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**A TRAGIC VISION OF LIFE IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS***

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**Abstract:**

*The novella, The Metamorphosis is penned by one of the most famous German writers Franz Kafka. The story is about Gregor Samsa who is the protagonist of the story. He works as a salesman for his family. He is a common man. One day there happened an unusual incident regarding Gregor Samsa. When he wakes up one morning, he comes to know that he is transformed into an insect. After that day, his life is totally changed. He knows each and everything. He wants to do several things but he cannot do due to his transformation into an insect. Thus, Kafka tries to portray a tragic vision of life in such a way that most of the time we want to do several things in our life but we cannot achieve them.*

**Keywords:** *Identity, Transformation, Struggle and Tolerance, etc.*

Franz Kafka was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1883 in Prague, Kingdom of Bohemia, Austria-Hungary. He is a literary icon of German literature. He was born into a middleclass German family. His literary interest was in such a way that he wrote short stories and novels. His most famous works are *The Metamorphosis, The Trial, The Judgment, The Castle, Contemplation, A Hunger Artist, Letters to Felice, etc.* *The Metamorphosis* is the story of a salesman named Gregor Samsa. When he wakes up one morning, he finds out that he is suddenly changed into a huge insect. *The Trial* is a story of a man named Joseph K. who is a chief cashier in a bank. He has been arrested on his 30th birthday by two unknown agents for unspecified crime from an unspecified agency. He has self-existence before that day. But when he is arrested, he is not imprisoned but the trial goes on. He confronts the trial in the court for next several days to maintain his well reputation and tries to make self-existence. Eventually, he is stabbed to death. *The Judgment* is about a relationship between a man and his father. *The Castle* is about 'K' who is a protagonist of the novel. He arrives in a village and tries to gain authority over the castle for his self-existence which is governed by Count West from the castle. Kafka died before completing the novel but it has been suggested that the protagonist 'K' dies in the village. *Contemplation* is a short story collection. It is Kafka's first published book. It has eighteen short stories. It is written between 1904 to 1912. *A Hunger Artist* is a short story collection. It has four short stories. It is the last short story collection. *Letters to Felice* is a book of letters in which Kafka wrote letters to Felice Bauer. His works influenced most of the people such as writers, publishers, artists, critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

In human life there are two visions. First is tragic vision and second is comic vision. Tragic vision is the vision through which one can see the world in tragic way on the other hand comic vision



is the vision through which one can see the world in comic way. Kafka shows tragic vision of life in most of his works such as *The Trial*, *The Castle*, *The Metamorphosis*, etc. Tragic vision is the vision in which man suffers from the problems in life. He suffers from his day-to-day work, from his family, from his relatives, from his friends, etc. Man is pessimistic about his life. There is nobody in the world that is always happy. Everybody is suffering from his monotonous life. In the same way, Gregor Samsa, protagonist of the novel entitled *The Metamorphosis*, suffers the same.

He is a common man. He was a traveling salesman. One day when he wakes up early morning, he finds out that he is transformed into a large insect. He says "What's happened to me?" (Kafka, 3) He was thinking at that time that it was not his dream. After that he is so much worried about his life. He thinks what kind of life it is. He talks negatively regarding his job by stating that taking so many efforts for a job, curse of traveling, worries about making train connections, bad and irregular food, contact with different people all the time so that you can never get to know anyone or become friendly with them. He thinks that how to reach to job. When he looks the alarm clock, he thinks it is too late. It is half past six. The time of the train was seven. If he were to catch that train, he would have to rush like mad. Even if he could not get the train, he had to bear the anger of his boss in the office. His boss does not listen his excuses.

He does not understand what to do. He only imagines about his daily routine. He thinks how to catch the train, how to reach the office and so on and so forth. He thinks that the office assistant is very strict. He also thinks that if he reports him sick, nobody will believe him in office because in fifteen years of his service, Gregor had never been ill. At his home firstly his mother came to call him. She called him saying that it was quarter to seven. She asks herself why Gregor is not waking up. He wanted to give answers and wanted to explain each and everything. But he couldn't do so. After this his father came there calling him "Gregor, Gregor" (Kafka, 5) but nothing happened. After his father, Gregor's sister came to call him. She also requests him but he does not reply. His sister whispered: "Gregor, open the door, I beg of you" (Kafka, 5). He, however, did not reply. After listening the voices from the outside of the door, he tries to come out of the bed. Firstly, he wanted to do was get the lower part of his body out of the bed, but he had never seen this lower part, and could not imagine what it looked like. Therefore he could not do it. So then he tried to get the top part of his body out of the bed first, carefully turning his head to the side. But he could not do so. He tried so many things to come out of the door but he could not. After sometime, his sister came once again there and told him, "Gregor, the chief clerk is here" (Kafka, 7) "Yes, I know", (Kafka, 7) said Gregor to himself. Then the chief clerk called "Good morning, Mr. Samsa". He isn't well", (Kafka, 8) said his mother to the chief clerk. His father also tried to talk to the clerk that he is not well. The chief clerk now raised his voice, "Mr. Samsa", (Kafka, 10) he called to him, "what is wrong?(Kafka,10).He tried to convince at his level. He also tries to speak on behalf of his parents and his employer and he requested him for his clear and immediate explanation. Gregor tried to explain. But he was not well. The chief clerk also tried to convince him but Gregor could not reply. Finally the chief clerk left the room. After that Gregor's parents were thinking of his job because they were dependent on him. Gregor requests the chief clerk to be positive about him because he is seriously in debt. He is trapped in a difficult situation. He also says not to take sides against him at the office. He tried to convince a lot but all in vain. As soon as Gregor started to talk, the chief clerk turned away. He tried to run behind the chief clerk but after sometime the chief clerk disappeared. When Gregor's mother sees his condition, she is totally depressed. She had forgotten the table on which breakfast was there. His parents were worried about him. He pushed himself over to the door. One of his legs had been badly injured because of the events of that morning. He looks towards a dish filled with sweetened milk and little pieces of white bread floating on it. He was so pleased after looking it. Firstly, he laughed. Finally becoming disappointed he came to know that he cannot taste that milk. Milk was his favourite drink. His sister



had put it for him but he turned against his own will. Several things were going against his own will. His other family members were doing their works thinking about Gregor and his future. His sister is also worried about him. Sometimes she is so disturbed due to his behaviour. She gave him food every day. He was comfortable due to her help. Gregor understands everyone but nobody understands him, not even his sister.

