

Roopa V R

Franz Kafka's –'Metamorphosis' depicts the importance of social interaction to survive through the predicaments of the protagonist Gregor Samsa.

Franz Kafka a German –speaking Bohemian Jewish novelist and short story writer is the prominent figure of 20th century literature through his works he has explored the themes of alienation, existential anxiety, guilt and absurdity. "Die Verwandlung" (The Metamorphosis) is one such work that reflects the Kafkaesque (senseless disorientation, menacing complexity ,surreal distortion).The novel features the predicament of the protagonist Gregor samsa by fusing the elements of realism and incomprehensible transformations leading to his isolation and death due to lack of social interaction.

“Social interaction is the process by which we act and react in relation to those around us”. Social interaction is the basic process represented in communication and a mutual relationship between two or more individuals. Interaction between persons is social behavior through language, symbols, and gestures. People exchange meanings and have a reciprocal effect upon each other's behavior expectations and thought.

Social contact and Communication are the basic conditions of Social Interaction . Social Contact has its origin in the mutual response between various groups or individuals , social contact is the beginning point of social interaction it is strengthened by physical contact in various forms. Similarly, social interactions are established through the medium of communications like script, gestures, symbols etc . In fact society cannot be conceived without communication.

Franz Kafkas ground breaking work “The Metomorphosis” is one such work that depicts the importance of social interaction to survive in human society through the nightmarish plight or predaciament of the protogonist Gregor Samsa , who unfortunately gets transformed into a gaint beetle like insect the physical change along with his incapacity to maintain social contact by communicating his tragic faith to his family members , at last culminates in his death in its deadliest form by suffering alienation and humiliation from them, for whose well-being he worked very hard and wished to fullfill all their dreams, however harder he had to work . The heart breaking story of Gregor samsa comples the reader to rethink about the futility of life without social contact and communication.

Though Gregor being changed to an monstrous vermin , would have succeeded to gain the support of his family members to some extent, if he was able to communicate with them, and express his dissatisfaction

over the injustice met in his own family. At least, he would have died with the solace that he had communicated his plight to his family and it was not of course his fault that he had turned to an insect and its now their turn to support him to get through this ordeal and show some humanity instead of isolating and humiliating him.

The novel begins with the realization of Gregor Samsa that he has been metamorphosed into a monstrous vermin on one fateful morning. At first he thinks that it's just a dream it's out of tiredness because, he works very hard to afford a comfortable life to his family members. Feels it very hard to accept the unfortunate tragedy happened to him. He is engulfed by shame and helplessness thinking, how he could support his family. He tries hard to hide the fact from his family to however extent he can, because he cannot see them shocked seeing his transformed condition, which also hints to the loss of financial support and comfortable life they enjoyed so far. That shows how considerate Samsa is about his family than, the tragedy fallen on him. But his consideration, his hard work to ensure them a prospered life goes unanswered in his post-metamorphosed life, as they eventually burden him with physical and psychological torture.

Though the family recognizes the beetle as their son Gregor Samsa through his communication with the chief clerk who visits him for being late, but runs away seeing his metamorphosed form. After that communication Samsa completely loses his ability to interact and the loss of communication also marks the beginning of his tragic life filled with humiliation and isolation. The same family members who showed immense interest and were worried about his health when he neither responded to their call nor opened the door, were no more worried after he turned into a beetle that anxiety gradually started fading out.

In the initial stage Samsa's sister does her best to look after him the whole family mourns at his state. The consideration they showed was with the expectation and hope that, he will change into his former state but unfortunately that does not happen. His appearance was unbearable to them. If Samsa could ever interact with them he would have burdened his unfortunate fate more easily than without interaction.

“If Gregor had only been able to speak to his sister and thank her for all that she had to do for him it would have been easier for him to bear it; but as it was that it caused him pain”(Kafka,50)

Though Gregor was metamorphosed into beetle his need to communicate and maintain interaction remained intact, Samsa thrived for the presence of his family members.

