

**Humans Trapped in Bureaucracy: A Study of Franz Kafka's Depiction of the
Modern Man**



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Abstract

Franz Kafka is one of the greatest writers of twentieth century who explores the complexity of bureaucracy in his literary works. His novels and short stories show the crisis of modern man through anguished characters have become important figure in the twentieth century Europe literary tradition. Kafka belonged to a Jewish family in Prague. During his lifetime he worked in insurance companies which made him experimentally and intellectually aware of the fact that humans are slaves of the modern bureaucratic system. The reason why humans are under the enslavement of this system is due to rapid growth of industrialization, urbanization and commercial institutions. These are only a means to serve the purpose of capitalistic and bureaucratic purposes. Kafka's characters such as Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* and Joseph K in *The Trial* are vivid illustrations of humans trapped within the hierarchy and the web of bureaucracy which existed within the capillary of Kafka's society. Modern man of twentieth century Europe reflects the hollowness of existence. Their nightmarish situations slowly progress towards death or slavery, a neurotic journey of the individuals in a bureaucratic trial filled with unnamed anxiety and condemned to a torturous abyss. The disjuncture out of which the anguish originates in Kafka's characters has a direct relation with bureaucratic culture present in Kafka's time. The fundamental aim of this thesis is to illustrate how Kafka's characters suffer from unnamable torments and their suffering makes the readers aware of how modern man is trapped in the web of bureaucracy, and my discussion in this thesis will be an attempt to show this through textual analysis of his works.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Eastern Europe in Kafka's time was in a spiritual and psychological turmoil. The turmoil was not only faced by Eastern Europe but by the whole Western world. The reason for this turmoil cannot be truly deduced or felt sociologically or historically because the turmoil involves immense angst and despair well beyond normal human imagination. Edward McNall Burns writes in his book *Western Civilization: Their History and Culture*, around the last phase of the first industrial revolution, which is generally classified up to the 1850s, and the beginning of the second phase of industrial revolution, which is considered from 1860 onwards, that "developments of new forms of capitalist organization" was witnessed by Europe (684). These "new forms of capitalist organization" developed out of the then Europe's increasing industrial activities and started to penetrate into people's lives and determined the very way how an individual should conduct his/her life. From being a project of innovation the great Industrial Revolution resulted in the advent of a new capitalism which created a culture and value of its own. This capitalist culture was extrinsic, and hence, imposed upon the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europeans. Industries developed and started to take over all other earlier forms of manufacturing; rapid productions were possible with new technology which made the men and women of Europe more materialistic. With the domination of industries and the vast aggregation of capital the investment institutions such as investment banks, insurance companies etc. developed. This new culture made human beings its slave; this industrial and commercial capitalism turned into an imperial presence and resulted in human beings to have new chains. With the advent of Darwinism the religious values of Europe were diminishing, the spiritual meanings which earlier made human beings an integrated being suddenly disappeared. Human beings became fragmented and a slave of the capitalist systems and its laws. Slowly bureaucracy

originated within the capitalist culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe which started to govern human beings. Bureaucracy served to fulfill some social requirements of twentieth century Europe, but also started to dictate the lives of human beings who belonged to the modern capitalist Europe.

Bureaucracy had a govern-mentality of its own; it promoted its own mentalities, its rationalities, its own techniques to control people. Human beings were subjects of a system which overpowered them, and which naturally resulted in a great psychological depression. In the general sociological or historical narrative writings about economic depression can be discovered, but as far as the psychological depression of human beings is concerned, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, something more needs to be speculated upon than historical and sociological narratives for through them a proper deduction of the existential trauma of human beings, the agonizing alienation and disintegration of men and women of modern Europe cannot be made. In order to truly contemplate the suffering of human beings which resulted from the advent of modern capitalism and bureaucracy, one has to look at the artists of the then modern Europe, particularly the writers. The writers of the then Europe were an intricate part of the whole capitalist system who weaved their art out of the suffering and trauma of human beings, for whom the psychological and existential angst which human beings suffered from was his own existential experience, his own truth. As a result, in order to illustrate the existential angst of the human beings of modern Europe, writers were required rather than sociologist or historians; artists because they dealt with the most profound depth of human existence. One of the writers who truly conveyed this spiritual and existential turmoil was Franz Kafka.

Kafka's World

In the midst of his living years Kafka studied law, worked for insurance companies and used to write whole night starting from the evening. Kafka was born in a middle class Jewish family. The relevance of these facts can be realized if one interprets Kafka's writings as a works of literature which highlights the total absurdity of the modern society.

Kafka has personally experienced the evilness of modern bureaucratic system which was unspoken and unexpressed horrors. His belongingness to a Jewish family Kafka also witnessed personally the silent oppression of the Jewish society. The cause of all these suffering was, to a large extent, the social structure of the then Europe. As mentioned before, Europe was at the pinnacle of industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the advent modern capitalism and the commercial culture a space was created where finance was the most important aspect of living. People strived for money from the mid-eightieth century onwards as people from all over Europe settled in urban areas to avail themselves jobs and earn money and one of them was Kafka's father. His father was Hermann Kafka who was a travelling sales representative. Although later on he became a retailer who employed people, but as Franz Kafka was the youngest child of his family, he must have seen his father facing the hardships of undertaking continuous commercial activities while being a travelling sales representative. In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* the hardships mentioned of Samsa might be a reflection of the toil Hermann Kafka undertook which Franz saw as a child. Such a situation has most likely to have been occurred in Kafka's life when he was young and growing up Kafka was very familiar with the dominating nature of bureaucratic and commercial systems. In order to survive, people realized they had to earn money, but in this process they lost all meaning of their lives due to extreme persuasion of money and material wealth. The vocabulary of the people, as far as their

social identities and individual identities were concerned, changed drastically. People faced immense angst, and immeasurable suffering; fundamentally, their existence lacked any meaning. They were also ransacked of all tradition and human values as the modern bureaucratic values and rationales replaced them. It was only survival in a bureaucratic society that was the concern of the people in Kafka's time, and due to this the cost they had to pay was profound for Kafka.

