

Joanna Zator-Peljan (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0432-8551>)
Akademia Nauk Stosowanych w Lesznie

A Challenging and a Beautiful Inner Transformation on the Example of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* by Robin Sharma

1. Introduction

The following paper concentrates on an analysis of Robin Sharma's breakthrough novel called *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. It is worth emphasizing that the above-mentioned publication is considered as a beginning of a completely new chapter in the Canadian author's life. At that particular moment many people started perceiving *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* as a very interesting book that could be seen as a first step to unfold as well as to transform their lives.

Robin Sharma used to work as a litigation lawyer. At the age of 25 he decided to go in a completely different direction. For this reason, in 1994 Sharma wrote and self-published a guidebook on stress management and spirituality under the title *Mega Living*. Three years later, Sharma's creation *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* was addressing the wider public. It needs to be stressed that the publication gathered excellent reviews – e.g. Mark Victor Hansen described it in this way: “Nothing less than sensational. This book will bless your life”. According to the bestselling author of *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho “Robin Sharma's books are helping people all over the world to live great lives”. Elaine St. James claims that “Robin Sharma has created an enchanting tale that incorporates the classic tools of transformation into a simple philosophy of living. A delightful book that will change your life”. On the other hand, Brian Tracy maintains that “this is a fun, fascinating, fanciful adventure into the realms of personal development, personal effectiveness and individual happiness. It contains treasures of wisdom that can enrich and enhance the life of every single person”.

Last but not least, one has to mention readers who are usually the best reviewers. As far as I am concerned, they truly loved the book due to the fact that the majority of them perceived it as a motivation to transform their lives. As commonly known, there are plenty of books on personal development. Therefore, one question needs to be asked: What makes *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* so special? From my perspective it is not only a delightful story regarding life transformation of a superstar

lawyer, Julian Mantle. There is much more to it – Sharma describes it in a very subtle way, without criticizing anybody or anything. Literally, the writer encourages his readers to live a more joyful, inspiring and satisfying life.

After publishing *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the novelist fully concentrated on further writing. His 12 bestselling titles have sold millions of copies in over 60 countries and 70 languages, making Sharma one of the most widely read authors worldwide. Moreover, he became one of the top experts on personal development as well as leadership. The author of the following article aims to present two sides of Robin Sharma's novel – a difficult and challenging transformation connected with fear of losing one's comfort zones, and a beauty of the whole process that can be seen as a prize after a long struggle.

2. A challenging transformation within the scope of Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*.

In his book under the title *The 5 am Club*, Robin Sharma stresses his point of view that can be perceived as a clue to comprehend any kind of a demanding transformation: "All change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end" (Sharma 2018: 33). As previously mentioned, the hero of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is Julian Mantle, a very successful and wealthy American lawyer whose only goal is to work hard aiming to earn more and more money: "Julian became enormously successful. He achieved everything most people could ever want: a stellar professional reputation with an income in seven figures, a spectacular mansion in a neighborhood favored by celebrities, a private jet, a summer home on a tropical island and his prized possession – a shiny red Ferrari" (Sharma 1997: 5). His relations with other people were very superficial – there was never time for true friendships or long-term relationships. Instead of it, Julian preferred to date a variety of different women and never get too close to anybody. And one day "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 that draped his well-fed frame as for his remarkable string of legal victories" (ibid., 1). Already the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus suggested that the natural world was in a constant state of movement. Therefore, some people claim that change is the only real constant in our lives. Needless to add that Julian Mantle did not expect such an immense turn in his existence: "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" (ibid.). As it occurred, it was quite a miracle for him to stay alive. On the other hand, according to doctor's recommendations there was hardly a chance to survive a second heart attack of that kind. The enormously stressful profession, long working hours and inappropriate approach to one's health led Julian to a complete breakdown. Additionally, it was clearly stated that a further continuing of such an exhausting lifestyle would drive Mantle straight to early grave. Of course, the new situation was extremely hard to digest. Furthermore, a "part

