Volume 20 Issue 61
Originally issued as A16



Global Journal of human-social science: a
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 20 Issue 16 Version 1.0 Year 2020
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

An Archetypal Pattern of Redemption in "*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*" of Robin S. Sharma

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GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 190499



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Abstract- Robin S. Sharma displays astonishing skill in portraying the existential problems faced by the modern man in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. Sharma's protagonist, Julian Mantle, to a great extent conforms to the norms of the European and American Existentialist fiction in the individual's relations to himself, to others, and to the nature. Julian undergoes a terrible social alienation and self-estrangement because of the influence of the materialistic world and his quest for authentic mode of living as elucidated by Martin Heidegger finally enables him to make the necessary changes in his life style. The world remained the same for Julian but with conscious choice he comes out the crisis they endured. This Biblical pattern of redemption can be found in literature also and this article attempts to analyse the work of Robin Sharma *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* through the archetypal pattern of redemption embedded in the Bible. Redemption is a process through which a person is brought from ill-being to well-being.

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I. Introduction

Redemption is a Christian concept that refers to the process through which a person is brought from a condition of ill-being (sin) to an eventual well-being (freedom). The Biblical process of redemption started with the entrance of sin to humanity. There was everything in the paradise but Adam and Eve disobeyed God and as a result of their disobedience sin crept into the world. There was a need for redemption and this need for redemption can be named as pre-redemptive process. Adam and Eve experienced shame, fear, guilt, and the need for redemption propelled them to make a choice. They could either make a pro-redemptive response or counter the process of redemption through counter-redemptive response. In spite of the negatives they faced, they made a pro-redemptive response and it enabled them to come out of their slavery which is post-redemptive process (Mathew, 97).The world remained the same for them but with conscious choice they came out the crisis they endured. This Biblical pattern of redemption can be found in literature also and this article attempts to analyse the work of Robin Sharma *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* through the archetypal pattern of redemption embedded in the Bible.

In redemption stories in literature, the protagonist archetypes are sinners like Misers, Addicts, Rakes, Harlots, Thieves, Villains, Vampires, Shape shifters, Zombies or Biker Boys with Tats. These tales usually begin with a protagonist who has already fallen from grace, or who like the Ancient Mariner, commits a crime and falls from grace in the first few scenes and the sinner begins his tale in a "miserable world."When the Sinner sees the error of his ways and repents, his miserable world is transfigured and becomes holy. The Sinner emerges from the Valley of Life and Death into a world that is as close to heaven as any world can get (Ramsay).

In order to explicate redemption in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the psychological notion of archetype is used in this article and the archetype becomes an interpretative key to analyse the dynamics of sin and redemption in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. Sharma's allegorical protagonist is Julian Mantle, a celebrity attorney who, after having a heart attack in the courtroom, decided to sell his Ferrari and found his spirituality in the Far East. Julian, being aware of the need for redemption, dropped his selfishness and developed selfless lovewhich, paved a way from ill-being to well-being; emerges from the Valley of Life and Death into a world that is as close to heaven, a journey from sin to redemption. Therefore, the argument is redemption is not an 'other-worldly' concept; it begins here and now, and it is within the reach of everyone who is interested in and committed to a better life.

II. The Concept of Redemption in an Archetypal Pattern

There has been numerous works on redemption in literature but this article endeavours to look at redemption as an archetype in "*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*," by Robin S. Sharma. Archetype falls under structuralism. It was challenged by postmodernists who don't admit of a reference point. When there is no reference point we end up in meaninglessness and the postmodernist outlook is irresponsible inclinations to view that everything in life from pure relativism. When redemption as an archetype is explored, there is a universal pattern in all stories, events, and experiences of redemption. The interrogation of redemption arises at a crisis, sin, captivity etc. While analysing the epoch of history, we come across, instances of trials, tribulations, bondages where human being has turned towards the power above in search of spiritual strength to help

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him/her to continue living with ease and comfort. Though there had been a strong urge in human being to experience redemption, the needs of the body and the extravagances and eases of the world had turned him/her away from God, people, himself and nature. This precarious situation destroyed the original beauty or status of his life. This points out to a need for redemption, a pre-redemptive process. When one is in a crisis, sin or captivity a voyage or an exile is essential to experience redemption. According to the Bible, the people of Israel were in captivity and they had to make an exodus to come out of their slavery. At the face of a crisis, sin or captivity, there are two options before any individuals or groups and they can either enter into the process of redemption by making a pro-redemptive response or counter the redemptive process through a counter-redemptive response. A pro-redemptive response will lead one to experience redemption and eventually reach the post-redemptive process where one is transformed (218-2200).

