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The Psychological Transformation of Jonathan and His Retrieval of Talismans in *The Secret Letter* by Robin Sharma

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Abstract:

Robin Sharma is one of the eminent motivational speakers and writers. He writes on personal growth, life skills, leadership skills and self-improvement etc. Each book of Robin Sharma deals with some practical and basic life skills which are essential for today's young generation. *The Secret Letter* is a story of a rich man Jonathan who in pursuit of success and happiness actually forgot the real meaning of his life. He forgot how to live a true life. In this research paper I am going to explore the elements of psychological transformation in the personality of *Jonathan* after collecting and acquiring the lessons of Talismans in *The Secret Letter*.

Keywords: eminent, motivational speaker, life skills, generation, pursuit, psychological transformation, talismans.

Introduction

Robin Sharma is a source of motivation and inspiration not only for individuals, but also for many big enterprises. Many big companies like Nike, The Microsoft Company and Starbuck etc implement his ideas and methods of leadership skill in order to have maximum business and real growth. Robin Sharma writes self-help books. In each book he teaches some practical lessons and basic methods, techniques which a reader can implement in his day-to-day routine in order to get success and happiness. *The Secret Letter* is one of the widely read books of Robin Sharma in

the series of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. In *The Secret Letter* he talks about the authenticity of life. It's a fable about how we can live our best life. Very often we feel that we are stuck in our life and not actually living our life the way we want or desire. In this book, *The Secret Letter* the main character Jonathan also felt the same, in spite of having all luxury, nice family, good earning name fame and everything, he was not happy in his life. He always felt that something was missing in his life. He felt that he was actually living a puppet life. No joy, no happiness, no satisfaction. *The Secret Letter* is a story of a character *Jonathan Landry*, a marketing sales executive who had a beautiful wife and a son. With his family and marriage life at stake, he was actually unable to recognize the real cause of his problem. *Jonathan* was always in dilemma and confusion he states:

My job had become a constant source of stress and frustration. My wonderful wife was leaving me. Whatever savings I had built up through my hard work were going to be decimated by divorce. And even the joy I felt with Adam was being eaten away by the guilt I had, seeing him only on the weekends-and being such a lousy dad even then. (SL24)

Jonathan's mother urges him to meet his cousin *Julian Mantle*, a renowned litigator whom he met when he was about ten and what he exactly remembered about *Julian* is his bright red Ferrari. *Jonathan's* mother told him that now he was utterly a different man, selling his Ferrari and living a monk's life at present. *Jonathan's* mother told him that he should visit *Julian* as *Julian* needed to talk to him and he needed *Jonathan's* help with something. *Jonathan* was shocked when he saw *Julian*, as he was now wearing a long crimson robe, draped his head with the hood. *Jonathan* was eager to know what exactly happened with *Julian*, why he left all his comforts and living the life of a monk. *Julian* told his story of transformation to *Jonathan*. He states:

At one point, I was more successful than I had ever dreamed I could be-as far as fame and money go. But I was destroying my life. When I wasn't consumed by work, I was smoking cigars and drinking expensive cognac, having a wild time with young models and new friends. It ruined my marriage, and my lifestyle began to take a toll on my career. I was in a downward spiral, but I did not know how to stop. One day in the middle of arguing a big case, I crashed to the floor of the courtroom. a heart attack sold my mansion, my car, all my possessions. And I headed to India, hoping to learn what I could of the wisdom of the world. (SL18)

Further *Julian* narrated how he met with the Sages of Sivana and sages taught him many remarkable lessons of life. The monks taught him the power of the Talismans. Talismans were small statues or amulets. There were nine of them. Each holds a piece of essential lesson for happiness and the wisdom of a life beautifully lived. They hold extraordinary power of transformation and can, in effect, be life saving. The monks gave *Julian* the Talismans and asked him to be a new keeper. Afterwards when *Julian* had a fear of Talismans being stolen or destroyed he decided to distribute them to different trusted keepers who would return it over when *Julian* had need of it. *Julian* assigned the task of collecting Talismans to *Jonathan*. *Jonathan* was in a dilemma whether he should take this task or not? *Julian* only said at the end -“*Jonathan, be joyful. It’s not every day that you get to save a life.*”(SL23)

