

Shamanic Healing and Altered States of Subconscious in Murakami's Fictions

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Abstract:

Shamanism, a universal phenomenon, originated in Inner Asia and has evolved over time. Haruki Murakami, a renowned Japanese author, has crossed cultural divides and gained attention with his works of fiction. His belief in protecting the individual for society's benefit is what appeals to and offends people about him. Murakami's works often convey a sense of loneliness and dislocation through characters that are often lonesome and alone. He uses magical realism to explore the subconscious, a metaphysical part of the mind that is unavailable to the conscious self. Murakami's daily writing routine reaches the surface, focusing on human solitude, loneliness, yearning, nostalgia, and the slender borders between existence and reality. Murakami's short fiction *The Elephant Vanishes* explores the complexity of human pleasure and voting rights, with the narrator's obsession with an elderly elephant and its keeper as a metaphor for the town's negative changes. His works, like *Kafka on the Shore* and *First Person Singular*, explore themes of perception, memory, and existence, often connecting readers' subconscious and influencing our lives. His works, often resembling American culture, have gained critical recognition in Japan. Murakami's fiction explores themes of autonomy and individuality, particularly for a generation of Japanese people who lack an identity and are subsumed by commercialism. His characters face existential crises, alienation from society, and the need to find their true identity to rebel against an oppressive system.

Keywords: Traditional, Mongol, Narrative, Storyteller, Philosophical

Introduction and Literary Background:

'You have to go through the darkness before you get to the light'

“Haruki Murakami”

Shamanism is a universal phenomenon, albeit it first emerged in Inner Asia. With its dramatic nature and religious dominance over such a large territory, it has evolved several components throughout its lengthy historical voyage. These various combinations are referred to as classic shamanism and are practiced by renowned male or female shamans. The numerous local manifestations of Inner Asian shamanism (Mongolian shamanism) that are described in anthropological accounts have deteriorated because either certain components of these traditional configurations were missing or outside current components were present. In this sense, the concept of Shamanism as represented by the professionals known as Shamans is a traditional one maintained by the Mongolian people who thought it existed in the past. Shamanism may be thought of as a belief system that incorporates ancestor worship, traditional remedies, and

religion. The system is centered on the deeds of male and female conduits who mediate between the worlds of spirits and humans. The terms "boge" and "idugan" are used to refer to shamans and their practices, respectively.

With his works of fiction, Haruki Murakami has crossed cultural divides and attracted attention from all across the world. Murakami grew up with a strong confidence in the power of the individual, which contrasts with the homogeneous nation in which he was born. His belief in protecting the individual for the benefit of society is what both appeals to and offends people about him. Every person should be able to locate their essential identity within their subconscious, get to know it, and claim it, according to Murakami. Instead of focusing on finding answers to global problems, he is more interested in studying a person's subconscious to determine whether they would adhere to or defy the homogeneous Japanese culture.

Since the beginning of written history, shamanism has been practiced and followed in Mongolia and the area around it. It was initially connected to other aspects of life as well as Mongolia's tribal social structure. Later, Buddhism repressed it and combined it with other beliefs. Shamanism and Buddhism were severely banned throughout the communist era, or the twentieth century. Although Buddhism still dominates, it has made a significant comeback after independence to help shape Mongolian identity.

People don't often embrace shamanism as a vocation, according to popular belief. The communicator from the world of spirits selects him or her for the job. When the emissary from the spirit realm shows up, the selected individual becomes gravely ill or has hallucinations (Asia Society). These rituals were utilized by the Shamans to battle the mystical origins of evil. During the initiation, a stick was presented to the newly selected shaman. Its lower end had the appearance of a foot, and its finial was shaped like a horse's head.

The success of a work of fiction is greatly influenced by mood since it has to do with how the reader is made to feel. For advice on how to produce a melancholy or surreal tone in literature, a writer can examine the works of Japanese author Haruki Murakami. Through character, story, language, and topic, Murakami expresses various feelings. The people he portrays are frequently lonesome and alone. In *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicles*, for instance, Toru, the main character, loses both his job and his cat. He seems to be able to connect with people who are also floating through life, such as a schoolgirl he meets named May, yet he wanders through life in a passive condition, estranged from his wife. *Sputnik Sweetheart's* narrator has a serious crush on a woman who rejects him. Murakami often leaves his readers with a sense of loneliness and dislocation through these people and others like them.