of a humbling process” (Wapnick 2014a: 22) started. Deepak Chopra stresses the fact that “in every moment, we have access to an infinity of choices. Some choices are made consciously, while others are made unconsciously. Unfortunately, a lot of our choices are made unconsciously, and therefore we don’t think they are choices – and yet, they are. As a result of conditioning, our choices are often triggered by people and circumstances into predictable outcomes” (Chopra 2007: 40). Julian Mantle felt choiceless, depressed and totally overwhelmed by the brand new occurrence. Finally, being a fighter type of a person, he decided to fight for his wellbeing. At that point our hero found himself constantly focused on a particular thought of Albert Einstein – one can live his/ her life as if nothing is a miracle or as if everything is a miracle. Julian was determined to choose the second option, but at the same time he had no idea how to do it. Old habits die hard? Yes, they definitely do. On one hand it is easy to state that one needs a change, but on the other hand it seems extremely difficult to concentrate on it in practice. How to make a chaotic mind more peaceful and quiet? How to live more joyfully? These questions bothered the litigation lawyer a lot. Aiming to fulfill the very challenging task of a total modification of his current long-term habits, Mantle came to a conclusion that there was a huge need to change everything. For that reason, he made a decision to sell all his material belongings – including the beautiful shiny red Ferrari – and went to India.

Living among monks turned out to be an extremely challenging task for a person who was commonly used to experience all the luxury of the modern world. From our hero’s perspective, the very modest living conditions were nothing in comparison to inability to start an inner change. While analyzing his former way of living, Julian concluded that every single person existing on this planet has a persistent need to unfold in many different ways. It can be a continual desire to gain e.g. more money, more success, more recognition, more material goods, more popularity, etc. No matter how much of the above-mentioned “more” a human being has already gathered, it tends to never be enough. Due to the fact that there is always something that remains out of reach, it leads to a lot of disappointment, anger, unfulfillment, hopelessness and – last but not least – despair. Watching the simple but yet very meaningful life of monks, the former jurisdiction representative conducted a comparative analysis that made him realize one simple fact – although the monks were quite poor from a wealthy American’s point of view, they seemed to be much more joyful and peaceful. It can be stated that the so called Western world focuses a lot on a pursuit of happiness, searching for joy outside of themselves. Worth emphasizing is at this point the variety of aforementioned material goods or aspects connected with one’s reputation or social status. In contradiction to this approach, the monks prefer to find joyfulness within themselves – regardless on any external aspects. According to Chopra “the purpose of life is the expansion of happiness. Happiness is the goal of every other goal. Most people are under the impression that happiness comes from becoming successful, accumulating wealth, being healthy, and having good relationships. There is certainly enormous social pressure to believe that these accomplishments are the same as achieving happiness. However, this is a mistake. Success, wealth, good health, and nurturing relationships are *byproducts* of happiness, not the

cause” (Chopra 2010: 9). The above-mentioned modification of current lifestyle was not hard for Julian – it could be described as immensely challenging, extraordinarily demanding and exceedingly difficult. At the beginning he was totally unable to find even a shade of joy or peace. His former habits turned out to be a huge disappointment causing him a lot of struggle. The litigation lawyer realized how shallow and meaningless it all was – destroying his health aiming to observe more dollars on his account. He really desired to become like the monks surrounding him in India – peaceful, fulfilled and loving. The problem was, Mantle did not know how to achieve it. For a person used to a lot of rush, sitting quietly and meditating seemed to be very surreal. There were simply too many different thoughts appearing on his mind one after another. Was it in this situation really possible to calm down and make a change? To his own surprise, after a while living among monks, Julian could answer in the affirmative: “As the days melted into weeks within this enchanting environment, Julian slowly began to feel alive and whole again, perhaps for the first time since he was a child. His natural curiosity and creative spark steadily returned, along with his enthusiasm and his energy for living. He started to feel more joyful and peaceful. And he began to laugh again” (Sharma 1997: 15). The former lawyer achieved the previously unachievable level of a satisfactory and peaceful life. Julian perceived his trip to India as a “personal odyssey of the self” (ibid.). Although the journey to get some inner peace was unimaginably complicated, at the end its goal was achieved: “He confided that he was determined to find out who he really was and what his life was all about before it was too late. To do this, his first priority was to connect to that culture’s vast pool of ancient wisdom on living a more rewarding, fulfilling and enlightened life” (ibid.). After a lot of struggle regarding the variety of inner challenges, Julian could finally enjoy the beauty of transformation.