Bureaucracy and Hierarchy

Dictionary meaning of bureaucracy is excessively complicated administrative procedure. It is a very complex concept which is very hard to explain. In fact, the word "Bureaucracy" is one of the strangest words. It exhibits sophistically rather than in its use. This is a popular yet reckless word which is often used without any clear meaning. People have a lack of understanding of this magic word and also there are reasons why they have disrespect for the bureaucracy. In the very first page of an article named "The Trial: a bureaucratic system in Zizek's view" written by Ismaeil Jangizahy and Shahram Afrougheh, it is written, "Bureaucracy confronts us as a phenomenon of which everyone speaks and believes to have experienced in some way, and yet this phenomenon strangely resists conceptualization" (89). The very reason, it can be said, of why bureaucracy resists conceptualization is because it permeates in every corner of the society, and it penetrates into the very thought structure of the human beings who are its subjects.

Bureaucracy is a happening, an ongoing activity which cannot be pinned down to mere conceptualization, and as a writer Franz Kafka is immensely significant, particularly for the study of this paper, because he depicted the bureaucratic system and how through it people experienced suffering and felt to be at a point of total disintegration. Kafka showed how bureaucracy operated and made human beings its subjects of domination rather than conceptualizing it which seems near to impossible to many intellectuals and thinkers.

In addition to that, if we try to explain the concept of bureaucracy, we can say this way that the degree of industrialization rose and the demand for administrative activities increased. Offices were build up, people slowly started to become a part of an “organization” from being a part of the human society. Peter M. Blau in his book *Bureaucracy in Modern Society* writes, “Bureaucracy provides ...the formal organization, with its explicit regulations and official positions, constitutes controlled conditions, and these controls have been...an intricate part of the bureaucratic structure” (24). It is control which human beings in Kafka’s time essentially faced. In his story “Blumfeld, An Elderly Bachelor” what is significant to notice is that Kafka’s depiction of the people walking around aimlessly going to their jobs or coming back from their jobs. Life became absolutely mundane for these people, modernity brought with it an immense level of anguish which can only be expressed by those who closely witnessed it and Kafka was among them.

Furthermore, the author writes “The organization of offices follows the principle of hierarchy; that is each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one” (24). If one takes this model of a bureaucratic mode in office and expand this model in the structure of the society as a whole then the modern twentieth century society can be looked at from a different perspective. Bureaucracy became the new omnipresent and all permeating system; it did not replace social institution but it penetrated within all social institutions and within the mentality of human beings by creating new commandments within the capitalist culture. Hence, following the organizational “principle of hierarchy” each human being is externally assigned a hierarchical level according to their social position under the bureaucratic system. Human beings belonging to the higher official posts supervises and orders human beings belonging to the lower official posts. In this way bureaucratic system has penetrated into the very way human being of

the then Europe, particularly in Kafka's society, perceived themselves and the world. Human beings in Kafka's society lacked empathy; they viewed each other either as socially respected or as utterly mad and desolate, and Kafka's narrative captures this as will be seen in latter chapters of this study. In Kafka's stories all most all of his characters are portrayed either with a particular designated social posts, or individuals who have in some way relation with the governing bodies and the law makers. He shows the bureaucratic system not objectively, but from a purely subjective point of view of men who belonged to its system. Kafka's characters are a manifestation of his consciousness which was filled with an unspoken trauma. For example in *The Metamorphosis* Kafka clearly showed how depressed Samsa became not due to the realization that he suddenly transformed into a vermin, but when Samsa became aware that he cannot operate as a travelling salesman anymore and that he will be fired from his job letting his family fall into heaps of trouble it caused him unspeakable angst. In Kafka's time human beings went through a profound and deep existential crises precisely due to the fact that they were reduced to a hierarchical post, those above enjoy certain privileges and those below suffer like Samsa. However, bureaucratic social structure is complex in its operative functioning, and as a result there were, and still are, various levels of hierarchy. Gregor Samsa belonged to a middle class group with many dreams and unfulfilled desires, however, in case of *The Trial* K was definitely in a higher position than Samsa. However, K also, like Samsa, had to experience death. Regardless of the fact that K was financially in a better position than Samsa, perhaps what is now known as upper middle class, however K was still very low in terms of the societal position. K was the chief cashier of a bank, not someone who still was commercial influential to bend the rules in his way. Therefore, the case which was imposed upon K was never known to K. He searched in vain to find the cause of the case, or how to solve the trial precisely because his

social position was limited, he belonged to a lower level of hierarchy. Kafka very profusely showed in *The Trial* how a human being is bound to suffer, and in certain cases die, if he/she has been imposed a case by the social system of law and governance if he/she belongs to the lower rags of hierarchy. If K would have lived, he would also, without any choice, progressed in ranks and hence in hierarchy. In both cases, and in numerous other novels of Kafka, he depicted his characters as bearers of his unspoken and traumatic experiences and events which perhaps was very close to Kafka and dominated his consciousness.

Bureaucracy and Morality

Fredric Nietzsche in his dairy which is labeled as the *Will to Power* writes in his note number 286, the note of *Jan-Fall 1888*, “two types of morality must not be confused: the morality with which the healthy instinct defends itself against incipient decadence-and another morality with which this very decadence defines and justifies itself and leads downwards” (153). The modern bureaucratic society promotes the later type of morality, and almost choicelessly imposes upon the human beings this morality. The best example of this can be found in Kafka’s short story “The Penal Colony” where the officer shows the traveler, “explorer” the machine which he, the explorer, considers to be the law and order of the penal colony. Of course as the story progress the readers discover that the officer’s machine was old, it used to kill people but now there are more enhanced machines which kill people. As a result from this story one fact can be deduced about the modern bureaucratic society which is the fact that punishment was, and still remains, the only law and order which exists in a bureaucratic society.

Also, the officer in the story so immensely believed in his heart that this machine has the key to the true progress of the penal colony that he gives up his life for the machine. As a result,

it can clearly be seen how human beings are blinded by their morality imposed upon them by the society. This morality crippled human beings, destroyed them from their core and made them unable to live a healthy and organic life. Kafka looked for the morality which was an individually developed morality, healthy and ready to defend itself against decadence. However, such was not the case in Kafka society, people inevitably had to become a victim of the bureaucratic structure which demanded from them a morality that only increased decadence. People earned money, but they became so dependent on them that whatever human quality which was intrinsic within them started to face a turmoil. Kafka as a writer saw people suffering, a writer who had within him a cosmos of pain which he dealt with by writing them, by writing about the society which not only snatched all human meaning from human beings but also became malevolent and filled with injustice.

