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MAN'S SUFFERING IN KAFKA'S METAMORPHOSIS

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Abstract

The present document takes into account the human dilemma in modern society, this dilemma leads to desolation and dejection in the life of a person who is dedicated to feeding, protecting, and providing for his family. The situation in man's life comes when he fails to earn and provide and is considered useless. Gregor Samsa in Metamorphosis was the only breadwinner for his sister, mother, and father. He worked as a travelling salesman, who was content with his earnings. Franz Kafka shows the very staunch reality of Gregor when he wakes one day as transformed into an insect, unable to move, eat and go outside, he fails to bring bread or earn for his family, which eventually leads them into poverty as well as shame due to his appearance. Gregor becomes useless and a liability to his family, which forced him to commit suicide. Kafka moulded a story that shows how our society works for a man who doesn't earn and provide. Gregor's life becomes much more miserable due to his family's attitude toward him.

Keywords: Transformation within Transformation, Forced Suicide, Rejection, Voidness of Human Relations.

INTRODUCTION

Franz Kafka in his novella talks about a story of a man who suffers due to his absurd transfiguration into the body of an insect one night, although this transformation of Gregor is kind of erratic for the reader as the writer fails to provide any prior details about his condition and situation which leads him into the body of the insect. Later Gregor faces challenges in doing his daily chores as well as he could not go to the office, where he works as a salesman. His sudden mutation leads the family into a different new perspective towards him, and he sees a change in the compassion and attitude of his sister, father, and others.

Kafka's protagonist was a simple man, he was a sole earner for his parents and sister, just like in a modern middle-class family, where we often see a single person who earns, feeds, and provides for other members, while the rest of them are dependent on him/her. Gregor as a responsible man worked hard to make survival. Kafka's protagonist also went into another change apart from his mutation, he went from a '*resourceful man to a resource-less man*', this transformation is so impactful if it is seen from the perspective of reality which changes the way of reading this story. His situation could also be called 'the situation of a modern man, who loses his work and becomes a useless and liability to his family and society.'

Gregor's appearance also worked as another factor to his family's poverty and their condition is debauched when they thought of earning by bringing 'borders' for some earning, although they tried to conceal Gregor by shutting the door their plan failed at last due to which their renter left the house.

MAN'S ISOLATION

Gregor's isolation or alienation started after a change in the attitude of his family members, they started behaving like Gregor was some kind of an alien or an outsider, who was suddenly incarnated in their house coming from nowhere. Although, Gregor remembered everything, retained his duties and was worried about the family's economic situation. He knew if he fails to work and fails to earn, his family would go into a grave and grim situation, but the attitude of his family was worse towards him, especially his father he displayed his anger towards him and showed a hostile approach by driving him away from the living room, treating him like an animal. Gregor was transformed only physically, but he was still the same old brother and son at the cognitive and emotional levels, due to his loss of speech, all he could do was groan and moan, which limited his ability to speak and communicate with his family.

Gregor was treated as if he was in the territory of the enemy, and his mother started to hate his appearance, even one time she saw Gregor in the transformed form, she fainted on the spot, this led to chaos and confusion for both sides and in this chaos, his father thought that Gregor attacked his mother, in this confrontation he started throwing an apple to him, which embedded in his body leading to severe injury and loss of movement in his limbs.

The only kind and compassionate person towards him was his sister, Greta, who took care of everything, showing empathy towards him, taking care of his food, cleaning his room, moving his furniture so that he could feel comfortable, and he could stroll around it, she even played the violin to him every day to break his monotonous situation to let him tackle uninvited thoughts. Greta conversed with him every day so that he could never feel

neglected and isolated. But the time came when Kafka showed the limitations of human emotions, compassion, and empathy.

Greta wanted to become a musician, she played the violin, Gregor for her passion worked hard and wanted a promotion so that he could pay her for her needs. All worked well until his transfiguration which made him helpless and also stopped the progress of his family. Due to this, his family member had to work different odd works to meet their needs, which led them to frustration and a sense of unrest and also occurred a loss of empathy towards Gregor. Greta lost her emotions and empathy for Gregor and started to act bizarrely towards his brother, which eventually led to the ill-treatment of Gregor and his seclusion from his family. This impairment of empathy is rather symbolic in nature as Kafka tries to show how human emotions have limitations when it comes to meeting needs. At last, we see the death of Gregor in his room being broken, desolated, and dismembered from his family and society.

TRANSFORMATION WITH TRANSMUTATION

The Metamorphosis to readers is known for the strange transformation of Gregor Samsa into an insect at the very start of the story, the story advances and moves along with his journey after his mutation, which leads him to the loneliness, realization and rejection of his own family and others. However, Metamorphosis in my opinion is not just a story of his change into horrible vermin but a story of a common man who loses his value in family and society after he is incapable to provide and to earn for them, to be more accurate I would like to say that, there is a social stigma for a man that he is only '**worthy if he is resourceful**' and if he earns and brings money to family. This social stigma for man forces him to do odd work, to face humiliation and sometimes torture at the workplace.