3. A beauty of transformation within the scope of Robin Sharma’s *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*.

As previously quoted, a change is difficult in the beginning, but after a while it might turn out to be something extremely beautiful (Sharma 2018: 33). After spending some time in India, Julian Mantle came back to USA as a completely different person. His inner transformation was also visible regarding his looks. One of his former employees, John, could barely believe his eyes when he saw his boss: “I was astonished by the new and improved Julian Mantle. How could someone who looked like a tired old man only a few short years ago now look so vibrant and alive? I wondered in silent disbelief. Was it some magical drug that had allowed him to drink from the fountain of youth? What was the case of this extraordinary reversal?” (Sharma 1997: 15). The previous litigation lawyer put a lot of time and energy to explain his former subordinate the challenging as well as beautiful change that he was privileged to experience. Due to the fact that the transformation brought so many positive aspects to his life and daily routine, Julian’s aim is to discuss it with other people as well as encourage them to do the same. That might motivate others to perceive

their existence from a completely new perspective. According to our hero it is very significant to find a goal in our lives – a goal that could enrich our inner self every day: “Once you find out what your life’s work is, your world will come alive. You will wake up every morning with a limitless reservoir of energy and enthusiasm. All your thoughts will be focused on your definite objective. You won’t have time to waste time. Valuable mental power will not, therefore, be wasted on trifling thoughts” (ibid., 67). Furthermore, as a result of focusing on an important life’s goal, there will occur a visible tendency to feel more peaceful and more at ease: “Interestingly, you will also have a deep sense of inner harmony, as if you are somehow being guided to realize your mission. It is a wonderful feeling” (ibid.). Julian shows another way to regain joy in one’s life – a lot of laughter, taking various matters not too seriously and stop being dead serious in every single aspect of life: “When I was chained to my former lifestyle, one of my main problems was that I took life too seriously. Now I am much more playful and childlike. I enjoy all of life’s gifts, no matter how small they are” (ibid., 103). It is obvious that there are moments when every single person seems to be far away from being cheerful because life brings a wide range of occurrences that are far away from joy. As reported by Mantle, even in the saddest situations a ray of light can be observed: “Enjoy the process. The Sages of Sivana often spoke of this philosophy. They truly believed that a day without laughter or a day without love was a day without life” (ibid., 106). Furthermore, Julian explains to his previous subordinate that it is very important to “identify the things that are holding you back” (ibid., 118). Literally, the former litigation lawyer means leaving one’s own comfort zone aiming to experience the beauty of life to the fullest. For many people leaving their carefully built comfort zones seems to be worse than a nightmare. They prefer to stay where they currently are protecting their own projections towards life. In his book called *Taking the Ego Lightly. Protecting our Projections* Kenneth Wapnick points out how projections are being created in a human’s mind: “Clearly that is what projection does. I see you as more sinful than I am, or perhaps I see you as better than I am. I see you as different. Whenever we get angry, which is always projection, we are saying: You’re different” (Wapnick 2014: 62). As believed by Julian Mantle, fear is an unnecessary projection that most people would love to leave behind or even totally forget. On the other hand, they have no idea how to do it. The feeling of powerlessness in this area seems to be very overwhelming for them. The inability to move forward might become depressing and sometimes even breathtaking. Julian advises his former employee to start overcoming his fears by doing things that he defines as very unpleasant: “This might be the first taste of real freedom that you have experienced in years. Fear is nothing more than a mental monster you have created, a negative stream of consciousness” (Sharma 1997: 119). As maintained by Mantle, living a fearless life reflects in one’s behavior as well as appearance: “When you erase fear from your mind, you start to look younger and your health becomes more vibrant” (ibid., 121). While living among monks, Julian experienced meditation and a power of mantras which – according to his perception – can be considered as calming, balancing and even healing. His favourite mantra is the following one: “This is the mantra I suggest you

