



## Gregor samsa as an existential hero of Franz Kafka

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### Abstract

In the whole life, everyone wants to confirm his presence to secure his privileged corner in the society. People with similar orthodoxly customs, traditions, culture, norms, rites, conservative thinking, etc. are known as a society. However, society is “comprised of social facts and collective representations” (Os well, 16). It can be called as a foster-mother of religion because without religion, it is almost impossible for a society to take a single breath and consequently with religion human existence cannot be imagined. In fact, religion is a conceptual but concrete fear to govern a pack of people in the name of god or supernatural power. In religion, god is an invisible and omnipresent shadow of inner-phobia. In the light of religion, a society provides questionable and limited-limitations to its members. Everyone is socially constructed in a way by which even to think about the violation of prescribe limitations are considered as sins. Therefore, a societal creature cannot digest any challenge against the prevailing dogmas. On the other hand, an existentialist cannot live in such environment where his freedom and existence are interpreted. Therefore, he wants to break the chain of limited-freedom and live his life according to his own terms and conditions. Such existential heroes put the question mark on the societal structure.

**Keywords:** society, orthodoxal, inner-phobia, existential, free-will, self, freedom, existence

### Introduction

Existentialism is a philosophy to govern ‘self-senses’ in the light of self-conscious. It is a new spectrum of self-civilization of modern world. It is also considered a revolt in the opposition of conservative and orthodoxal culture of a society. Although some writers claimed, “Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy” (Kaufmaan, 11). According to taboos of orthodoxal society, you have wings but you can fly only during the day. On the other hand, existential-thought encourages for setting off your journey whenever you want to fly. “It is the individual that has made existentialist philosophy possible” (Solomon, xii). Society prepares a stage of social responsibilities and moral values for a newly born creature whereas he even doesn’t know what he is. It modifies such subjects according to their prevailing essence. But existentialists declare such responsibilities as fruitless and emphasize on ‘self’ whereas society validates only collective-self rather than individual-self. In a society, everyone is considered as ‘societal-assets’ and their essence is based on societal-essence. Therefore, they have to define their essence by fulfilling assigned societal- responsibilities as Jean-Paul-Sartre <sup>[4]</sup> says “Existence precedes essence.” (Panza, 164) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The opening of novel shows an unsystematic symmetry of life. Generally, it is believed that good deeds lead a good life and bad deeds lead a bad life in the next birth. But Kafka believes that mishappening can be occurred at any time with anyone, it is not a matter of good or bad deeds. Through the novel, *Metamorphosis*, he challenges the existing thoughts as his hero Gregor after realizing strangeness in his body, says, “...It’s shocking, what can suddenly happen to a person!” (Kafka, 29) <sup>[3]</sup>. In the novel, existentialist hero Gregor’s family has decided to leave him alone for dying because now he is unable to fulfill social responsibilities. In the beginning, he earns money to bring up his family because it is his responsibility and he gets good position in his family. Transformation shows

dissimilarities between existential (modern world) approach and traditional approach (orthodoxal world). A person cannot survive along with an uncanny appearance. Therefore he declares orthodoxal society as a threat for all human begins because who want to survive in this world they have to copy or imitate the skills of their ancestors. In fact, it is a world of imitators.

Gregor Samsa was only a tool of earning money for his family. Because of his job of salesman, he is assessed as a valuable object for the family. He is not assessed on the basis of family relationships. For clerk, Gregor is only a paid worker. His honesty and hard-working are not measured as his dedication to company. Emotions rest in the grave and everyone is brought up on the basis of time-value. There is a continuous conversation between Gregor and other especially chief clerk. Clerk explains the theory of business, “...if we people in commerce ever become slightly unwell then, fortunately or unfortunately as you like, we simply have to overcome it because of business considerations (27).” He also says that business recognition is the only objective and every employ must prefer to business recognition rather himself. In this way, Gregor was still unknown and alone and he shows his pain of loneliness by saying, “I was quite alright, my parents know about it, perhaps better than me...” (29)

He claims that his family knows everything but they don’t try to help him. Although he is not able to perform his duty but still he wants to cope with the present situation. He struggles endlessly to make sure his existence of new-form. He does not exist anywhere because of his essence. He tries to define himself as a part of family or community. He has lost the ability to speak so he is considered an animal as chief clerk said “That was the voice of an animal (31)”. Unidentified voice or communication of deformed human beings is called an animal’s language. Therefore he is alienated because he is not accepted as a part of society. Actually, he is unable to act like other puppets of culture and orthodoxal sect. Gregor has transformed physically

but not mentally. Transformation can be taken as extra-burden of responsibilities and duties of an outsider. In such scenario, mind must be stubborn because physical collaboration gives it completeness and Gregor's physical organs are not functioning properly that becomes him an outsider for his family. The disconnection with Gregor of his family shows that they want to get rid of him. At this time, he has turned into a burden from a bread-winner. The length of relationship based on the praiseful performance of assigned duties and responsibilities of the society. A failed person is considered as 'second animal'. As a result, his family changes their behavior towards Gregor. In such circumstances, even god can't save you even if you are innocence. Still he wants to look after his family but now he is not capable to do that. His continuous effort recalls Sisyphus.