III. The Concept of Redemption in "*The Monk who Sold his Ferrari*"

The book is a fable about Julian Mantle who is a powerful and successful lawyer and lives a luxurious life. He had a crazy schedule and a set of priorities that were centred around money, power and prestige and he is typical representative of our society but a radical paradigm shift occurs in his life, after he gets a severe heart attack. He quits his profession, sells all his possessions and engages himself in learning mythical knowledge from Great Himalayan sages in India to seek a more meaningful existence. When he comes back, he's a transformed man. Really, it's as if he's a completely different person. He's learned from some mythical Himalayan gurus who gave him mystical and yet practical advice, which he shares with his former associate John and the readers.

The inordinate attachments of Julian for money, power and prestige and the consequent heart attack is the crisis in the book, the need for redemption, the pre-redemptive process. There were two options before Julian and they were either to make pro-redemptive response or counter-redemptive response. Julian came to senses and realized the crisis was due to his messy life style and excessive attachments. He made a pro-redemptive response by selling all his possessions and sought the help of a mentor who could guide him. He was aware of himself, accepted his short comings, repented, and that led him to the post-redemptive process where he is transformed and enumerates his experience to his former associate John and the readers.

Robin S. Sharma displays astonishing skill in portraying the existential problems faced by the modern man. Sharma's protagonist, Julian Mantle, to a great extent conforms to the norms of the European and American Existentialist fiction in the individual's relations to himself, to others, and to the nature. Julian undergoes a terrible social alienation and self-estrangement and his quest for authentic mode of living according Martin Heidegger finally enables him to make the necessary changes in his life style.

> Authenticity entails a kind of shift in attention and engagement, a reclaiming of oneself, from the way we typically fall into our everyday ways of being. It is about how we approach the world in our daily activities. Dasein inevitably moves between our day-by-day enmeshment with the they and a seizing upon glimpses of our truer, uniquely individual possibilities for existence. The challenge is to bring ourselves back from our lostness in the they to retrieve ourselves so that we can become our authentic selves.(Sherman 5)

By his extraordinary vision, Sharma is able to probe deeper into the nature and causes of man's self-estrangement and able to delineate the causes and consequences of social alienation and self-estrangement. The crisis in the fable is explicated in the following text:

> The more time I spent with Julian, the more I could see that he was driving himself deeper into the ground. It was as if he had some kind of a death wish. Nothing ever satisfied him. Eventually, his marriage failed, he no longer spoke with his father, and though he had every material possession anyone could want, he still had not found whatever it was that he was looking for. It showed, emotionally, physically — and spiritually. At fifty-three years of age, Julian looked as if he was in his late seventies. His face was a mass of wrinkles, a less than glorious tribute to his "take no prisoners" approach to life in general and the tremendous stress of his out-of-balance lifestyle in particular. (Sharma, 15)

The modern man is in a relentless pursuit to amass wealth and power and yet passes through a sharp pang of meaninglessness and purposelessness which oxidizes every sphere of human life. Robin Sharma's handling of existentialist themes are captivating and his hero is engaged in meaning of life. He attempts to project through his hero's agonized experiences the crisis of the urbanized and highly industrialized modern civilization together with its dehumanizing impact on the individual who is in quest of his lost self and this work 'reads like the spiritual odyssey of the twentieth century man who has lost his moorings'.(R. S. Pathak, 46)

Edmund Fuller in *Man in Modern Fiction* states: Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem…a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence. (3) The case was the same with Julian and it is elucidated in the following text:

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> It soon became clear to me that he was being consumed by the hunger for more: more prestige, more glory and more money. As expected, 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 neighbourhood favoured by celebrities, a private jet, a summer home on a tropical island and his prized possession — a shiny red Ferrari parked in the centre of his driveway. (23)

Julian's once enthusiastic nature had been replaced by a deathly sombreness and his life had lost all sense of purpose. This massive heart attack that brought the brilliant Julian Mantle back down to earth and reconnected him to his mortality. (16-17) The heart attack must have been because of the enormous stress he endured in life and the deep-seated feelings of alienation, isolation and meaninglessness and that propelled him to sell everything he had. Sharma's hero suffers from restlessness and to escape this feeling he makes relentless effort looking for a purpose in life.

> He described his time in this far-away land as a "personal odyssey of the self." 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… "I don't mean to sound too off-the-wall, John, but it was like I had received a command from within, an inner instruction telling me that I was to begin a spiritual voyage to rekindle the spark that I had lost," said Julian. "It was a tremendously liberating time for me."(23)

Right from the beginning, Julian is oppressed by a desire to find the meaning of life and his entire life is geared around his quest for performance in life, which left him in chaotic situation. He discovers the truth about him through self-awareness which is the first step in redemptive process and decides to follow the whispering of his conscience:

> "They only focus on the outer person. I needed to be healed from within. My unbalanced, chaotic lifestyle left me in great distress. It was much more than a heart attack that I suffered. It was a rupture of my inner core" …I began to realize that the sterile world I had grown accustomed to had dulled my creativity and limited my vision… Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life; it will improve the lives of all those around you.(44)

Robin Sharma, a great leadership expert, draws from outer reality and delves deep into the inner recesses of human heart and discloses through Julian that investing time for the self enables one to improve the quality of his life and of all those around him. It is self-awareness that helps him realize his meaningless search for money, power and prestige, which had dulled his creativity and limited his vision. A person begins the process of transformation when he/she realizes the real need of change and it comes from self-awareness.