Kafka's society was bureaucratic from all its imaginable aspect, and hence the modern life was besmirched and tarnished in every possible way. The only way to respond for human beings in order to ensure their survival was to follow the pattern imposed upon them by the bureaucratic structure, to immerse in their given hierarchical position and shapes their lives according to their bureaucratic roles. Kafka was well aware of this, he was deeply aware into the phenomenon of institution and how institutions make individuals their slaves and impose upon them authority, and it is his awareness which is the main constituent of this aesthetics. Kafka's awareness of this fact made him separate from his society, a secluded person who totally used to submerge in his subjective dimension as a writer.

Structure of the thesis

This study essentially aims to look at Franz Kafka's short stories and novels as bearers of the horrific and dreadful human experiences of the twentieth century caused by the modern bureaucratic and commercial system, which is still dominating human lives in a more enhanced and sophisticated way. This paper has been divided into five chapters, and this section of the paper is the first chapter where I have stated the advent of the modern commercial system leading to urbanization and resulting in creation of institutions paving the way for the modern bureaucratic society. In addition to that here Kafka's familiarity with the bureaucratic system, the influence behind the creation of his literary world has also been attempted to elucidate in this section to that extent that it complements other chapters of this study. The second chapter consists of a close reading of Kafka's *The Trial*, its intricate relation with modern bureaucratic system and how this seminal work of Kafka remains as a testament of the unspoken and unseen anguish of modern man. The third chapter is a close reading of another of Kafka's very famous novella, *The Metamorphosis*. Here, the main focus will be on the experiences and memories of Gregor Samsa, who is a commercial worker suddenly condemned by the society and his family for an unexplained and illogical metamorphosis. In Samsa's memories and experiences there remains the reflection of the condemned modern man, condemned by the modern bureaucratic and commercial system. In the fourth chapter this study will attempt to speculate certain issues through Kafka's longer short story "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor". Here, elements of alienation, and individual's psychological subordination by his social surrounding, the sense of emptiness and being lost which dominated the twentieth century modern man. It will be speculated in relation to the modern bureaucratic system and the commercial society it has developed. In the fifth chapter this study will contemplate the horrors and appalling events of the

modern bureaucratic system through one of Kafka's allegorical representation of the nature of the modern commercial and bureaucratic system in his work "In the Penal Colony". In each of these chapters this study essentially aims to carry forth a textual analysis of Franz Kafka's works and attempts to show through them the dreadful and agonizing affairs and encounters human beings from the modern era experienced being dominated by the modern bureaucratic system. Finally, this study will end with a conclusion which will claim how Franz Kafka's works are an emissary of the tragedy of modern man who exist for the laws of social and commercial hierarchy through a bureaucratic authority, whereas all these were essentially meant to exist for human beings to live in a better society.

Chapter 2: *The Trial*

Franz Kafka's works, particularly *The Trial*, is a direct confrontation of man and the society, with its injustice and horrible truths of the laws of the modern bureaucracy, in which he belongs. In Kafka's time human beings were forced to see themselves in such a manner which was imposed upon them by the laws and bureaucratic and commercial system of the modern society. The twentieth century modern European society is a society where man's existence has been reduced to only survival and his existence was chained by the modern bureaucratic system under the guise of commercialization, and its influence reached to that extent that without financial and societal support, it was impossible for the modern man to exist. In an article named "Max Weber and Franz Kafka: A Shared Vision of Modern Law" by Douglas Litowitz, a paragraph very aptly states the fundamental purpose behind the narrative of Kafka's *The Trial*:

Although Kafka's writings were generally darker than Weber's, they both prophesied the ascendancy of instrumental rationality and bureaucratic reasoning, causing a slow extinction of previously held religious, traditional, or normative commitments that once undergirded the law. This leaves the legal system (and legal reasoning) in a closed circle of self-legitimation, a vacuum where *legitimacy* collapses onto *legality*...In addition to diagnosing a legitimacy crisis at the heart of modern law, Weber and Kafka were among the first thinkers to argue that modern law could not deliver on its pretense of being a stable guarantor of fundamental rights within a body of transparent, systematically ordered rules and procedures. Against this traditional view of modern law, which still holds sway at least in the popular imagination, Weber and Kafka recognized that gaping pockets of irrationality could persist within the framework of highly rationalized modern law. (49)

What can be clearly seen from the aforementioned passage are some of the key features present in *The Trial*. To begin with, *The Trial* as a whole propagated a world view which is very mechanistic; human beings in the society where K belonged exercised, or were socially obliged through a subtle form of mental imposition, to use only bureaucratic reasoning. Once faiths and other faculties of human intelligence created and supported the law for the betterment of the human beings and the society. However, as the twentieth century arrived Europe went through the experience of modernization through the enhancement of capitalism and commercialism. The modern industrial society only valued its financial aspect. In addition to that the issue of exercising State power over its citizen likewise created the sphere of power politics within the modern European societies. As a result, bureaucracy came into being, and immediately it became one of the most powerful tools for the institutions of the State and the capitalists' institutions to control the citizen to fulfill its needs. Thus Litowitz writes that the legal system collapsed from its ideal position to a place where it was a "self-referential maze" without any higher purpose such as ensuring the progress of individual human beings. In the modern bureaucratic societies, like the one in which Kafka as well as his character K belonged, the law only existed to act as a means of exercising power individual human beings by the bureaucratic institutions, there was no other means for its existence. That is why in the aforementioned quote, the law in the modern bureaucratic society has been referred to as meaningless. Furthermore, one more important point which is very much evident in *The Trial* and in many of other Kafka's novels is that individuals like K are lost in the labyrinth of processes and systems through which justice is never served. This labyrinth also exists in his mind and he cannot just escape from it and thus Pradip Mondal says in his article "Predicament of the modern man in the City: Reading Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Metamorphosis*" that, "The Labyrinth is not only a piece of architecture to a wander but also

a psychological one inside his mind: a modern man carries the labyrinth in his own heart wherever he goes” (68). There is absolutely no level of transparency within the legal system, as is seen throughout the novel that K endlessly seeks a probable cause and a solution of his case. The trial of K is the existence of human beings in the modern bureaucratic society. In the end of the aforementioned passage it is stated that Kafka, and Max Weber, criticized the law under the modern bureaucratic and capitalist societies under the ground that it fundamentally cannot uphold the essential rights of individual human beings. On the contrary, what it does is make human beings the slaves of the society. It is this truth which remains as a testament in Kafka’s seminal work *The Trial* and through this literary work a real glimpse of the evils of the legal system under the modern twentieth century society can be seen and its meaninglessness realized.