repeat at least thirty times a day: *I'm more than I appear to be, all the world's strength and power rests inside of me.* It will manifest profound changes in your life" (ibid., 180). As claimed by Mantle, the lack of fear should not be perceived as a final goal, but as a beginning to a more balanced and joyful life: "Push yourself to do more and to experience more. Harness your energy to start expanding your dreams. Yes, expand your dreams. Don't accept a life of mediocrity when you hold such infinite potential within the fortress of your mind. Dare to tap into your greatness" (ibid., 197). In his beautiful tale Robin Sharma encourages his readers to do more and to become more. He aims to give his readers a feeling of limitlessness that is supposed to improve the quality of their existence: "Act as if failure is impossible, and your success will be assured" (ibid.). There are many authors who stress the fact that every single human being's goal should be to discover as well as unfold the limitless potential that helps us to live a more fulfilled life. One of them is Deepak Chopra, the author of over ninety bestselling books. Interestingly, in his publications Chopra investigates this aspect from the variety of perspectives: "And when you realize that the intentions and desires that arise in you are the very intentions of the universe, you can relinquish your desire for control and let the miraculous life you were born to lead unfold in all its unimaginable magnificence" (Chopra 2005 182). Coming back to *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Julian Mantle discourages his previous subordinate from concentrating on only one goal, wish or dream. While focusing on only one possible solution to a particular situation, we ignore many other options that can surprisingly turn out to be more wonderful than expected. Sometimes people desire something to happen and are full of grievance as well as resentment once they realize that their wish will never come true. As time passes by, they begin to be grateful that their wish has never been a part of their experience. Literally, sometimes life brings some better solutions that were previously unthinkable: "Remember, John, life doesn't always give you what you ask for, but it always gives you what you need" (Sharma 1997: 223). Furthermore, Julian reveals another aspect concerning the beauty of his transformation – the fact that every human being possesses a hidden talent that can be discovered at any time: "I told you earlier that we all have been given certain talents. Every single person on the planet is a genius" (ibid.). To John's great amazement, our hero really means it. For some of us this point of view might seem surreal, but if we follow Mantle's further explanation, it starts to make sense: "Once you are connected to this mission, whether it is being a great teacher of children or an inspired artist, all your desires will be fulfilled effortlessly. You will not even have to try. As a matter of fact, the harder you try, the longer it will take you to reach your aims. Instead, simply follow the path of your dreams, in full expectation of the bounty that is certain to flow. This will bring you to your divine destination" (ibid., 224). Another aspect that the previously wealthy litigation lawyer emphasizes is the distinction between material goods and life's satisfaction: "There is a huge difference between making a lot of money and making a lot of life" (ibid., 222). Robin Sharma focuses here on a very significant matter – many human beings believe that rich people are happy and fulfilled due to the fact of having a lot of money as well as many other material possessions. The author stresses the fact that in reality it is not like

that. If only wealthy members of societies were destined to be happy, life would be more than unfair. Surprisingly, those who possess the most turn out to be the most stressed, depressed and disappointed ones. Why would that be so? Due to the simple fact that the fear of losing all money and possessions is so huge that it leaves no more space for a joyful and peaceful existence.

Last but not least, the author of this paper would like to focus on gratitude that plays a significant role in our hero's transformation. Julian discourages John from limiting joy in his daily routine as well as from waiting for the so called big matters to come and become a source of happiness: "Never put off happiness for the sake of achievement. Never put off the things that are important for your well-being and satisfaction to a later time. Today is the day to live fully, not when you win the lottery or when you retire. Never put off living!" (ibid., 217). Mantle encourages his former subordinate to search for joy within the scope of little things like e.g. a funny situation, a good joke or somebody's kind favor. As believed by the previous litigation lawyer, the shortest way to joy is gratitude: "When you start spending even five minutes a day practicing the art of gratitude, you will cultivate the richness of living that you are looking for" (ibid., 222).

There are many other aspects concerning the powerful transformation of Julian Mantle. The author of this paper mentioned only a few of them – the rest of it might be discovered by those who decide to read *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* by Robin Sharma.

4. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to conduct an analysis of an inner transformation described in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* by Robin Sharma. On the example of a very successful and incredibly wealthy litigation lawyer Sharma emphasizes the fragility of our existence. The author highlights a heart attack as a life turning point that motivates Julian Mantle to change his life. The hero realizes that there is no further possibility to continue his stressful lifestyle anymore. Moreover, the doctors inform him of a huge early death possibility if his daily routine does not change. The litigation lawyer takes it very seriously and sells all his belongings aiming to leave the country. He decides to live among monks in India. As it occurs, it is a wonderful chance for Julian to start his inner transformation. While taking a closer look at peaceful and joyful monks, he desires to be like them. Unfortunately, there is no idea how to achieve it. In contradiction to the peaceful monks, Julian's mind seems to be in a constant rush. Sadhguru in his book under the title *Mind Is Your Business* explains the above-mentioned matter: "Right now your mind is the boss, you are the slave. The main aspect of meditation is, as you become more meditative, you become the boss, your mind becomes the slave, and that is how it should always be" (Sadhguru 2020: 33). As time goes by, Julian discovers that his own mind is not the best adviser, but there are certain techniques enabling it to calm down a little: "The mind is a terrible master. He will put you through all kinds of endless

suffering. But the mind is a wonderful slave. If you keep your mind in a certain way, you can do anything you want with it” (ibid.). It required a lot of understanding as well as a huge amount of practice to achieve some level of a peaceful mind. Within the scope of a transformation, not only one’s mind, but also a human body tends to change. First and foremost, it loses its constant depressive state. Secondly, it becomes more energetic and radiant (Renard 2004: 86): “It is not about sculpting your body and showing it off. This is to make the body into a fantastic vessel, a fabulous device to receive the Devine” (Sadhguru 2020a: 20). The transformation of the litigation lawyer occurs to be extremely demanding, challenging and time-consuming. Furthermore, there are also various moments of doubt, anxiety, anger or even fear. Nevertheless, Julian Mantle is very stubborn – giving up does not indicate his character traits at all. After a lot of struggle regarding the transformation, Robin Sharma presents his main hero enjoying the beauty of change. To his previous subordinate the man seems to be a completely different person. Julian claims that “the size of your bank account and the size of your house have nothing to do with living life with a sense of joy and wonder. This world is full of unhappy millionaires. Do you think the sages I met in Sivana were concerned with having a well-balanced financial portfolio and acquiring a summer home in the South of France?” (Sharma 1997: 222). On the example of his hero, Sharma points out the emptiness of the welfare society versus pure joy of life. As believed by Julian, the two above-mentioned aspects do not need to exclude each other. On the contrary, there are no obstacles in the so called modern world to fully enjoy as well as express joyfulness. One does not have to live among monks to live a happy and a fulfilled life. The only thing is to focus on one’s mind that is usually indicated as a major difficulty concerning this goal: “If your interiority is not managed, it does not matter what we have achieved on the outside, everything goes waste. With great effort, people reach success, only to suffer success. How much effort it has taken! But when they get there, they cannot enjoy it, they only suffer it because the internal has not been taken care of at all” (Sadhguru 2020a: 20). To conclude, an inner transformation is a synonym for a constant work within oneself. Moreover, once the majority of the work is done, a human being can have privilege of living a beautiful, peaceful and joyful life. *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is definitely a novel that encourages its readers to do so.

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Słowa kluczowe

Wewnętrzna transformacja, wyzwania życiowe, rozwój osobisty, poczucie własnej wartości, wdzięczność, umysł, medytacja, radość, spokój

Abstract

The following paper focuses on Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and discusses the difficulty as well as beauty of an inner transformation. On the example of Julian Mantle, a very successful litigation lawyer, the author of this paper describes a variety of different matters regarding one's life turning point as well as the further personal unfoldment. The paper emphasizes the difference between the so called modern society and living among monks in India. After concentrating on various challenges, fears or anxieties in terms of Julian Mantle, the author of this article presents the beauty of his inner transformation – the process of changing oneself at a personal, spiritual and emotional level.

Keywords

Inner transformation, life challenges, personal unfoldment, self-esteem, gratitude, mind, meditation, joyfulness, peacefulness