

## A Search for self-therapy from the sense of loss due to high modernism in Haruki Murakami's *South of the Border, West of the Sun*

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**ABSTRACT:** This research on Murakami's novel *South of the Border, West of the Sun* attempts to disclose the sense of loss and a search for Self-therapy from the modernist perspective. Modernity is related to the modern era and the aesthetic qualities of modernism; however, modernity refers specifically to the social conditions and relations that arise out of the modern period, usually as a result of capitalism and industrialization. Modernity and high modernity are concerned with human progress and the potential of human intervention to bring down positive change in the structure of society; however, high modernity's visions of societal change rely on the expertise of intellectuals and scientific innovation, making high modernity a more elitist project than its predecessor. This paper argues that separation, loss, and alienation of characters that one meets in his/her life do not let him live a happy life. In fact, coping with loss, search for self-therapy and growing to search for commitment make people to live a satisfied and illumined life. It is the product of modernism that the protagonists of this novel Hajime and Shimamoto are dissatisfied with each other and they slip away from reality. Also, Murakami portrays Hajime lamenting on the loss of his youthful days which leads as a psychologically weak mentality of his own leads his life into a tragic track. The problems that are identified in this novel are social by nature, no science except modernism can address such issues, and therefore the modernist perspective explores social problems faced by the protagonist and paving way for the way of resolution.

**KEYWORDS:** Mental breakdown, Modernism, Self-therapy.

Haruki Murakami is arguably one of the most experimental Japanese novelists to have been translated into English. His novels inhabit the liminal zone between realism and fablerepresenting the duality of mind of the protagonist who is literally of two minds and psychologically troubled. Search for identity and magical realism are the twin hallmarks of Murakami's literary works, where he always presents himself as an ardent follower of cultural cosmopolitanism, standing in favour of cultural reforms and speaking against cultural isolationism. The practical problems of modernity confront the spiritual distress of the current generation in the society, which are more painful than necessarily fatal and also aggravated by disillusionment.

The major characters Hajime and Shimamoto suffer due to their separation. It comes close to the modern definition which shows people lamenting on loss, separation, defeat and breakups, as both the characters cannot accept themselves as part of the society where separation results into pang and suffering. They try themselves to entangle in multiple love affairs temporarily forgetting their past. In the beginning, Hajime shows his true love for Shimamoto but later he involves in relationship with other girls too. Here multiple affairs act as an indication of modernism resulted from dissatisfaction, and this rooted dissatisfaction in the characters makes themselves suffer more. Hajime leaves Shimamoto thinking that she is not perfect, and that too is an indication that characters are suffering due to their own choices. The environment they live in is the consequence of their own deeds. Hence multiple love affairs, feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction of the characters become the major problems that the characters face, finally haunting the broken relationship. Hajime laments on the loss of the true beloved. These are considered to be addressed by the theoretical perspective of Modernism that can pave the way for resolution.

Hajime, Shimamoto and Hajime's wife Yukiko are the central characters who suffer due to high modernism in the society. The separation of the characters is in such a way that obstructs them to live a happy married life. The marriage of Hajime and Yukiko does not relieve them from their past memories. Hajime feels as if he is trapped in a world not of his own choosing and, whereas Shimamoto feeling the same does not confess her suffering. Towards the end of the novel Hajime admits that he himself is a patient needed for medication. Likewise, Yukiko tries to hang herself to death. Due to high modernism, the psychological drives of the character are not in a state to drive them to the right path. The obligations of married life make them suffer more for they cannot return to their previous life.

As a result of such suffering, the characters feel alienated from the world around. The rise of capitalism signals the value of money and the central characters feel as if they are psychopaths. This exemplifies that the modern protagonist lacks something in which he is a loser and not the winner. Change in people's lifestyle is an indication of modernist art which involves certain new understandings of time and space, speed, communication, travel and chaos.