Existentialism and Modernist Writers

Human beings have a soul, a consciousness, which has been turned into a mere machine to confirm all the laws of the modern society as Sigmund Freud in his book *Civilization and its Discontent* writes, “There may be particular features in the development of the individual that are not matched in the process of civilization; the former need coincide with the latter only in so far as its aims is to incorporate the individual into the community” (77). Many European thinker, in particular those who are categorized as the “existentialists”, have been dominated by a pessimistic tone as far as their intellectual narrative is concerned precisely because, under the modern bureaucratic system which remains incomprehensible to human beings, they choicelessly becomes a victim of these laws and remains a slave. As a result, the existentialists, like Freud, saw man as an incomplete project because the only way to get out from the trap of the modern bureaucratic system was death. Perhaps that is the reason why Jean Paul Sartre stated that “Man

is condemned to be free”, because the moment he understands he is free he is judged by the social order. The bureaucratic system of which K is a victim, and the system being a part of the society as a whole decides K’s ultimate fate of life, is mainly a system of governance outside which nobody can have any freedom. Slowly as K’s case is heard by everybody they all become concerned about the case, K himself becomes exhausted at one point in the novel about what he will do as he goes from one door to another and everyone remains unable to state clearly exactly what is the cause of the case. Kafka’s K gets trapped in a system which very much resembles the system in which the modern man remains at the mercy to the legal and social institutions. These chains remain subtle, not easily noticeable by the general level of intellect inquiry. However, their impact is more dangerous than the emergence of great apparatuses or political struggles precisely because it cripples man from the inside and makes him a slave without any choice.

Kafka foresaw this through his literary insight, and as a result he created a character which travels alone through the labyrinth of modern society till his death. Dying of the modern man has a metaphysical significance in this context; for if freedom is death in the 20th century modern society than man’s sense towards his dignity is more than his life. There are many modern novelists, before and after, along with Franz Kafka such as Gustav Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Jean Paul Sartre and Andre Malraux etc. whose characters died sacrificing for their values, whether it be individual or societal it has something metaphysical associated with it. This point needs a considerable degree of contemplation as K dies being a victim of the modern bureaucratic society, but he dies also because he in the process of his seeking what is the cause of this guilt and finally becomes aware that life is not logical, with this much realization K dies. Albert Camus stretches the fact in *Myth of Sisyphus* that Kafka’s novels have a religious significance, a metaphysical significance, for Kafka not only talked about man’s existence in

relation to society, he also search an inherent meaning of existence which the social bureaucratic order has condemned man to discover. Kafka combines the metaphysical and societal problems of the modern man through *The Trial*. K attempts to seek a cause of his case, and in this process he slowly realizes the meaningless of the legal system of his society. In *The Trial*, in the chapter named “In the Cathedral”, in one instance of the conversation between K and the Priest, K states that, “How can a human being ever be guilty? We are all human being here after all, each the same as the other,” and the priest replies to K’s “...everyone who is guilty always talks like that” (164). What is noticeable here is that K has within him a human consciousness through which he claims how a human being can be guilty as all human beings are the same, to that the priest, instead of consoling K with the words of God, tells all guilty states that. There is no level of human empathy in the bureaucracy; even religion has lost its significance to the power of bureaucracy and capitalism. Like all other existentialist writers Kafka sought the meaning of life of the modern man, who is crushed beneath the legal and social system. In spite of the exhaustion K seeks justice, and in K relentless search within the insane system of modern bureaucracy and its legal system, which as stated before is meaningless, he dies, and in his death Kafka prophesized the dreadful future of humanity under the modern bureaucratic society. In *Waiting for Godot* Samuel Beckett wanted to highlight human beings when they are reduced to their core, alone facing the world which is meaningless. Kafka perhaps also wanted to show through K the common adult individual who faces the lunacy of the modern bureaucratic system alone, and dies alone in a meaningless absurd world by waiting for a resolve to his trail.

Bureaucracy as Modern Prison:

Michael Foucault in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* writes in a paragraph:

The minute disciplines, the panopticism, of every day many well be below the level of emergence of the great apparatuses and the great political struggles. But, in the genealogy of modern society, they have been, with the class domination that traverses it, the political counterpart of the juridical norms according to which power was redistributed. Hence, no doubt, the importance that has been given for so long to the small techniques of discipline, to those apparently insignificant tricks that it has invented, and even to those 'sciences' that gives it a respectable face; hence the affirmation that they are at the very foundation of society, and an element in its equilibrium, whereas they are a series of mechanisms for unbalancing power relations definitively and everywhere; hence the persistence in regarding them as the humble, but concrete form of every morality, whereas they are a set of physico-political techniques. (223)

In the aforementioned passage, Foucault clearly expresses the setting of *The Trial*. A post World War I Prague society, dominated with commercial activities within an enclosed urban area is surely a place where the modern panopticism is being practiced to a very large extent. As Foucault states in the quotes that it is one of the fundamental features of society that it creates and then imposes some type of a discipline upon the human beings who belong to it. And it can be said that coming to the twentieth century, this form of governance or discipline deliberately created an unbalanced power relation through which it can control human beings and make them fully functional to achieve certain aims. The law of the modern society, hence, is not a medium through which morality and humbleness is being promoted amongst the citizens, they were in Kafka's time and still are means to fulfill the aims of the purposes laid down by the bureaucratic and commercial structures, they are physio-political techniques of control, and in close urban spaces as is the setting of *The Trial*, where most amount of money in the economy is generated,

bureaucratic governance becomes easy and efficient. The urban setting of this novel also indicates the uniformed and illogical nature of K's trial.