“Gregor would think to himself that maybe it would be better if his mother came in, not everyday of course, but one day a week, perhaps; she could understand much better...”(Kafka,53)

He wanted to console them and support them atleast through words for the hardship and economic insecurity they are going through as that was what he could do, but loss of speech cut him off of all the interaction that he could have had and the difference he would have bought in his family . Samsa wanted to tell his sister about how he had planned to send her to learn music the dream which she had cherished from a long time, he had planned to let them know with grand announcement on the eve of christmas, and how he had to work hard to raise himself from junior salesman to a travelling representative bringing with that the chance to earn more money in a different way and hence enabling his family to lead a comfortable life. If he could interact he would have convinced them how desperate, helpless and lonely he is feeling as that gratitude and affection was not given in return to him. Samsa's alienated life was suffocating than one could imagine though initially he was given food to eat he was deprived of interaction he missed his dear ones a lot . He kept his ears pressed against the door to listen their conversation he wanted to keep in touch with what's happening around to them.

There are many situations depicted in the novel that reflects the humiliation samsa as a beetle had to go through at the hands of his family thinking he would harm them. Which he would have averted, if he was able to interact with them and justify his position. Like, when the chief clerk realized the transformation and turned away gradually to save himself. Gregor followed the clerk because he wanted to stop him and convince him else samsa's position in the firm will be in danger but his parents did not understand his intention.

“ That was something his parents did not understand The flight of the chief clerk... put his father into a panicGregors s father seized the chief clerks stickpicked up a large newspaper Used them to drive samsa back into his room stamping his foot at him as he went. Making hissing sound at him.. there was a threat of lethal blow to his back or head from the stick in his fathers hand at any moment Gregor pushed himself into the doorway without regard for what might happen... his father gave him a hefty shove that sent him flying and heavily bleeding deep into his room”.(Kafka,33)

After his transformation, his mother and his sister plans to remove few furnitures from his room to facilitate his free movement . Samsa was not happy with their idea, he did not want to part with the furnitures that were dear to him and in his attempt to save the picture on the wall, he hurries up and presses himself against it's glass. But, his sight lives his mother fainted to which he cannot be counted as responsible he just did not wanted them to remove things that reminded him of his pre-metamorphised life the memories that gave him some solace .but he is tortured physically and psychologically for that ,he could not justify his stand that everything happened unexpectedly and he was not in anyway responsible for what befall on his mother. That incident ended by causing serious injuries on samsa through the words of his dear sister and at the hands of his father who was not in a mood to notice samsa's good intention.

“Ah!” he shouted as he came in... Gregor froze in shock ; there was no longer any point in running as his father had decided to bombard him.”(Kafka,67)

“Gregor! “ shouted his sister, glaring at him and shaking her fist. (Kafka,62)

Similarly, when one of the room was rented out to the three gentlemen samsa’s family started showing them exaggerated courtesy, but they were not of good demeanour Gregor watched them misusing the freedom they had in his home he could no more tolerate neither disturbing his sister nor making fun of her as they were least interested in her music. He wanted to protect his family especially his sister from the outsiders, though he is covered with dust from all the junks in his room and is also weak from hunger he decides to protect his family members by scaring the tenants out, but that ends up in open declaration by his sister and father that they wanted to get rid of him:

“I don’t want to call this monster my brother, all I can say is: we have to try and get rid of it (Kafka ,89)

“If it were Gregor he would have seen long ago that It’s not possible for human beings to live with an animal like that and he would have gone of his own free will..... this animal is prosecuting us, it wants to take over the flat and force us to sleep on the streets....” (Kafka,91)

That incident weakens him both mentally and physically but still thinks about his family with love and affection. If could communicate he would have made it clear that if it was possible he would have left his home much earlier than their declaration, because his every movement was met with physical torture at the hand of his father they were responsible for his immobility, even samsa wanted to get rid of himself and his family he was so weak that he could no more tolerate further torture. At last his end is welcomed with joy by his family.

“let’s give thanks to god for that” He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example”(Kafka,97)

Life in his family turned its deadliest face filled with hatred, alienation, contempt, and fear, their affection and sympathy with the passing time and experience turned into contempt and aversion they just wanted to get rid of him. Samsa wanted to question them of the injustice met. But, he could not because there was nobody out there to understand the physical and psychological torture experienced by him, without that being verbally clarified. He could see and experience how pathetic the existence of man is, how meaningless is life and relationship around him. Samsa’s metamorphosed life (though its imaginary and would not happen in reality) perfectly exemplifies and proves that everything is utility based those relations not tended with purposeful interaction and communication not only lasts long but eventually dies proving the futility of existence in the material world.

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