The conscious mind is considered to be a part of the physical world, whereas the unconscious mind is considered to be a part of the metaphysical world. Murakami employs the paranormal to access this subconscious "other," the metaphysical portion of the mind that is unavailable to the conscious self. The supernatural is what makes it possible for the subconscious to be real. Murakami employs magical realism as a means to discover an identity rather than to affirm it, according to Strecher, setting him apart from other authors who employ the genre.

Famous Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami established a daily writing regimen that has grown to be as well-known as any one work. He gets up at four in the morning and writes for five to six hours, creating ten pages daily, before going for at least a six-mile run and sometimes a swim. This habit is not only practical but also a source of intense delight, which likely explains why his writings have gotten

longer. He has extra capacity due to his extremely productive routine, which he uses to write short stories, and non-fiction and to personally respond to reader inquiries.

Murakami has translated into Japanese to a high degree of proficiency. Because reading his work in English translation is like reading a brand-new book, he likes doing it. These large books need a year or two to transcribe, so by the time the translator contacts him, he has forgotten everything. Murakami takes on a more authorial persona while criticizing American politics. He thinks there ought to be a better world beyond the strangeness since people now don't think things would get better even if they tried. His narratives are set up as journeys through the shadows and the underworld before reaching the surface. This kind of hope is appropriate at this time because Murakami's protagonists typically leave the story in a state of tranquility and composure. Despite the strangeness of life, you may locate your lost cat and your dreams do cease.

Murakami's story developments also provide a certain mood. The majority of his writings recount a succession of bizarre incidents that frequently seem unrelated. For instance, a guy may talk to cats in *Kafka on the Shore*. Murakami's storylines frequently have a dreamy quality, which causes the reader to feel similarly. It is more difficult to discuss Murakami's use of language because all of his works have been translated and Japanese differs greatly from English. But Murakami's writing is renowned for being stylistically distinct from many other Japanese books, and as a result, it reads differently in English.

Murakami writes in an easygoing, flowing manner that has been successfully translated into English. This poetic wording accentuates the sad feeling. Human solitude and loneliness, yearning and nostalgia, and slender or nonexistent borders between other planes of existence and reality are among the topics Murakami explores in his writing. Even after finishing the novel, a reader who has been completely absorbed in the characters' wandering universe and these preoccupations may still feel as though they are living in another reality.

Murakami also successfully conveys to his readers a sense of desire in his literature through the ambiguity of his works. The reader is left feeling a little uneasy and bewildered because most of his stories don't come to a normal conclusion, just like his characters. We can also see by looking at Murakami's work and writing style that the components of fiction need to work together to express a particular mood. They must be reliable. When you write the initial draught of a novel, the mood might not be top of mind, but as you rewrite, you should consider mood and how you want the reader to feel.

The reader experiences an alluring, occasionally nearly drowsy effect from Murakami's writing, which is tempered by an emotional flatness that can serve as a welcome escape from the harsh realities of the outside world. Murakami, however, relies on a fundamental faith in his subconscious and thinks that every vision that emerges from that dark inner well must necessarily be important.

In his short fiction *The Elephant Vanishes*, Murakami masterfully conveys the complexity of human pleasure and voting rights. The narrator's preoccupation with the elephant and its keeper is subtly and skillfully revealed in this story. The narrator learns about a part of himself that is also incredibly complex and enigmatic as he attempts to understand the disappearing elephant and caretaker and their relationship to one another. Early on in the narrative, the narrator makes clear that he is obsessed with the elephant in the town. He goes into great detail about how the elephant is the centre of his universe and says that "the elephant could become the town's symbol." The narrator believes that the town has altered negatively when the elephant vanishes: "Without the elephant, something about the place seemed

wrong." It appeared larger than necessary, vacant, and blank. To fill his own "blank and empty" space, the narrator appears to pass the time by reading about the missing elephant.