Gregor's journey is symbolic for readers, his change brings us the reality of a society that works differently for both genders. Let's have one recent example, during the corona period in India, we saw workers getting laid off, businesses getting shut down and other works also came to halt, thousands of men (maybe million) lost their works, in a literary

sense they become resource-less person, unable to bring money to their family, they failed to feed them, next thing we know was family quarrels, increasing rates in divorce and their condition became more miserable. These situations were less seen in families where there were several working members or even husbands and wives whom both were employed. This social stigma that only a man would work and woman would remain in the house puts the life and mental health of members of the family in jeopardy as well as pressure. Gregor Samsa's family was happy until he kept them providing, but due to being the single breadwinner, it got more miserable for them after he became useless in the eyes of society.

At the start of the novel, we come to know about Gregor's occupation that he is a 'Traveling Salesman' (p 15) who is employed in the textile business, he calls his career a 'strenuous career' (p16). This shows his stressful, hard-working life to feed his family, and being a dedicated man, even after his transformation into an insect he thought it was a bad dream and he kept on waiting to go to work, just like a common man he thoughts of debts he had to pay '*I have got the money together to pay off my parents' debts to him-another five or six years I suppose-that is definitely what I will do*' (p17). The character of Samsa is the attitude of a common man who even after being bedridden thinks of his family's happiness. The happiness and welfare of his family bring contentment to his life, and he forgets his pain in front of their smile. Although when a man loses his work the first one is his family with whom his confrontation happens and usually in our Indian society this conformation is not encouraging or amiable to the person, our culture takes man not working or being idle as a social disgrace while it is ironical that a woman or girl sitting idle or not working is not considered as any type of social stigma. Gregor's incompetency came with his body transfiguration, while he was ready to do his daily chores and work. As the story proceeds, we see his father becomes more aggressive towards him as he has to leave his comfortable life and the scarcity of money leads him to work as a guard. This generated an aggressive attitude towards his son, and he often showed his anger by beating, shouting and throwing

an apple at him, which led to injury for Gregor later he succumbed to it.

CONCLUSION

Gregor Samsa's plight is a lesson for the readers, Kafka's aphorism in his writing tries to bring out the social-cultural background of that era, which was hard to survive, ever demanding and wanted man as a working mule. Kafka's protagonist Gregor was a simple man who was dedicated to his family and their dreams. Striving hard to provide for them, when he undergoes this symbolic transfiguration into an insect, he faced isolation, rejection and most importantly he lost his position in his family. The term symbolic is used here by me to reflect and to add a new different meaning to this paper, as most of the time 'Metamorphosis' is understood to be an absurd novella, but when it is read from a different perspective then it is found to be more realistic than absurd. Here the term symbolic is used to understand that a man in real life goes from a working man to a work-less man and there after losing his work, money and losing his value and position in society. Gregor's transformation is the transformation of every man who goes in to change from an appreciated man to an unappreciated man in his life as this might happen due to not getting work, due to other factors losing work or retirement. Kafka's protagonist also was one of them.

Limitation of emotion.

"It got to go" p (90) were words shouted by his sister after her limits of compassion, emotions and dedication for his brother's crosses. Kafka shows how a person dedicated to his loved one's a human being with a barrier of emotions. Greta was the only person who loved Gregor even after he was isolated from his family and society. As we learned that Greta wanted to be a musician and played the violin to Gregor to keep him occupied but after his transformation, she had to work and keep doing household chores to keep her dream alive and to support her family, this led to frustration in her and rejection of all compassion for Gregor. His father had to leave luxuriant life and went on doing minimal and odd work to bring bread to the family, which seemed much suffering, he showed his anger in form of violence and his mother felt ashamed of him and

scared of his appearance. These voids and changes in human emotions and behaviour reflect how contemporary society treats men which have changed due to certain reasons.

Forced suicide

Gregor went into rejection “what now then?” P (92) he asked himself as he looked around in the darkness. He was left with nothing, he could not walk, could not communicate, could not relate to anyone, this dilemma led to isolation and a play of fracked human relations in front of him leaving him broken. His body became weak, and at last, he thought of his family with emotion and love, leaving a void and empathyless world forever.

Gregor did not die naturally, when I conclude with this sentence it has an immersive experience of the society that we live in, the man never dies but is forced by breaking his self-respect, by demoralizing him sometimes also by dogging him for his avoidable weakness. Gregor was forced to attempt suicide by that cruel society and his empathy-less family, this shows how man is treated when he is not useful in the family as well as in society being unable to bring bread. This ‘Man’ is crushed, outcasted, humiliated and at last forced to be isolated and dejected by ruthless society.

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