHARMA

RAJESH KUMAR

Assistant Professor, G.B. Pant Memorial Govt. College, Rampur Bushahr HP 172001.
Email: durga.mathassheshering@gmail.com



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ABSTRACT

What is true happiness? Is it to find out what you truly love to do and direct all your energy towards doing it? Once you do this, abundance and success crown your life and all your desires are filled with prosperity and material comforts. Is this what the true and joyful bliss we all wish to accomplish? In the present study I have undertaken a humble effort to study the novel by Robin Sharma "The Monk who sold His Ferrari" through the perspective and the perceptive lens of the Vedantic Philosophy to decipher the transformational journey of the principal character Julian Mantle and the secret of happiness which leads to eternal ecstasy. In order to interpret and deconstruct the text of the Novel wear the Lens of the Vedic Philosophy which proposes that we should cultivate and nurture our minds in a certain way to explore true nature of intelligence and this accomplishment will blossom beyond our expectations and we can decode the precious lessons with opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. To realize and actualize the true inner experience dive deep into the realms of deeper dimensions of intellect and intelligence is essential which is capable of transformation The spirit of Eastern wisdom is not limited to bookish knowledge and sensory information; it is beyond superficial thought process and also goes beyond the five sense organs with limited perceptions with distortion of the reality for mere existence or survival. Nature of true reality could be understood in relation with inner perceptions and eternal laws. Intellect only dissects but intelligence ensures Inward movement and the profoundness of experience. Sense organs are outward bound by nature hence intellect which relies upon Intellect has certain limitations. If we truly wish to know the fundamental laws of Nature which governs life, we need inner perception or the deeper and higher dimension of intelligence within us.

Keywords: Happiness, Vedantic philosophy, Intelligence, spiritual growth, intellect, transformation, perception, eternal Laws, loneliness, conscious, sub-conscious, genetic, Dharma.

Introduction

The Power of self-enquiry and critical appreciation permeates whole atmosphere of this incredible novel of the quest for purpose and meaning in life. So, this interpretation of the novel deals with the protagonist, Julian Mantle, whose journey of self- transformation and self-discovery has been studied in light of the wisdom of Vedanta philosophy which offers a Perception of life in a very different way with other sublime dimensions of intelligence. Let us explore his journey by analyzing the sixteen-dimensional studies or the study of the sixteen parts of human mind as per the Vedic and the Yogic perspective. For the sake of convenience and the keeping in view the nature of the research article we propose to study only the four aspects of the mind: **Buddhi** is the Intellect which ensures and enhances comforts and convenience in life, but at the same time results in emptiness, hollowness, and loneliness. The more use of intellect and the lonelier we are. **Ahankara** is Identity, a strong sense of who I am, and it is a certain kind of prejudice. We all are identified with something or the other and the intellect will work only to protect the identity. We are willing to give up everything for the identity and our pursuit to achieve the desired results but we cannot escape stress, misery, suffering, fear, anxiety which is the byproduct of our excessive indulgence in material world. **Manas is the silo of memory** there are eight dimensions of Memory, there is conscious memory, subconscious memory, genetic, evolutionary memory and profound dimensions of memory first three intelligence it is samskara (cyclical Life) moving in circles, it is like exercise it has a cyclical mode, cyclical nature of our existence. **Chitta** is pure intelligence and unsullied by memory and beyond every kind of influence past or other untouched by any memory, memory within you, Dharma is great significant because it comes from Chitta truly universal and which Sanatana Dharma which is the Ultimate law of Nature and does not come from individual identity or memory Two dimensions of Nature the Physical Nature and The Inner nature Two Dimensions of Laws Physical Nature changing thing in a process of flux Inner Nature is Constant Two dimensions of Dharma; Shrutis and Smritis', the two dimensions of expression which is very foundation of the Vedantic understanding of the novel "The Monk who Sold his Ferrari"

The self-Enquiry: a step towards the Vedantic realization of the true self.