He is a salesperson who doesn't see the point or satisfaction in his job. Additionally, "things you can't sell don't mean much in this practical world of ours." He becomes fascinated to the point of obsession and travels every day to visit the elephant because he is miserable since his life lacks variety, passion, and adventure. He chooses to bring up the disappearing elephant in conversation with a lady he has a love interest in since he is so preoccupied with the idea. "I was aware that the subject I had chosen was one of the least appropriate ones for the situation. I should not have brought up the elephant, though. Additionally, it could have possessed a particular ability similar to telepathy and been able to read the keeper's mind. The caretaker's appearance is compared favorably to that of the elephant in the narrator's description: both are elderly, wrinkly, with hair that is "stiff and short" and uncannily comparable large ears. The narrator continues by saying that the last time he went to the elephant house, he "had the feeling that to some extent the difference between them had shrunk."

The narrator's concept of oneness is paralleled by this metaphor. The elephant and its carer are both quite elderly, and it appears that the space narrowing between them symbolizes the end of their existence as they transition into the next one together and as a single being. This story's description is exquisite! It seems that the narrator's description of the town's atmosphere as one of "doom and desolation that hung there like a huge, oppressive raincloud" serves as a visual metaphor for the sadness he experiences over the part of himself that is lost when the elephant vanishes. The sudden departure of the elephant and its keeper disturbs the narrator, pushing him deeper into sadness and perhaps even into the early stages of insanity. Though it's possible that my perceptions are deceiving me, I frequently experience the impression that the environment is out of balance. He sinks into a profound depression, "washing the memories of summer burned into the earth bit by bit." All those memories raced down the gutters and into the sewers and rivers, where they were taken to the vast, dark ocean.

Japanese novelist Murakami has a captivating writing style that is especially appealing during turbulent political times. His paintings were well-liked in Germany after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and in Russia in the 1990s. *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami's fourteenth book, is set in the eastern Japanese mountains and tells the story of an anonymous narrator who gets sucked into a complex adventure involving a mysterious technology entrepreneur, a bell that spontaneously rings at night, an underground shrine, and a strikingly chatty two-foot-tall samurai soldier. The author, who has been a fan of F Scott Fitzgerald's writing since he was a teenager, thinks that these elements come together to create "a homage to *The Great Gatsby*."

For instance, there is a moment in his 2002 book *Kafka on the Shore* where fish start to rain down from the sky like hail. Murakami merely got the concept that something should fall from the sky; he has no explanation for why fish should fall from the sky. Then he pondered what ought to rain down from the heavens. Murakami is so certain that he serves as a link between his readers' subconsciouses and his own that he even corrects himself after jokingly referring to himself as a "natural storyteller".

This idea of emerging from somewhere outside of his conscious control permeates the pivotal periods in Murakami's development as a writer. Murakami upset his parents by forgoing a business career in favor of launching a jazz club in Tokyo called *Peter Cat*, which was named after his cat. Murakami was born in Kyoto in 1949, during the American occupation of Japan following World War II. He hung up the phone and went for a stroll with his wife, Yoko, after receiving a call one weekend morning from the Japanese literary magazine *Gunzo* notifying him that the book had been shortlisted for

its new authors' prize. They took the wounded pigeon they found to the neighborhood police station. That Sunday was sunny and clear, and the spring sunlight reflected brilliantly in the store windows, buildings, and trees. Then it dawned on him. He was going to take home the award.

Critical recognition in Japan took a little to develop, in part because his novels were viewed as "too American-like" due to their lack of any recognizable Japanese roots and their abundance of parallels to American culture. Murakami's economic success, however, increased gradually and peaked in 1987 with *Norwegian Wood*, a heartrending story of longing for adolescent love. With the analogy that his writing is like his glasses—through those lenses, the world makes sense to him—he rejects the idea that his tales of falling fish and supernaturally pregnant women aren't believable.

The captivating and philosophical book *Kafka on the Shore* by Murakami is set in Tokyo. The plot of the book revolves around the lives of two characters, Satoru Nakata, a sexagenarian with mental impairment, and Kafka, a fifteen-year-old runaway. After an inexplicable silver light in the sky, Nakata enters a coma and loses his memory and reading skills. He finds missing cats, which he uses to communicate with cats while working at a handcrafted furniture company.

