

Book Review

The Monk who Sold his Ferrari

Author: **Robin Sharma**

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The book is quite a rage among worldwide readers. Its claim to fame is a straightforward path to self realization. Somewhat akin to the quick fix books of different types, this one seeks to demystify the ways of the mystics. It makes a very good attempt to combine advice on abstract ideas like happiness with that on practical things like time management. In fact, anyone can benefit from this pocketbook of philosophy.

Thinking about Thinking

There are a few stunning statistics and insights drawn from them. For example, the process of thinking that we take for granted. On an average, a person thinks about 60,000 thoughts in a day. But this is the less surprising part. The really stunning part is- 95% of these are the *same thoughts*, day after day.

The ancient wisdom of the mythical Sivana Sages is actually doled out in practical doses, liberally spiced with memorable lines. For example, "happiness cannot be pursued. It must ensue.....as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself"(actually a quote from Victor Frankl).

According to Sharma, there is no such thing as objective reality or 'the real world'. It is all an interpretation, which results in our terming an event good or bad. And he insists that positive thinking is possible at any time in life, including immediately after a personal tragedy. Habits can be formed in about twenty one days, if you try moderately hard, according to him. Therefore, putting together the two-positive thinking, and deliberate forming of "good" habits will banish bad thoughts and bad habits.

The Power of Thinking

He believes we have the power to make good things happen. This is because, he says, everything is created twice. Once, inside the mind. This is like a blueprint. Second, it is created outside. If you start imagining good outcomes, you start working to create them. In a similar vein, Paulo Coelho in the Alchemist had also contended that if you are serious about your dreams, then the universe will conspire to let you achieve them.

The Opposite Thought Technique

If you have a negative thought, replace it with a positive thought. Doing this deliberately is very beneficial, as only one thought can reside in the mind at a time. With time and practice, negative thoughts will be completely banished from the mind. Similarly, worrying is an energy drain. It takes your energy away from creative and fulfilling tasks. The secret of keeping fatigue away? Focus on the present. If you are immersed in a task that you like, you do not feel fatigue, and this is a form of mind control. Your *mind controls how you feel. Therefore, you can train it to make you feel good.*

Another drain on your energy is constant comparison with others. He quotes an old saying, that "there is nothing noble about being superior to some other person. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self". A sort of *kaizen* for the self.

The Purpose of Life

The purpose of life is a life of purpose. He suggests that we have a goal. And work to achieve it. The goal need not be only material. You can have a goal of being a better person, husband, father, mother, a spiritually evolved

person, a kind person, and so on. But you need to consciously work on each goal you have. Writing down goals makes you more committed to achieving them, than merely thinking about them.

Rituals

Some rituals are suggested by the author, such as spending time with yourself, personal reflection on the good and bad things you did everyday, and what you would do differently. Immediately on waking up and before going to bed, he suggests we consciously think positive, refreshing thoughts so that we remain positively energized. Laughing is also a ritual he suggests, which can become a good habit. For instance, an average adult laughs only fifteen times in a day, while a four year old laughs three hundred times! Music is a great motivator, according to Sharma, and we should listen to what we like more often. Another useful technique he suggests is positive self-talk or affirmations. This helps change one's self image to a positive one (a sort of Pygmalion effect).

Willpower

Willpower and discipline are other virtues that he talks about. Some of these include the ability to decide what is good for you and what is right for you. Doing what everyone else wants you to do is not good, as it often leads to wastage of time and dissatisfaction. Doing more of what will satisfy you (tangibly, intangibly, spiritually) is a better idea.

Time

There are really useful tips on time management. Some golden advice like "Don't pick up the phone every time it rings" really rings a bell. This also frees up time that you can take to do things that are good for you- good for the body, and mind, and soul.

There is a nice quote about productivity too- "Most productive people in this world have cultivated the habit of doing the things that less productive people don't like doing, even though they too might not like doing them". Such as waking up early, perhaps!

In summary, another quote points to what we can expect to achieve (materially, and spiritually), if we could muster the willpower to follow these tips- "What lies behind you and what lies in front of you matters little when compared to what lies within you." Amen!

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