Who am I? What am I? Have been the profound questions troubling the seekers after the truth and the knowledge seekers who have been passionately following the reality of existence and the true self which is core of all the actions and reactions of our personality and demeanour. Is the true self the realization and resolution of our problems, stress, emotions, conflicts, greed, anxiety, agitation, beliefs system, likes, dislikes or is it beyond these outer sheaths and subtler and deeper which requires extensive and exhaustive study and knowledge to delve deep into decipher the Vedantic notion of self. Julian Mantle in the Novel undertakes this journey to appreciate this truth which is beyond tangible reality. Julian Mantle is the inspirational character in Robin S. Sharma's most critically acclaimed novel "The Monk Who Sold his Ferrari". It presents the motivational and soul touching story of indomitable search for the true self by its central character Julian Mantle, who used to be a very successful and rich lawyer in the United States. He was superficially a very successful in his legal profession and appears to be a happy person, with fame and power externally. However, a sudden transformation has brought about by his workaholic attitude in his life during one of his trials in a packed courtroom; he suffered from a severe heart attack and collapsed, and he was so saddened and grieved by this incident and then he started his search for true Vedantic self for the eternal joy and bliss.

The journey from the Mind to consciousness.

The novel depicts the journey of the character Julian Mantle from the level of mind to the pure consciousness, from the appearance to the subtler reality of true self in Vedantic tradition. The Vedic understanding of consciousness possibly suggests an organic process of evolution, wherein there is a constant emotional inclination to move into higher forms of reality and truth, which in turn could have a better and intelligent grasp of the nature of the unknown riddles of this infinite universe to realize the state of nothingness with everything. One Vedic model of the mind is often expressed by the comparison of the chariot in the Katha Upanishad and the Bhagavad-Gita. In this metaphor the person is compared to a chariot that is pulled in different directions by the horses which represents the senses. The mind is understood as the driver who holds the steering, but the question comes that who sits next to the mind or the engine of the vehicle the master of the

chariot – the true observer, the self, who represents the highest form of consciousness, the pure being, the Atman, a universal unity. Without this, the seer, the ultimate self no true blissful joy and the coherent behavior are possible to lead a contended and meaningful life.

Julian Mantle, the protagonist in the novel who has achieved tremendous success in his profession had become purpose less and materialistic in the world of glitterati of wealth and power. But the life changing and dramatic sudden collapse, and the doctor's strict warning that either he should quit his profession or his life, he had no options left, but to choose the second one.

As John, the other character in the novel narrates:

"He collapsed right in the middle of a packed courtroom. He was one of this country's most distinguished trial lawyers. He was also a man who was as well-known for the three thousand-dollar Italian suits which draped his well-fed frame as for his remarkable string of legal victories. I simply stood there, paralyzed by the shock of what I just witnessed. The great Julian Mantle had been reduced to a victim and was now squirming on the ground like a helpless infant, shaking and shivering and sweating like a maniac". (1)

However, this incident has deeply impacted on the mindset and the outlook of Julian Mantle. It provoked him to consider his future course of life, with limited options left to join the path of spiritual way or risk his life. Mantle bargained for the spiritual way of finding his true and divine self (The Atman). He mustered courage and determination to control his nerves and thoughts. His dream, who once wanted to be the Centre of power and wealth, was to share his life changing experience of Vedantic concept and path of joy and fulfillment which is the source of eternal joy and learn the ancient and Vedic formulae to achieve the ecstatic state to the people of west who are suffering from the mental and the psychological trauma of distortion.

