

“The monk who sold his Ferrari” is a tale, which provides an approach to living a simple life with greater balance, strength, courage and abundance of joy. The fable format is a refreshing change from the tiresome listing of all the good things we could do for ourselves but do not. It makes the message being conveyed linger in our minds. Although most of the principles dealt with can be found in countless other books on self-help and spirituality, there is a difference in the way of Sharma has put things together.

This well crafted story by Robin S Sharma is the tale of Julian Mantle, a lawyer brought face to face with a spiritual crisis. Julian’s spark of life begins to flicker. He embarks on a life-changing odyssey and discovers the ancient culture of India. During this journey he learns the value time as the most important commodity and how to cherish relationships, develop joyful thoughts and live fully, one day at a time.

The eleven chapters are meticulously planned and flow seamlessly from one to the next. Julian Mantle, a very successful lawyer was the epitome of success. He had achieved everything most of us could ever want: professional success with an seven figure income, a grand mansion in a neighborhood inhabited by celebrities, a private jet, a summer home on a tropical island and his prized possession a shiny red Ferrari parked in the center of his driveway. Suddenly he has to come terms with the unexpected effects of his unbalanced lifestyle.

John, who is a friend as well as co-worker of Julian, narrates the story. He begins by describing Julian’s flamboyant lifestyle, his exaggerated courtroom theatrics, which regularly made the front pages of newspapers and his late night visits to the city’s finest restaurants with sexy young models.

Julian Mantle, the great lawyer collapses in the courtroom, sweating and shivering. His obsession with work has caused this heart attack. The last few years Julian had worked day and night without caring about his mental and physical health. That helped him become a very rich and successful lawyer but took a toll on his health and mental state. At fifty-three he looked seventy and had lost his sense of humor. Julian refused to meet any of his friends and colleagues at the hospital. One fine day he quit his law firm and took off without saying where he was headed.

Three years passed without any news from Julian. One day he paid a visit to his friend and former colleague John, who was now a cynical older lawyer. But Julian, in the past three years, had been miraculously transformed into a healthy man with physical vitality and spiritual strength.

Following his heart attack Julian Mantle had sold all his property (Yes, his Ferrari too) and left for India. The author tells us about Julian’s Indian odyssey, how he met the sages of Sivana who had a life changing effect on him. Julian Mantle shares his story of transformation, his secrets of a happy and fulfilling life with his friend John. Julian describes Sivana- a small place located in the Himalayas, the land of rose covered huts, placid blue waters with white lotuses floating, youth and vitality, beautiful glowing faces, fresh and exotic fruits. He tells John about the sages of Sivana who knew all secrets of how to live life happily and how to fulfill one’s dreams and reach one’s destiny.

Julian relates his experiences with yogi Raman the leader of the sages of Sivana and the person who taught Julian his secrets of a happy and fulfilling life. He narrates to John the fable that contained the seven virtues for a life abundant with inner peace, joy and a wealth of spiritual gifts. He tells John the techniques that he learned from yogi Raman on how to master our minds with simple techniques like “the heart of rose technique” and “the secret of lake technique”. He tells John how to cultivate the mind and how to use setbacks for expanding knowledge of the self.

He talks about setting and following our own purpose and teaches John the ancient art of self-leadership with techniques such as “do the things you fear” and “the 5 step method for attaining goals”. He waxes eloquent about the value of self-discipline and respect for time. He describes techniques such as “the ancient rule of 20” and “the vow of silence”. He teaches how to focus on the priorities and thereby maintain a balance and simplify life. He gives examples that prove that willpower is the essential virtue of a fully actualized life.

Julian teaches John the virtue of selflessness in serving others. He asks John to embrace the present and live in the present - “Now”, never to sacrifice happiness for achievements and to savor the journey of life and live each day as his last one. At the end he asks John to spread these secrets for the benefit of other people. Embracing John like the brother he never had, Julian leaves.

For the reader who might be in the rat race for material success and money, this book might be food for thought. But the message is a trifle too clichéd and the lectures too pedantic for the reader who is more or less conversant with the principles and insights garnered by Julian Mantle from the sages of Sivana. The presentation in the form of a story redeems the book to some extent. The book might perhaps be more satisfactory for readers who are unfamiliar with and hungry for oriental wisdom. All in all, a book of wisdom.