> "Luckily John," said Julian, "I did embrace it. Carl Jung once said that 'your vision will become clear only when you can look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakens.' On that very special night, I looked deep into my heart and awakened to the secrets of the ages for enriching the mind, cultivating the body and nourishing the soul. It is now my turn to share them with you." (50)

The key to self-discovery is to look into one's heart and that will awaken. According to Robin Sharma: we are living in a very troubled world. Negativity pervades it and many in our society are floating like ships without rudders, weary souls searching for a lighthouse that will keep them from crashing against the rocky shores. (83)

> Step one is to become aware that you are thinking these uninspiring thoughts. Self-knowledge is the stepping stone to self-mastery. Step two is to appreciate once and for all that just as easily as you allowed those gloomy thoughts to enter, you can replace them with cheerful ones. So, think of the opposite of gloom. Concentrate on being cheerful and energetic. Feel that you are happy.

Self-awareness leads an individual to self-acceptance. One is able accept oneself with all it's strength and weakness and this will help one for positive imagination.

> When you learn to take control of your thoughts and vividly imagine all that you desire from this worldly existence in a state of total expectancy, dormant forces will awaken inside you. You will begin to unlock the true potential of your mind to create the kind of magical life that I believe you deserve. From tonight onwards, forget about the past. Dare to dream that you are more than the sum of your current circumstances. (58)

Those who cannot accept themselves remain slaves of their past. They are bogged down by the miseries of life. They continue to have the same thoughts and same habits every day.

> This is the tyranny of impoverished thinking. Those people who think the same thoughts every day, most of them negative, have fallen into bad mental habits. Rather than focusing on all the good in their lives and thinking of ways to make things even better, they are captives of their pasts. Some of them worry about failed relationships or financial problems. Others fret over their less-than-perfect childhoods. Still others

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brood over more trifling matters: the way a store clerk might have treated them or the comment of a co-worker that smacked of ill-will. Those who run their minds in this fashion are allowing worry to rob them of their life force. They are blocking the enormous potential of their minds to work magic and deliver into their lives all that they want, emotionally, physically and, yes, even spiritually. These people never realize that mind management is the essence of life management. (52-53)

Lack of self-awareness and self-acceptance blocks the well-being of a person and has a blurred vision of life. They tend brood on their past rather than live the present. The author makes it clear through the following text the harm it does to an individual:

Yet look at the toxic waste that most people put into the fertile garden of their minds every single day: the worries and anxieties, the fretting about the past, the brooding over the future and those self-created fears that wreak havoc within your inner world. (52)

When Julian realizes the self-created fears that wreak havoc within his inner world, he decides to change through repentance. Repentance is a process and a key with which he unlocks prison from inside. He changed the complete directions of his life.

He spoke of his former life and of the crisis of spirit he had struggled with, how he had traded his health and his energy for the fleeting rewards that his law practice brought him. He spoke of how he had traded the riches of his soul for a fat bank account and the illusory gratification of his 'live fast, die young' lifestyle… Deep inside his soul, he somehow sensed that this was the first moment of the rest of his life, a life soon to be much more than it had ever been. (31-33)

A journey through the process of redemption enables Julian to discover his real self and the meaning of his existence. He changes his life-style, practices the wisdom he learnt from the mystics and that leads him to the post-redemptive process where he really experiences peace, joy and serenity others can't express.

He also said that his new lifestyle and the new habits associated with it started to have a profound effect on his inner world. Within a month of applying the principles and techniques of the sages, he told me that he had begun to cultivate the deep sense of peace and inner serenity that had eluded him in all the years he had lived in the West. He became more joyful and spontaneous, growing more energetic and creative with each passing day… He actually felt as if he could do anything, be anything and unlock the infinite potential that he learned was inside every one of us. He started to cherish life and to see the divinity in every aspect of it. The ancient system of this mystical band of monks had started to work its miracles. (39)

The end result of the redemptive process is freedom and fulness of life. In the case of Julian, he discovers the God within him and finds everything else as rubbish. He is certain of his purpose and meaning of his existence.

IV. Conclusion

The protagonist's search for some kind of a meaning in life is the central theme of Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. The battle with human loneliness for an incessant search for a meaningful existence of life is beautifully elucidated by the author. Thus, Robin S. Sharma discloses that the ultimate end of human life is the redemption of human soul that they lost once and for all in this materialistic world. Sharma's angst - ridden protagonist is relentlessly in search of a way to face with dignity of life which is ugly, inescapably painful and always unsatisfying. Ultimately, however, he is able to arrive at post-redemptive process through self-awareness, self-acceptance and repentance and thus completes the journey from ill-being to well-being.

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