The modern bureaucratic society has a direct relation with the urban area precisely due to the fact that within an enclosed area most people of a nation are dependent, and out of this dependency people of the twentieth century and also the twenty-first century are urban centric, resulting in the development of a social system based on discipline and control. Furthermore, once within this system if an individual is made a victim for whatever reasons, it is incomprehensible as well as impossible to find the cause of it. It is precisely due to this reason that Foucault has written the phenomenon of governance which is inbuilt in the modern society is more dangerous than great political struggles, because they are a part of the equilibrium which constitute the essential part of the modern society, they are the fundamental constituent of commercial and infrastructural system of the modern society and being all those they are institutions which exercise power over human beings, which perhaps acts as the source of the human morality as far as one's social values are concerned, but at the same time psycho-political techniques to reduce man to machines. K was a man who was very much a part of such a society, of such a governing system and this is another reason why K was totally oblivious about his case. Information in a bureaucratic society again is controlled and given limited exposure to the general citizens so that a fear and a sense of uncertainty can be internally injected. In *The Trial* K continuously searches for a solution and tries to solve his case and he was finally condemned to death by murder; Kafka ends his work like this without letting his readers know what was the cause at the starting of K's case and what is the actual reason for K's demise. This is an indicator of the fact that K was a man who reflected Kafka to that extent that both in turn reflected the

modern man lost in the labyrinth of the modern bureaucratic society, suffering from anguish and being condemned for no clear reason.

K's case remained oblivious, people from officials to the normal citizens only knew fragments of what is to be done with K as can be seen in the various instances of the novel. However, it is indeed noticeable that not in any part of the novel there is vivid mention or explanation of exactly what is it that K was accused of. Every society, in terms of deriving a definition from Kafka's literary works, is totalitarian; and the word itself signifies that in every aspect of a man's life, the "total" aspect, governance is imposed upon him which for a man like Joseph K inevitably results in a hideous and unjust death. Michel Foucault in his famous book *Discipline and Punish* writes, "In every penitentiary establishment, there functions a social and medico- psychological service" (270). It is noticed very clearly, and comes as an undefined shock, when in the beginning of the novel *The Trial* the "supervisor" tells K, in the first chapter, "You've misunderstood me. It's true you're under arrest, but that doesn't mean you can't follow your occupation. And you won't be hampered in your normal way of life" (*The Trial* 11). This clearly suggest that the prison system, where fundamentally the prisoners are kept under observation by the authority, and which according to the aforementioned quote of Foucault serves a social and a psychological function, has extended to such a proportion that the modern society, the twentieth century modern bureaucratic society, with all its laws, itself becomes a prison system. The functioning of the penitentiary system has transcended the prison structure and has become a part of the whole society, and this remains more than evident when studying Kafka's novels. It can be interpreted that Joseph K, knowing that nothing will happen by searching for the cause of his being guilty, decided to stay before the gate of the law refusing to live; in a society where is a prison one prisoner suddenly becomes conscious of the whole

system, and immediately he was removed. Joseph K is like Sisyphus who knowing his fate, although being condemned and punished by the gods, is granted to live. However, the twentieth century modern man, with the advanced system of supervision, discipline and punishment exterminates anyone who becomes aware of the whole system. Joseph K in the ninth chapter of *The Trial* exactly goes through such a realization, “‘is there nothing more you want from me’? K. asked. ‘No’ said the priest. ‘You were so kind to me earlier,’ K said, ‘and explained everything to me, and now you dismiss me as if I meant nothing to you’... [The chaplain replies] ‘The court ask nothing from you. It receives you when you come and releases you when you go.’” (172-173). It is in this precise moment that K becomes fully aware that he is condemned, that by his will his seeking help from the court is only a role playing, nothing substantial will happen regarding the discovery of his guilt and his achieving justice, the whole society is a prison system where being a free citizen as Joseph K thinks of himself in the first chapter of the novel is just a mere illusion. Perhaps the reason why Kafka does not mention the geographical location of the society where K belonged, but only described its industrial and urban features is that he wants to show in every modern society controlled by bureaucratic legal institutions human beings will suffer the same fate as K and will realize the same harsh truth as K has experienced when he understood that all of the legal system is fundamentally meaningless, the court only acts as a role playing mechanism and nothing substantial occurs as far as the operation of the legal system is concerned for a human being. This understanding makes K an outcast of the modern bureaucratic society, makes him a man who needs to be immediately extinguished. It is this point which makes *The Trial* a novel which is profound in its analysis of man being a subject to the modern bureaucratic society and the significance of the existence of man.

Ending of *The Trial*

The reason why there is no mention of K's cause of being guilty is that there is no reason, K's existence becomes a metaphor from being a normal official at a bank signifying the chains of the modern man, which are subtle yet very much imposing and Kafka illustrates this through his novel. The reason why *The Trial* confirms nothing is because Kafka has not made any compromise in showing the modern bureaucratic system, its shallowness and superficiality, its detachment from human beings and its govern mentality that imposes upon all human beings who belongs to the modern bureaucratic society. In the aforementioned article "Max Weber and Franz Kafka: A Shared Vision of Modern Law" writes:

The first theme is that modernity creates a loss of grounding for the law, leaving the edifice of law and its legal institutions intact but hollow, as if the legal system splits off from its foundation and assumes its own teleology. What remains is a directionless superstructure of courtrooms, procedures, officialdom, and law books, increasingly unethered to any substantive notion of justice, and which posits itself as its own *summum bonum*. The second theme is the paradoxical nature of modern law, and by "modern law" I mean those highly rationalized legal systems that arose within industrialized Western societies in the nineteenth century and which promised an ordered and transparent system of entitlements, obligations, and procedures built upon a solid foundation of guaranteed human rights. (Litowitz 53)