As he (Julian Mantle) narrates on to John:

"They (people) have not learned the art of self-control and disciplined thinking. Most people I have spoken to have no idea that they have the power to control every single thought they think every second of every minute of every day. They believe that thoughts just happen and have never realized that if you don't take the time to start controlling your thoughts, they will control you. When you start to focus on good thoughts only, and refuse to think the bad ones through sheer will power, I promise you they will shrivel up very quickly". (151)

So, the judicious way to accomplish the state of pure consciousness is to turn inwards to subtler world of higher reality by initiating the process by giving up the bad thoughts and engulf within oneself with positive thoughts is the way to achieve the goal of destiny to the real self. If one cannot control his mind from the negative thoughts, it will eventually control the person. So, abiding by the Vedic way of life and understanding the aspects of life along with the meditation to control the mind and the body from the negative thoughts coming to an individual and under the wise and thoughtful guidance of the 'Gurus' Julian Mantle has found the righteous path of self-introspection and wisdom.

The Different levels (Sheaths and components of the Journey from the 'Mind to the Pure Consciousness.'

This profound and intricate journey for the search for the Pure Consciousness is complex and full of surprises and riddles. The Protagonist in the novel, "The Monk who sold his Ferrari" Julian Mantle has a strong will power and grit to quench his thirst for the wisdom. So, his journey can possibly be interpreted under the ambit of Vedantic philosophy. Let us decode the layers of Vedic interpretation of the transformation of Julian Mantle. The true nature and abode of the divine self has been a matter of research and curiosity and has been in the centre of discussion for years, however, the well-structured, defined and universally accepted answers are still debatable among the intellectuals. B. K. Jagdish Chandra Hassija, one of the greatest spiritual torch bearers of our country has defined self in relation to consciousness, as:

"Meaning of self comes through consciousness, and, in turn, consciousness is true knowledge of soul. However, self is not a matter of superficial importance nor is it to be left to some philosophers or religious scholars to discuss. Since each and every one of us is a conscious being, it concerns us all individuality and

severely. To refute ourselves with the true knowledge of consciousness is to deny ourselves the right and the duty of living a meaningful life". (Preface, 1)

In the Taittiriya Upanisad 2.7, the Mind is represented in terms of five different sheaths or levels that enclose the individual's self. These levels are as under:

1. The physical sheath (*Annamaya kosa*)
2. Energy sheath (*Pranamaya kosa*)
3. Mental sheath (*Manomaya kosa*)
4. Intellect sheath (*Vijnanamaya kosa*)
5. Bliss sheath (*Anandamaya kosa*)

The mind is also understood to be constituted by five basic components in the Vedantic Philosophy:

1. Manas,
2. Ahamkara,
3. Chitta,
4. Buddhi
5. Atman,

As discussed in the introduction with reference to the subtler dimensions of the intelligence and the aspects of mind, and as Mr. Sanjib Khatiwda describes:

"The Manas is the lower mind which collects sense impressions. Its perceptions shift from moment to moment. This sensory-motor mind obtains its inputs from the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. Each of these senses may be taken to be governed by a separate agent. Ahamkara is the sense of I-ness that associates perceptions to a subjective Centre and thus creates "personal" experiences. Once sensory impressions have been related to I-ness by ahamkara, their evaluation and resulting decisions are arrived at by buddhi, the intellect. Manas, ahamkara and buddhi are collectively called the "internal instruments" (*anta Karana*) of the mind. Next, we come to Chitta, which is the memory bank of the mind. These memories constitute the foundation on which the rest of the mind operates. But Chitta is not merely a passive depository. The organization of the new impressions throws up instinctual or primitive urges that create diverse emotional states. This mental complex surrounds the innermost aspect of consciousness, which is called atman; it is of course the same as the self or the *brahman*. Atman is considered to be beyond a finite enumeration of categories". (01)

The sheaths represent the ascending finer levels. At the highest level is the Self... the energy that percolates' physical and mental processes are *prana*. One could look at the structure of the Mind at three different perspectives. At the lowest level is the physical body, at the next higher level is the energy system at work, and at the next higher level are the thoughts. Since the three levels are interrelated, the energy situation may be changed by inputs either at the physical level or at the mental level. The Parana, or energy, is described as the currency, or the medium of exchange, of the psycho physiological system. The higher three levels are often lumped together and called the mind. The analogy of the journey of Julian Mantle and the different levels of sheaths and the components could be identified in the novel.