Jonathan’s Psychological Transformation in The Secret Letters

Jonathan decided to accomplish the task given to him by *Julian*. He left his family and work to take that voyage. He travelled to different places for Talismans and with each place and Talisman he learnt a new lesson of wisdom. His first destination was Istanbul. There he met *Ahmet Demir*, an old friend of *Julian* and first talisman keeper. *Ahmet* handed the first Talisman to *Jonathan*. The first Talisman carries a message of *The Power of Authenticity*. After meeting *Ahmet Demir*, *Jonathan* realized that the best and special gift we can give ourselves is the commitment of living an authentic life. He recalled his conversation with *Ahmet* on the boat. *Jonathan* told him he was an electrical engineer, A husband, A father, A son but this could apply to thousands of other men too. How would he describe himself if he couldn’t rely on these three labels? He questioned himself, who was he really? Here we see the transformation in *Jonathan’s* personality. He realized that his shortcomings as a parent or as a husband were being buttressed by a deep unhappiness, but that unhappiness was not with wife or son but with the texture of his life. Now he understood that we must know our hidden selves. We should explore our deep-seated unseen hopes, desires, strength and weakness that make us who we are.

Next, he moved to Paris where he met *Antoine*, a fifty-year-old man who wore small round glasses, had a wrinkled but kind face just like *Ahmet*. *Antoine* was a second keeper of Talisman. *Jonathan* while on his way to get the second Talisman from *Antoine* he had to pass through the tunnel which was very dark and scary. *Jonathan* had a fear of loneliness, darkness. He states:

The tunnel walls seemed to be squeezing in on me. The ceiling appeared to shudder-I was sure that, at any moment, it would come crashing down. This isn't real, I tried to tell myself. This is an anxiety attack. But panic was beating through me, threatening to tear me apart. (SL63)

Anyhow he managed to move through the tunnel. *Antoine* handed over the second Talisman to *Jonathan* which carries a message *Embrace Your Fear*. When he returned to his place he recalled the whole dark moments in the tunnel, his panic situation and his survival. He realized that fear is the only thing that holds us back in life and keeps us in our comfort zone only. We don't realize our power. The greatest risk in life is taking no risk. Finally, he understood that the more fears we walk through, the more power we reclaim. He had never used an elevator in twenty years, but that day he had taken an elevator. He was terrified but he was happy.

His third destination was Osaka, Japan. The third Talisman keeper was *Ayame*, a kind hearted woman of about thirty. *Jonathan* learnt the lesson of kindness from *Ayame*. The third Talisman carries a message of *Live with Kindness*. *Jonathan* now understood why *Julian* had made *Ayame* the safe keeper of the third Talisman. He recalled the past few hours of his life, how he was complaining about everything he had in his life, about a bad day in Paris, his long tiring flight to Osaka, then a train ride to Kyoto. He took out his frustration on others and on the other hand it was the kindness of others that helped him a lot. *Ayame* and her family's decency and gentleness had softened his heart.

Next, he landed in Oxkutzcab to collect the fourth Talisman. There he met with *Chava* and his wife *Sikina*. *Chava* was a field technician working in a team that was excavating Mayan ruins outside Oxkutzcab. *Jonathan* appreciated *Julian* for choosing the Talismans Safekeepers because each safekeeper seemed to have a certain relationship with the Talisman and its wisdom and now *Jonathan* was very much excited about what lesson he might learn from *Chava*. *Chava* and his wife were very hard-working people. They never went to university but they made their son *Avali*, a renowned physician. *Chava* said to *Jonathan* that-*"The tiniest of actions is always better than the boldest of intentions and results always speak louder than words."*(SL116)The fourth Talisman unfolds the message of *Make Small Daily Progress*. *Jonathan* understood that like other safekeepers, *Chava* also lived the wisdom of the Talisman he had guarded.