Gregor also tastes the pain of alienation. After the transformation, he is left alone in the room. He himself tries to create comfortable zone for his new body. His father doesn't want to see a single glimpse of him. To control Gregor his father, "...merely stamped his foot all the herder (39)". Transformation has created inferior-complex in Gregor. He analyses the situation and behavior of his family in terms of his transformation. He is closed in a room. He is not allowed to come out from the room. It seems that as if he is chained with the permanent punishment. His sister Grete comes close to help him. She tries to manage furniture of the room. But Gregor feel uncomfortable day by day because of his uncontrolled body. His sister and mother come to see him in the room. Once, when Gregor comes out to see his family, his father chides him badly and he comes back in the room silently. His sister says to her father and mother, "we can't carry on like this. Maybe you can't see it, but I can. I don't want to call this monster my brother (88)". Finally, she says, "We have to try and get rid of it" (89).

Gregor's injury limits his freedom not only physically but also mentally. Due to family affection, they leave half-opened bedroom of Gregor so he can patch himself with the family. His father seems sleeping with closed eyes but he is fully conscious in the chair. After reaching at home, he father stops taking off his bank attendant uniform. Gregor watches at the stains of his father's coat with a shiny and gold button. Sometimes his father looks uncomfortable but peaceful. In Gregor's father's life has entered a huge chaos and he expresses his emotions, "What a life! This is what peace I get in my old age!" (74). Grete, Gregor's sister, learns shorthand and French so that she can get better position later on. She helps her mother to look after Gregor. After transforming of Gregor, workload of the house has increased a lot. His mother performs sewing job to control the expenses. She works tirelessly, on this Gregor's father comments, "you're doing so much sewing again today!" (72). In addition to this, family makes a plan to sell the jewelry to fetch money. They dismiss their house maid and bring an old lady on low rate. They have big flat so they decides to give it at rent. For this, Gregor's father brings bank employees. His sister runs here and there in the service of them. His mother cleans and washes the dirty clothes of strangers. After doing so many different tasks, they have no strength to do anything anymore. His mother makes a signal to his sister by pointing out Gregor's room and says, "Close that door, Grete," (75).

Grete shouts at his father, "It's got to go, it's not possible for human beings to live with an animal like

that..." (90). At the end, they begin to ignore and detest Gregor. They themselves declare that Gregor is not a part of their family therefore his looking after is not their responsibility now. On the other hand, Gregor's body is aching more and more with the passage of time but his pain is going to lessen than before slowly-slowly. At this time, Gregor hopes, "...back of his family with emotion and love" (92). In the morning, he hears three strikes of clock tower actually it is the final call for Gregor from heaven. He realizes and feels the light of knowledge in the every corner of his soul. Finally, unwillingly he sinks his heads down and, "...his last breath flowed weakly from his nostrils" (93). Next day, when cleaner comes and she announces, "...it's dead, just lying there, stone dead!" (93).

In the next morning, the cleaning lady finds out Gregor's dead body. The whole family observes the dead body and Grete notices that Gregor's face has turned into pale. Mrs. Samsa looks at Gregor and asks, "Dead?" . Although everyone was happy on the death of Gregor but Mr. Samsa enjoys this event psychologically. He says, after analyzing the corpse, "Now then, let's give thanks to God for that" (94). They conclude the end of this phase of their lives as, "It was already the end of March, after all" (95). They relax themselves and decide to take a walk, but before this they write three letters to their bosses and explain the reason of their absence on work.

Grete with her parents leaves the room and takes a trolley for riding to the countryside. During the riding, they discuss the past and their finance status. After arriving at home, Grete has no limits of her happiness. She celebrates her freedom and cries when she leaves the room, "Cheerio then everyone" (98). Finally, three of them leave the flat together. They defeat their current impoverish condition and get satisfactory job individually. Now, they have need not only new but also short and clean flat which will be short and clean than Gregor chose for them. Mr. and Mrs. Samsa talk about their daughter Grete, that how she is turned into a beautiful lady. They silently agree to find a good and handsome man for her. As they arrive at their destination, Grete was the first to get up and stretch her young body.

In this way, the irony is that that have physically fit and the power to walk without crutches; they have to walk with crutches as well. If anyone even thinks to walk without a pair of crutches he is considered a rebel, and his actions are treated as a revolt. In fact, a revolt is a rebellious catharsis of a free creature. However, a revolt is an action of free-will and enjoyment of self-existence with the acceptance of results. In short, the circle of life depends on the societal pattern of surviving. Eventually, a society has opted for primary status and the self has opted for secondary status.

## References

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