A seven step Journey within from compulsiveness to pure consciousness.

In search of the Pure Consciousness Julian Mantle had devoted his time and energy in the company of the Sivana sages in the Himalayas to realize his true and divine self. The Sivana sages taught him the secret of long and happy life, in the form of Seven Stages of Self-Awakening. The writer of the novel, Sharma narrates this secret in the following manner:

"The seven stages of self-awakening is a remarkably potent process for living your biggest life and walking the path to your destiny. The seven stages are a blueprint for awakening your best self and manifesting the potential that you have been given by the force that sent you into the world. Few people in the world know it today. These stages reflect the pathway that every seeker needs to travel to return to his or her original nature – the state of mind, body, and spirit that they first experienced when they were perfect and pure". (94)

The east has Vedantic way of perceiving life as a whole and organic entity and a mystic and spiritual way of living and leading life since ages. The seven stages of self-awakening learned by Julian Mantle is, but, only another depiction and fictional portrayal of the transformative power eastern wisdom and the mythical trends and traditions. The seven stages of self-awakening have been the source of perennial knowledge and the eternal laws which governs the life of an individual in our Vedic society and also that helps a receptive individual to defy age, caste, creed and community and guides to lead a life full of charm and charisma. In the novel, Julian Mantle's life too had under gone through these seven stages of self- awakening. A simple way of reaching contended and a life of exuberance which could become enlightenment as, Mantle describes is,

"To have inner strength to get up earlier, eat less, read more, worry less, be more patient or be more loving, all I have to do is exert my will to cleanse my thoughts" (151).

Hence, the Julian Mantle's search of truthful and divine self is truly the awakening of one's conscience and inner strength. The path which leads to the destination of self-realization may be tedious and complex but with the guidance of Vedantic laws one can attain the self-actualisation through meditation and Vedantic wisdom of focus and truthfulness as the character of Julian Mantle has become a complete transformed personality in the novel.

Conclusion

There is a stark difference between appearance and reality. All that glitters is not always gold. Happiness is a very relative term and each and every individual may have different opinion about the nature of true joy in life. Most of us would definitely agree to the fact that the sustainable peace and constant solace in life can only be attained through realizing the inner most core of our mind or the true divine self. Julian Mantle, the protagonist in Sharma's "The Monk who sold His Ferrari" was a renowned name in the legal profession in the United States. This young lawyer was one of the leading and successful lawyers of the nation, and his success had come to him at within the few years of his career. There were clear indications that this lawyer would leave no stone unturned in achieving the heights in the legal profession. However, materialistic achievements shattered and collapsed one day, when, during a famous trial he collapsed in the court. The excessive work load and overreaching attitude of Julian Mantle was the cause of his sudden downfall and he realized, that his life was a big mess and meaningless and devoid of the spiritual energy, calmness and prosperity. In search of the true meaning of life, Mantle travelled to east, giving up all the material comforts and worldly goods and adopting to simplicity of eastern Vedantic philosophy based on meditation and strict austerity to realize his true divine self. He realized the true nature of joy and the true meaning of life in the company of the Sivana sages which we discern as the influence of the Vedantic way of perception and understanding. Mantle found the meaning of his life in the lap of Mother Nature with stoic like simplicity and in leading a disciplined life. The source of eternal solace and meaning of life was to realize one's self, and it was possible only through keen observation of the self and meditation. After learning the true and wise lessons of life from the Vedantic perspective and gaining the generation's old and valuable knowledge, Julian Mantle was asked by the sages to return to his world to share the enriching experience and to teach his fellow people the secret of happy and joyful living in great harmony with Mother Nature. We can very much feel that the power of self-enquiry which lead to the self-realization of the protagonist Julian Mantle for Transformation and the growth of his personality into a conscious human being with self-purgation, self-purification and ultimately self-clarification which is the essence of Vedantic teachings and principles.

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