What can be noticed in the above quoted section is exactly what K experienced when he first entered the room for his first examination of the case, "He [K] was annoyed that they had not given him more exact information about where the room was, they were really treating him with

peculiar negligence or indifference; he intended to stress this fact vehemently and distinctly” (*The Trial* 28). This shows the directionless nature of the modern legal system, and later on in the very same chapter when K arrives to the magistrate he accuses K of being an hour and five minutes late which shows how hollow the legal system is of its own foundation. The law should serve men, but as happened in the bureaucratic society through modernity, human beings were subjects of the law and various other unknown legal regulations. Western society as a whole went through the phase of modernization by passing through many historical epoch only to create a legal system which lacks a single degree of transparency, has no sense of obligation to the citizens, and apart from that the legal system, which is a byproduct of the dominating bureaucratic social system, only serve its own means. For example, in another chapter of *The Trial* name “Merchant Block- Dismissal of the Advocate” the merchant tells K, “...Your case is six months old...I’ve heard of it...But I have already thought these things through countless times, to me they are the most familiar things in the world...I’ve been trundling on with my case for five years” (*The Trial* 137). In this quote it can be aptly noticed the teleological nature of the modern legal system controlled by bureaucratic institutions, for they only serve their own material purpose and as a result lacks the components through which it can fulfill the human rights. *Before the Law* is Kafka’s testament, his prophecy that man, if he realizes that the society in which he lives is nothing but filled with invisible chains, will be free, but that freedom will come with the cost of life, and *The Trial* is a vivid manifestation of the parable. As a result *The Trial* can be interpreted as a social critique of the twentieth century bureaucratic system, as well as the courage and dignity of K to face the “last drama of existence” showing the position of human existence, bare and unclothed, in a society where humanity and all its values are dead.

Chapter 3: *The Metamorphosis*

Freud says, “Civilized man has traded in a portion of his chances of happiness for a certain measure of security” (51). The “civilized man” is the modern man of the twentieth century who has been forced to give up his existence into the hands of the modern bureaucratic system. Bureaucratic system makes the individual crippled; in the name of “security”, as Freud mentions about, with its unbending regulations, injecting individual with fear. Before proceeding into the complex universe of Franz Kafka, the notion of “security” upon which the civilized man is dependent and its intricate relation as a means of injecting fear inside the individuals needs to be examined.

Manager

Bureaucratic institutions provide individuals security in the guise of a job, or any means to earn an income. Amongst all class of people the bureaucratic system provides a means for an individual to earn the “security”. However, what is evident in Kafka’s works is that through providing this “security”, the bureaucratic system, with its commercial and legal institutions, makes the individual dependent upon them. Very subtly the individual is turned into a machine. In each layer of society, dependency exists for an individual, whether it is in the form of institution or family. However, dependency exists solely due to the issue of security. Security, social and financial are fundamental for an individual; it is the most essential necessity for any human being who belongs to the modern bureaucratic society. This dependency is the origin point of the injection of fear within individuals which can be assumed as the primary reason why individuals suppress their emotions being a part of the modern bureaucratic society. From being a human, being in essence free in nature, the modern bureaucratic system has reduced human beings into operational machines. Modern civilized beings are commoditized labor, and without

a performative and financial prospect every individual, though repressed and internally downtrodden, is as better as nonexistent. It is not an individual's condition, but his/her ability to perform and make the ends meet of the modern bureaucratic system which ensures one's existence in the modern society.

In a portion of *The Metamorphosis* Kafka shows how Samsa feels bad when the manager comes to see him was not in time for his sales duty. The manager says, "I hope it's nothing serious. Although on the other hand I must say that we men of business- fortunately or unfortunately- very often simply have to ignore the slight indisposition, since business must be attended to..." (*The Metamorphosis* 96). This unsympathetic attitude of the manager shows that Samsa, a man belonging to the working class, is a slave of the then capitalist system. However, what the modern bureaucratic system has done to fulfill the commercial purposes of the modern capitalist's agenda is internalize the sense of master-slave relationship inside the mind of the working class people. Samsa has metamorphosed into an insect from a human being, and instead of thinking about his health the manager is concerned about his missing work. It simply means Samsa is just a production unit for his office rather than a human being. Here, Kafka has illustrated Samsa that he is a commodity, a means to earn income for his family one the one hand, and on the other hand he is a means for the commercial firm for which he works to make certain commercial ends meet. In both cases Samsa can be labeled as the Marxist notion of reification. In the book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* by Peter Barry mentions that, Marx has used the work reification in a certain context which is vitally relevant here. According to Marx, reification occurs when a person is "made into a thing", or in this case a person is made into a mere object. In case of social relationships in the modern bureaucratic and commercial society the occurrence of reification can very vividly noticed where

a son, for example, just like Gregor Samsa, is seen as the income earner of the family and in this process the family has replaced this aspect of the son with other, more important and more humane aspects of the relationships. Gregor Samsa already existed in the process of reification, and when he was metamorphosed, slowly the family, not deliberately but was forced to by the social circumstance, to left Samsa in the body of the insect slowly to diminish. The moment Samsa was not able to earn for his family he slowly became a huge burden, not only for his family but within himself as well. Kafka has shown the process of reification occurs two ways; one is on the external level where Samsa's family has made him into a "thing", an object for earning money and surviving in the society. Another is on the internal level where Samsa himself has accepted the role of being a person who is under reification. He feels impotent as a human being not to earn for his family anymore, to see his sister's dreams being crushed and his parents suffering from hardships due to his sudden metamorphosis. All these points suggest that the bureaucratic society leaves no choice but for a human being to succumb to his work, or else die with a burden which even the closest kin of any individual, his/her family, fails to recognize or at least offer a solution. Family has been made by the bureaucratic system into an institution due to which relationships, both personal and social, has been undergone through a process of reification.

However, this thought does not only occur in the manager's head, Samsa, being inside the body of a vermin, is also thinking about losing his job, how can he catch the train on time to report for work on time. All these are inner mental states of Samsa through which Kafka has clearly proposed the subtle yet sophisticated system through which fear and the need for security is injected within the working class people by the bourgeoisie. The reality of the working class people is a reality associated with slavery; though in its crude form slavery has been abolished

but yet the bureaucratic and commercial system has devised structures, or patterns, deeply rooted in the urban commercial life, through which it has made human beings, slaves to their jobs. Power manifests in the way capitalists exercise them over the working class people and *The Metamorphosis* shows this harsh reality. Gregor Samsa's life is a reflection of the life of the modern man who fundamentally is a slave, and remains till his metamorphosed body dies, to the modern bureaucratic and capitalist system.