His next destination was Barcelona and there he met with *Lluis*, a thirty-year-old young man who lives his life to the fullest. He was a cab driver. He was the fifth safekeeper of Talisman. Fifth Talisman taught *Jonathan* that there is no insignificant work in the world. Every work has its own importance. People should always do what they love to do. Fifth Talisman unfolds the secret *To Lead Your Best Life, Do Your Best Work*.

Sixth Talisman was owned by *Mary McNeil*. *Jonathan* was headed to Sidney for his sixth Talisman. Mary handed over the Talisman to *Jonathan* which entitled *Choose Your Influences well*. Mary told her life story to *Jonathan* how she was cheated professionally by her friend only. Again, *Jonathan* learnt a new lesson in life that we should choose people in our life very carefully. We should always be grateful towards our family. The stories told by *Marty* had made *Jonathan* think about the relationships he would like to renew. He decided to spend some more good time with his sister *Kira* and mom. He always took his family for granted and after realizing his mistake he actually regretted all his deeds. He recalls his childhood moments with his mother and state that-

When I came through the door after a baseball game, she always asked, “Did you have fun?” instead of “Did you win?” And she managed to find something good to say about everybody. And when my father died, she showed a strength and bravery I couldn’t have imagined in her before. Even in the early days after his passing, she showed more concern about the loss *Kira* and I had suffered than about her own. Her influence was certainly one I should return to, I thought. (SL162)

Jonathan’s next destination was Shanghai. There he met *Mr.Gao* who was a venture capitalist. The seventh Talisman entitled *Life’s Simplest Pleasures are Life’s greatest Joys*. After meeting *Mr.Gao* he realized that we spend many of our best years pursuing things that matter little in the end. We just ignore the simple joy of our life. It seemed to him that both *Julian* and *Mr.Gao Li* had found something that most of the rich people will never have: a feeling that they have enough. We just spend our half of life pursuing materialistic things. No matter what our condition is at present, we should look for all that simple blessing that we already have around us which are waiting to be recognized and countable.

Jonathan's second last destination was Phoenix, where he met with *Ronnie Begay*. *Ronnie* was a sixty-year-old lady who handed over the Talisman to *Jonathan* entitled *The purpose of life is to love*. *Ronnie* was a lovable old lady who told him about her young days and how he met *Julian*. Next morning, he headed to Agra, India.

His last destination for collecting Talisman was India. In Agra he visited the Taj Mahal; he was so overwhelmed by seeing the beauty of the place. He had been walking around the Taj Mahal, deeply immersed in the moment that he actually forgot why he was there for what purpose. But he was surprised to see *Julian* there. *Julian* was standing in front of him motionless and flashing a smile. *Julian* told *Jonathan* that he came to India to take those Talismans off from him. He also told him that the last Talisman was with him only. *Julian* handed over the last Talisman small brown bag to *Jonathan*. The last Talisman entitled *Stand for Something Bigger than Yourself*. *Julian* explains the meaning of this Talisman to *Jonathan* that we all are here for some purpose to fulfill. So it's our prime duty to make life beautiful not only for yourself but for those also who love us. We should become successful, on our own terms rather than on those suggested by society. But the most important thing in life is to be significant.

Conclusion:

With the help of Talismans *Jonathan* learnt lots of practical lessons of life which are most needed for him. He understood the real meaning of living a life. We all have problems, ups and downs in our life but we should lead our life positively. We must have gratitude for each and everything that God has given us. *Jonathan* experienced a drastic change in his outlook towards life and surroundings. He recognized his self worth and happily started his new phase of life with new bright positive thoughts and authenticity.

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