Although he was not able to listen any news about what is going on inside the house and outside the house; he was thinking about his future. He had not enough money for his family. His father was healthy but old. He did not have self-confidence. He had not been working since five years. The condition of Gregor's mother was not also good. She suffered from asthma. His sister was seventeen years old. Her life was enviable, consisting of wearing nice clothes, sleeping late, etc. Her life was so luxurious. Gregor thanked her sister for her help. He hides his appearance. Whenever his sister comes to meet him, he hides himself under the couch. He was doing like that because it made him realize that if his sister sees his appearance, she will not bear this. First fourteen days, his parents and his sister did not meet him. His sister was going to give him only food. She did not meet him because he did not allow anybody to meet him. But after the fourteen days his parents were very excited to meet him. His mother was so eager to see him. But firstly, his father and sister meet him. Later, by force she was ready to meet him and said eagerly, "Let me go and see Gregor, he is my unfortunate son! Can't you understand I have to see him?" (Kafka, 26). But Gregor did not allow his mother to enter in his room because he was thinking that she would not bear all this. But finally, he allowed her to enter in the room. She expressed her feelings towards him. She expressed her love towards him. She was not comfortable in Gregor's room. So, his sister and mother were transforming the room. Gregor felt nothing at that time because he was thinking that nothing had happened about him. It was just a few pieces of furniture being moved after all. But soon he realised that it is assailed from all sides. His head and legs pulled in against him and his body pressed to the floor. He was thinking about himself that he could not stand once again. He also thought that his mother and sister were emptying his room out; taking away everything that was his favorite. He had suffered in that situation more than a month. His father was thinking that Gregor is a family member therefore he cannot be treated like an enemy. Gregor's family became so poor. There was a question in front of him that who would take care of him? The household budget became very smaller. The maid was dismissed. Scenario of the family was totally changed. The family members were thinking to sell the jewellery. As far as his family is concerned he had forgotten his boss, chief clerk and his friends. He was thinking only about his family and his health. Initially, all his family members took care of him but gradually nobody was paying attention to the Gregor. Gregor became angry because of such things. His caretaker, his sister too, was not paying attention to him. She provides him food inappropriately at the time of morning, mid-day and night without care, respect and love. His mother does not clean his room with respect and care. His sister shows that she is doing much more work for him. In short she shows sympathy for him. Nobody was taking care of his room. His father and mother were doing their work. His sister was playing so beautifully that he also wanted to join her. But unfortunately nobody was paying attention to him. It does not mean that they are against him. His all family members wanted that he should be fine. His sister, his mother and father could not do anything special for him but they were only showing sympathy for him. His sister and mother were crying for him. His family members were ready to accept the fact that the condition of Gregor had become worst. Gradually the body of Gregor was aching. He thought about his family. He remembered their love towards him and suddenly he fell down and unfortunately left the world. When the cleaner cleans the room next morning, she understands that he is dead. She shouted loudly, "Come and have a look at this, it's dead, just lying there, stone dead!" (Kafka, 45). After that Mr. and Mrs. Samsa entered into Gregor's room and saw him. Initially they became sad. Later they realized that whatever had happened



with Gregor it was good. They could not bear all this. He also was suffered a lot. But then he was relieved from all those sufferings. In short, death relieved him from all the sufferings in life.

The novelist reveals over here that the life is filled with struggle. Everybody has struggle. Man struggles for so many things. Firstly he struggles for job on which his family depends. One can do so many things for job. He adjusts so many things. He does not care his family. He forgets all his issues. He forgets all his relatives and friends and so on. In short, without struggle life is incomplete. There are so many obstacles in life. One can try to fight over those obstacles. Each and every day we accept a new challenge and face a new issue. From morning to night man struggles for each and every thing. Most of the time he is unable to do such things. That is the tragic vision of life.

When one wakes up early in the morning, he makes plan what to do in his whole day. He thinks that he has to go to his work. He has to complete all his work successfully. He has to return home from his work successfully. He also makes plan regarding his family that his family should be happy. But while doing that he faces a lot of issues. He accepts so many challenges in his life. While fulfilling his responsibilities, he forgets himself, his identity, self-respect and so on and so forth. Ultimately if he is unable to fulfill his responsibilities, he commits suicide like Gregor Samsa. Like Gregor everybody is facing the same issues and problems in life. Everybody is in trouble and suffering from depression. Most of the people commit suicide due to depression. Everybody tries to fulfill his responsibilities in life. But fulfilling the responsibilities in life he accepts the huge challenges. He is not happy in life. That is the tragic vision of life. That tragic vision the writer tries to convey in his novel *The Metamorphosis*.

This research paper concludes that how man is very eager to achieve his goal. It also shows that how he suffers from several things in his life. Man has so many expectations in life and in those expectations, he suffers a lot at each and every stage. It also shows that how man is forgetting his present happiness due to expectations.

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**To Cite the Article: Tate, Udhav. and Handibag, Y. S., “A Tragic Vision of Life in Frantz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*”. Literary Cognizance, IV - 2 (September, 2023): 58-61. Web.**