Condemnation, Rebellion and Family

If one contemplates the life and fate of the seminal character of Kafka, Gregor Samsa, one would have the whole picture of an individual's fundamental struggle living in the twentieth century modern bureaucratic society. "Oh God, he thought, what an exhausting job I've picked on! It's much more irritating work than doing actual business in the office..." (*The Metamorphosis* 89-90). These lines clearly reflect that Samsa has no attachments toward his job but he does it only to support his family. However, due to Samsa's metamorphosis everything changes as he fails to avail for himself and his family the "security" which later on his sister has to do. The modern bureaucratic system offers an individual no escape. For instance Samsa thinks in the story, "Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay back my parent's debts to him [Samsa's superior]- that should take another five or six years-...I'll cut myself completely loose than..."(*The Metamorphosis* 90). Samsa aims to free himself from the job he is condemned to do, however in order to do that he would have live a life of suppression since he does not like his job. It can be assumed that due to these unexpressed dissatisfactions and suppression one fine morning Samsa wakes up and finds himself in the body of an insect. This is another crucial aspect of the modern bureaucratic system. Man loves freedom; there is no doubt in this notion. The word "freedom" is not used anywhere in the novella but his metamorphosed condition

clearly indicates that Samsa is seeking for freedom unconsciously, that is, his unexpressed emotions. Modern bureaucratic society takes away the basic desires to enjoy a man's complete rights.

Furthermore, an individual, while growing up, depends on his/her parents or seniors financially which creates a concrete sense of security. *The Metamorphosis* illustrates this very clearly through the reflection of Samsa's life. Samsa is trapped in a system which provided him external or societal well-being in the form of security; he is a working man supporting his family. However, due to the bureaucratic system his work resulted in suppression of unexpressed emotions, and perhaps that is why his internal being also metamorphosed into something which is unable to contribute in any way to the bureaucratic institution. He gradually develops a prejudice in his mind towards this modern society. So, Samsa's inner being protested against the bureaucratic system of imposing on him a forced identity. Thus he thinks,

What a fate, to be condemned to work for a firm where the smallest omission at once gave rise to the gravest suspicion! Were all employees in a body nothing but scoundrels...had he wasted only an hour or so of the firm's time in the morning, was so tormented by conscience as to be driven out of his mind and actually incapable of learning his bed? (*The Metamorphosis* 95)

In the above passage, Samsa is reflecting upon the demeaning system of which he is a slave. Samsa through these questions, which is after his metamorphosis, talks to his internal being which has, without his permission, decided to turn into something apart from a human being. A human being carries the ability to be operational, and if deeply contemplated, Samsa turning into a vermin is a direct rebellion against bureaucratic system. Although Samsa's metamorphosis is

very much spontaneous and beyond his power, but there is considerable amount of space to think that Samsa turned into an insect because it is the most useless animal, and hence, a response to his deep suppression during his working years. Samsa is an honest human being who cares for his sister and mother, but he is labeled as a scoundrel by the organization for which he works. It can be assumed that due to this internal suppression Samsa's inner self rejected, or found it unbearable, to be a human and act as a machine for the bureaucratic society. Samsa's metamorphosis is a direct response of the individual's daily anguish caused by the bureaucratic system of modern times. In a bureaucratic society where individuals are crippled and internally suppressed, rebellion at times becomes a form of absurdity and Kafka's seminal work is a vivid manifestation of this fact.

In an article named "Predicament of the modern man in the City: Reading Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Metamorphosis*" by Pradip Mondal says that:

Reality and reflection play an important role in *The Metamorphosis* because the events that happened could be applied and assimilated with modern society. The most gruesome aspect of Samsa's fate is not his metamorphosis but the blindness with which everybody treats this metamorphosis. His self is what is absolutely alien, void, and nonexistent, not only in the world of business in the city but also in the world of the family. His façade self in the city is very pathetic which must toil in the commercial world outside. This restless self-staggers around the world while the 'beetle' self takes rest. Gregor's reduction to a real self (being, essence) and his consequent destruction are conditioned by a parallel change in the external world. (69)

In this quote the author is stating that the events that happen in *The Metamorphosis* are a reflection of the reality of the modern society. Samsa's metamorphosis becomes less significant compared to how Samsa's family member treats him. Samsa is neglected and considered to be an embarrassment and a burden to the family the moment he stopped being an earning source for his family. Samsa is condemned by his family after he was no longer able, physically, to work in the commercial area to earn money. Samsa, who is already left alone as a travelling salesman, is not also alienated by his family who are the most intricate part of his inner self. Samsa's real self, his inner consciousness, was now reduced to something worse than any insect as he is destroyed by the very people who gives his life a meaning, a will to work. In a bureaucratic society underneath all relationship lies the politics imposed upon them by the society and capitalistic system where human empathy has no place and human beings are forced to view themselves as source of financial security, which also is the primary source for survival for any individual who belongs to the modern bureaucratic society.

Furthermore, Ritchie Robertson in her book *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* states:

The first institution that anyone encounters is the family. For Kafka, the family is the place where oppression starts. The oppression Gregor Samsa suffers from his family is vividly embodied in the layout of his room, which has three doors (Gregor locks them all at night), at each of which a member of his family, his father, mother, and sister, knocks, urging him to get up and go to work. Kafka spoke of parental love as smothering, and of family life as a battleground, 'I always felt my parents as persecutors.' (68)

As can be seen institution starts when an individual encounters with his family, and as time progresses he/she gets exposed to schools, is bounded by the law as a citizen of the state,

bounded by commercial institutions as individual becomes totally dependent on money and security.

Kafka shows Samsa's metamorphosis is treated with condemn and disgust. Even his family members are blind to his inner affection and love, and the moment his body has changed from a human machine to a vermin he is alienated by all from his sister to the women who worked as a servant for the Samsa family. It simply indicates that those who are not eligible or not willing to fulfill the commercial requirements are excluded from bureaucracy. Also, in various instances of *The Metamorphosis* Kafka has shown how complex a relationship Samsa has with his father. Although Samsa used to earn for his family, however he has been shown as a subordinate figure compared to his father. When at the point of this story his mother and then his father knocks at Samsa's door the tone of the father indicates that Samsa was a man who was dominated by his father's presence. "Gregor, Gregor", he called, 'what's the matter with you'...after that he called in a deeper voice 'Gregor! Gregor!' " (*The Metamorphosis* 92). Kafka's notion of parental love was a complex mixture of love and passivity, as can be seen how Samsa's mother calls him gently and how his father calls him as if giving him an order. However that family was for Kafka a battleground is true for all individuals who belong to a middle class family working under the modern capitalist system.