It is understood that Hajime's suffering is caused by separation as he has inferiority complex by considering himself as a different child than any other child that obstructs him. He also confesses that he had happened to be one of the unusual ones, since he was an only child and that he had inferiority complex about it. Hajime ponders deep in silence which he confesses as "I much preferred to swim on and on alone in silence" (18). It confirms that Hajime thinks that he lacks something that all other people have. This proves that he likes to live in loneliness. Hajime is considered to be an abnormal child because people of Japan were highly affected by Sino-Japanese war. He had differentiated himself from other children and that suggests that he is afraid of his abnormality that makes him lament for his own life. That is where inferiority complex overtakes his normality and pushes him to suffer like most modernists suffer. He strikes with the memories of past and becomes nostalgic. Being alone, he considers that his actions have no meaning to his life. He does not consider himself as a person with actions to make his life livable. This depression further hurts him and pushes him at the verge of confession, Hajime confirms that other people also know about his feelings and confesses that whatever others think about him is true and that hurts him more. This indicates that he is not only physically abnormal but also psychologically weak. Hajime suffers from the same fate as modern people often face. It is possible that due to high modernism Hajime has inferiority complex which tears him to pieces.

It is more interesting to note that an inferior person always seeks another to prove himself strong and it had happened with Hajime too. He concludes that he is not as vulnerable as Shimamoto and explores that the only difference between him and Shimamoto is that she has the ability to cope or overcome the suffering. Thus, not only Hajime but also Shimamoto suffer more from psychological baggage. Modern people find it difficult to make their way out. They feel as if they are trapped. Such behavior is the character of the sufferers. Modern people often suffer from nostalgia. Hajime becomes nostalgic while he holds his wife Yukiko. He reveals, "She placed her palm over my heart, and the feel of her hand and the beat

of my heart became one. She's not Shimamoto, I told myself. She can't give me what Shimamoto gave" (25). He remembers Shimamoto all the time when he is with his wife and also cannot enjoy with any other girl except with Shimamoto. It is of course not the bolt of lightning that had struck him but it is a kind of imagination, a remembrance. Being imaginative, he fears worldly things and does not accept the change. Thus, he becomes a loner; a misanthropist in general. This ideology suggests that Hajime is suffering deep down rooted loneliness, inferiority complex and nostalgia. He confesses, "Years of disappointment and loneliness. And silence. Frozen years, when my feelings were shut up inside me" (45). Such characteristics of modern people cannot be distinguished between dream and reality. Here, in the novel, Hajime suffers from the same fate as he cannot distinguish between the world of dreams and the real world. He gets lost with the memory of the past.

Hajime also confesses his guilt. He goes on exploring the chains in his mind which are needed in order to distinguish reality. Finally he realises that people suffer because of the break in a chain of reality. This clearly pin points that Hajime is suffering from such a loss as a result of the break in the chain of reality. Due to this break Hajime is dumbfounded and speechless. One should realize that there is something much more important to do in his life. The truth is, life will amaze one person in the most stunning ways, and at the same time it will break the heart of the person. Life teaches many kinds of lessons to grow and build oneself and also helps to bloom into the person that one always hoped to be. It will also carry within it the kinds of losses, and also changes and shapes in uncomfortable ways. Life demands to do work to understand oneself and also to be healed. Bravery leads one to stretch towards light. It is the way that one can bloom in the direction of goodness. In modern life people do not believe in absolute reality. Many live in alternate reality and like to live in the world of dreams by rejecting the world around them. An endless chain is related within one's consciousness, and it is the maintenance of this chain which produces the sensation that he actually exists. But, at the same time, something may happen in the midst of loss.

Coping mechanism can be used for overcoming the sense of loss. The separation of the characters is shown in such a way that obstructs them to live happily and some of the coping mechanisms to be used are comparison and contrast, medication, overcoming suffering through love affairs and family which is an ultimate place to overcome all grief. Hajime is grief-stricken and dreams of his beautiful days to come back into his life again. This can be taken as a coping strategy of Hajime at the time of crisis. Thus, love affairs and dream and

recurring memories serve as coping mechanisms to overcome the sense of loss. It is also important to reveal busy lifestyle and meetings as coping mechanisms of the modern people. Hajime also escapes from his reality by going for long drives. Travel is one such best self-therapy which provokes to face the fears and allows the traveller to recharge by distracting in a healthy way and allows to get back home free of stress and anxiety. Travelling allows a person to learn how to go with a flow and lean into trip instead of constantly seeking comfort. Eating alone at a restaurant and talking to strangers gives confidence about self, and hence self-companion allows self-realization and self-acceptance. The author finds that coping mechanisms and search for self-therapy for modern people are important aspects since that can be greater remedies to overcome modern problems.

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