

A Study on Anne Tyler's Select Novels with Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*

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Abstract

An American Pulitzer prizewinning novelist Anne Tyler is renowned for her thematic insights into ordinary lives with a tone of optimism. Her novels reveal the truth of women's stereotypical existence insisting that they could achieve anything if their mind is fixed upon it. In this regard, the Australian television writer, Rhonda Byrne's book of *The Secret* is compared and contrasted with the women characters of Anne Tyler. These women believe that, everything will change in life, if the inner mind prompts her to achieve certain things. Byrne's concept of the law of attraction holds a strong note which "tells us whatever we will believe, we will manifest" (S26). Simultaneously, the women protagonists of Tyler propel towards creating new spaces for themselves where they are not constrained to do the household chores restricting themselves.

Keywords: optimism, achieve anything, women, inner mind, law of attraction, restriction.

Rhonda Byrne, an Australian television writer and producer is renowned for her book *The Secret* (2006). The book is based on the belief of the pseudo scientific "law of attraction" (2) which tells that a person's thoughts and beliefs could change his life. She states, "the first step to freedom is when we understand that our thoughts create our life. What you think is what manifests (12). This is Purely a thought provoking one itself. In other words, it can be

Simplified as, we become what we think of. In the words of a critic in the article "Mental Health":

When we think a negative thought, suffering will always follow. When we think a positive thought, we are sure to experience a great amount of joy. Essentially, suffering and pain are unavoidable in life, but we can alleviate ourselves from the suffering that comes from our own minds with each individual thought we think.(Elizabeth).

According to the critic's view, troubles in life follow, if our thoughts are always negative. It is only the hope for better and happier life, that makes any individual to survive despite the unavoidable tears and sufferings of life.

In par with Byrne's lines, the women characters of Tyler are seen to move in life. Age is just a number for these women who aspire to come out their horrible life, and make it meaningful. The lines in Tyler's novel, *Back when We were Grownups*, read thus, "Once upon a time, there was a woman who discovered she had turned into the wrong person. She was a 53 years old by then, a grandmother" (1). The protagonist of the novel is Rebecca Davitch, who finds out that she has turned into a completely different personality after her marriage. Her household works were too heavy that makes her to forget herself, whom she had been once in her younger days. But it is a relief that she did not pity and dumb herself. Instead, she creates a new path for herself and goes in search of her identity. In the words of Rhonda Byrne;

Decide what you want to be, do, and have, think the thoughts of it, emit the frequency, and your vision will become your life , Your whole life is a manifestation of the thoughts that to go on in your head, remember that your thoughts are the primary cause of everything (26,31).

Rebecca in this manner is an optimist, who decides what she wants to become and pursues her vision as she is well aware of the fact that, her thoughts manifest her life.

Delia in the novel *Ladder of Years* is another among Tyler's optimist women who seek freedom in life to bring her ability, and self - reliancy. Delia takes a ride with a truck driver to Bay Borough, finds a room in a boarding house, and makes her family to realize her neediness. She succeeds in it, and leaves a note to the readers that we make choices and our thoughts provoke intentionally or unintentionally to make it happen. Delia herself confesses it, "I didn't mean to leave you!. I just got . . . unintentionally separated from you, and then it seemed I never found a way to get back again" (LY397). When Delia realizes that she did not

want to leave her family actually, a year had already passed. However, she was constantly thinking about each and everyone in her family and those thoughts in turn make her to return home in an year and re-unite with them.

Delia's inner thoughts make her to pursue her journey even without her knowledge. Her quest to become self-reliant gets answered. Rhonda Byrne brings up the concept of “the law of attraction”(2) in her book. It tells that, “whatever we will believe, we will manifest” (3). It suggests that people's thoughts tend to create similar results. Byrne sums up, “if we believe we are deserving of great love, then we will manifest it. If we believe they are going to be poor, we are going to stay poor. If we believe they don't deserve something, it's not going to come to us” (S4). The law of attraction plays a vital role in everyone's life including Tyler's women. If we keep on worrying for being poor, we are destined to remain poorer forever.

Linnie Mae from the novel *A Spool Of Blue Thread* take up a big role in creating her own life based on Byrne's principle of “the law of attraction” (S 2). She changes her mere existence, betrays her parents and leaves home in search of her lover. Not even aware of where he was, or if he was alive, Linnie Mae pursues her journey with an optimistic view of finding him, and marrying him. Her thoughts were so sure and deep that even the universe stands proof for her love. It attracts and brings her towards where her lover Junior Whitshank was. Even Junior, “wasn't pleased to hear how easy he'd been to find” (SBT 362). With no other intentions, except to re-unite with Junior, Linnie Mae was so adamant that she waits for five long years without even looking at any other single fellow since he left. It is this strong thought of hers that makes her unite with Junior.

As seen throughout the pages, although Junior was uninterested to marry Linnie Mae, he is compelled by the universal force to marry her because, Linnie's thoughts were so strong:

she would never know how deeply he had longed to free himself all these years, how he had stayed with her only because he knew she would be lost otherwise No, she had absolute faith that he had her stay because he loved her. Otherwise . . . she would be crushed, and the sacrifice would have been for nothing (SBT 423-24).

Consciously or unconsciously, Junior happens to spend all his years with Linnie Mae, and never once he gets a chance to express himself to her. This is all because, he gets hold upon Linnie's thoughts, or desires, and never could find an escape.

In Tyler's novels, the readers can always see things presented with an optimist view, and thoughts provoking intorealities. Tyler's characters search for simplicity and independence away from the imposed stereotypes. Once they get hold on it, their thoughts or the law of attraction prompts them to go in search of their real self. Rightly as in Byrne's words:

Be grateful for what you have now. As you begin to think about all the things in your life you are grateful for, you will be amazed at the never-ending thoughts that come back to you of more things to be grateful for. You have to make a start, and then the law of attraction will receive those grateful thoughts and give you more just like them. You will have locked into the frequency of gratitude and all good things will be yours. (S78)

Good things happen only to them who believe in their own thoughts and feel grateful for everything they have. Tyler's women are no exception to this, who believe in their own thoughts and act according to their own minds to bring change in their lives. They cannot be restricted as they believe in Byrne's law of attraction, and progress towards self- knowledge and change in all possible manners.

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