Nakata leaves the crime site and meets Hoshino, a truck driver, who becomes his student. Kafka befriends Oshima, an androgynous hemophiliac assistant at a small library, while Nakata finds a pupil in Hoshino. Both characters develop shrewd friendships. The storyline develops through deftly but shakily connected segments and includes violence, humor, sex, and an overwhelming amount of potential meanings. Crow assures Kafka that the storm will be ferocious, metaphysical, and filled with "hot, red blood," and that he won't remember how he survived it. The concept that our actions in dreams might be mirrored in waking life and that dreams can serve as portals into waking reality is at the heart of this storm. The inspiration for this idea came from the Japanese classic *The Tale of Genji*, which was written in the first half of the eleventh century. In this story, Lady Rokujo develops a deep jealousy for Genji's principal wife, Lady Aoi.

The incident in "Genji," as translated by Arthur Waley, verges on the realistic, with emotional violence breaking its chains amid the close-knit, restrained circles of the imperial court. Both ladies are startled by the intrusive ghost of one of them, with Lady Rokujo appalled because her nightmares concerning Princess Aoi were rife with savage wrath. She thinks back on how awful it appeared that one's spirit could leave the body and experience feelings that the waking mind would not acknowledge. In conclusion, *Kafka on the Shore* is an engrossing and fascinating book that tackles topics of dreams, dreams, and the power of dreams to alter our lives.

Haruki Murakami is a master of captivating fiction that will have you scratching your head, emphasizing the fundamental weirdness and unfathomability of existence. *First Person Singular*, his first collection of translated tales into English since *Men without Women* (2017), contains eight of his works. These pieces are typical of Murakami, who is known for his multifarious obsessions with jazz, classical music, the Beatles, baseball, and recollections of confused adolescent love. The title of the book and its central idea of detachment are taken from the previous narrative.

The existential issues raised by Murakami's straightforward short stories include those related to perception, memory, and the purpose of existence. His unnamed narrators tend to be middle-aged authors who are self-effacing and who have always favored Schumann and Charlie Parker over the Beatles. Their tales frequently begin with wandering recollections of a puzzling romance from their adolescence.

More than just "a burst of fleeting color," the finest Murakami stories frequently result in more than that. This book does contain some errors, though, such as a tiresome discussion on the difference between ugly and beautiful women in a narrative about a friendship with a hideous lady based on a love of music. One of Murakami's best books, *Confessions of a Shinagawa Monkey* will particularly appeal to those who enjoy his surrealist twists that straddle dreams and reality. Murakami learns a valuable lesson about "how to accept defeat with grace" in *The Yakult Swallows Poetry Collection* through his humorous account of his support for the futile neighborhood baseball club.

Conclusion

The work of fiction demonstrates Murakami's skill as a writer in weaving intricate tales into an engaging storyline, as well as his steadfast commitment to bringing the theme of autonomy. His attention is more localized and relevant to a generation of Japanese people who lack an identity and whose identity has been subsumed by commercialism and wealth rather than global concerns. His writings are not "placeless and timeless novels," even though his un-Japanese writing style and acquaintance with Western pop culture have made him well-known abroad.

His heroes experience two fundamental existentialist crises as a result: alienation from society and the need to find one's true identity to rebel against an oppressive, uniform "system." These are significant subjects for Murakami since they affect his Japanese generation. Murakami believes that the secret to surviving the dystopia of the 20th century is individuality. The only source of moral authority in a corrupt and materialistic world is the individual. The major objective of any work of fiction Murakami writes is to figure out what happens to a person's own identity in a society where that person's identity has already been pre-constructed to fit in. The conflict between one's struggle for individual identity and society's imposition of an organized and uniform identity is the overarching topic. According to Murakami, finding an identity that is distinct from the system is the only option to challenge the system. Individual identity must be protected as a result, and doing so requires using one's will.

Murakami has a sizable worldwide following, indicating that his message to uphold uniqueness and reject uniformity is resonating with readers all around the world. But he's writing in Japan warning them to avoid being absorbed into the system. Murakami wants his readers, who are Japanese citizens, to embark on the same journey as his protagonists, one in search of an identity that is in danger of being lost unless it is urgently pursued. He does this because he understands the identity crisis that his home country's readers are experiencing.

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