Apart from the previous point many critics and analyst states Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as a surreal piece of work. However, in a famous article "What is Minor Literature" written by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, one significant aspect of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is mentioned through which the intention behind Kafka making his literary creation surreal perhaps can be realized. They write "No less than all designation, Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, and all significations. Metamorphosis is contrary to metaphor" (22).

Intellectually, Samsa's metamorphosis cannot be reduced to any analysis for the metamorphosis is a consequence of modernity as it represses human being to a point from which it is impossible to return. As is written in another part of "What is Minor Literature" Samsa's metamorphosis is a "state of desire devoid of all interpretation" (14). On one level it is the direct response rather than a reaction of the demise an individual experience being a part of the modern bureaucratic society, on another level Kafka showed the experience of minority being forced to become a part of a major city with rationalized activities of capitalism and the culture of commercialism. Deleuze and Guattari argues that Kafka postulates an experience which fundamentally cannot be expressed in language as the reality of minority can never be fully put forth, literally or symbolically, in the language used by the majority. According to the above mentioned article, the authors defined minor literature as "A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language" (16). Being a Jew in Prague of Czech Republic Kafka wrote in the German language, a language which was commercially known to Kafka but existentially inadequate to carry forth the expression which resided in his center of consciousness as Franz Kafka witnessed many unnamed and voiceless human beings suffering and going through immense agony under the pressure created by the bureaucratic system of the modern capitalist society.

Chapter 4: “Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor”

Bureaucracy does not come into being as something outwardly manifest in many of Kafka's short stories unlike his novels *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial*. In many of his short stories, such as the one this chapter will aim to explore, presents the minutiae details of daily lives of modern man alienated, isolated and covered by an unnamed and unidentifiable suffering.

In Kafka's long short story “Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor” precisely nothing happens. A man's daily experiences, or to be more precise daily activities, are mentioned by Kafka. Blumfeld, who as the title suggests, is an elderly and bachelor, one day suddenly coming home from work he finds two celluloid balls inside his house. They can move on their own, they play and undertake mischievous acts; the balls have a life of their own with a genuine and unusual innocence in the mundane and tedious life of Blumfeld. One important aspect of Kafka is that in his stories, the characters experience unusual magical, situations and yet are totally unmoved by it. Perhaps it can be said only for a brief moment of time the characters of Kafka are bothered or attentive towards that which is magical, that which does not ordinarily happens, and after that they become pensive and contemplative about their lives and jobs. For example, in *The Metamorphosis* Samsa turned into a vermin, and after some moment, apart from him being adjusted to his new body, his thoughts are on his job and how his family will survive without his income. Similarly, in “Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor” the protagonist is absolutely not surprised to see two celluloid balls hovering around him inside his private space, his room. However, Blumfeld rejects the company of the two balls and their innocent mischiefs as if two beings have invaded the private space of Blumfeld. Instead of having the company of the balls, Blumfeld prefers to be alone. However, Blumfeld is not at all a man who is violent, although he prefers not to be with the celluloid balls he remains with them for the night, only once he tries to capture

them but fails. He gives up taking control of the mischievous acts of the celluloid balls and goes to sleep. In the night, Blumfeld:

...is startled by the delusion that someone is knocking at his door. He knows quite well that no one is knocking; who would knock at night and at his lonely bachelor's door? Yet although he knows this for certain, he is startled again and again each time glances in suspense at the door, his mouth open, eyes wide, a strand of hair trembling over his damp forehead. ("Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor" 191)

It is almost that Blumfeld is suffering, in the night where from the perspective of Freudian psychology the unconscious takes over the conscious being of a human, from an ¹unknown guilt and someone will burst from the door, accuse Blumfeld guilty and will kill him. This can be deduced from Blumfeld's facial expression, "his mouth open, and eyes wide..." In the modern bureaucratic society a human being has to suppress many things in order to act in accordance with the regulations put forth by the legal and commercial system. In the later part of the story Blumfeld thinks, "But what worries Blumfeld more than this lack of appreciation is the thought that one day he will be compelled to leave his job, the immediate consequence of which will be pandemonium, a confusion no one will be able to straighten out..." (Henceforth, "Blumfeld" 198). Blumfeld, like many individuals who are a part of the modern bureaucratic society, cannot free themselves from the clutches of the commercial system. Human beings are dependent on money which has made their whole being an anxiety ridden machine, and the unnamed and unidentifiable reason for occurrence of such a situation is the whole social structure of modern bureaucratic system. Ritchie Robertson in his book *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* writes:

¹It can be noticed that in *The Trial*, K faces such a similar being guilty of a crime of which he cannot find a trace of.

Kafka was fascinated by institutions. Institutions are types of social organizations serving particular purposes, such as the household, the family, the business corporation, the government ministry, the school, the hospital, the prison. The word 'institution' tends to slip from its general meaning to a more specific sense, denoting especially those institutions where people are confined, allegedly for their own good and often against their own wishes, such as old people's homes, mental asylums, and jails. (67)

As Foucault suggests from a sociological and philosophic perspective in his book *Discipline and Punish*, the evils of modern institutions bear for the individual unnamed and unknown ways of torture, similar to the mad man in an asylum who gets tortured by various means in order to become disciplined. Whereas Foucault takes the intellectual path taking information and empirical events from history, ideas from philosophy and constructs an angle with which to look at the modern world, Kafka uses a far more sensitive medium. For Kafka, the daily unknown suffering of human beings living in an urban space under the regulations of modern bureaucratic society is not in history and philosophy books, it is his experiential reality. Kafka has both experienced and witnessed others experiencing the subtle ways of control and regulation, unnamed and unutterable. Kafka in his short stories talked about a problem which has no name, yet which still dominates human beings who are part of the bureaucratic and commercial society.

In *Blumfeld*, Kafka has shown a man's internal being filled with an unnamed pain as Blumfeld lives his daily life, undertakes his daily activities in an anxious manner. Not only Blumfeld's private life, but in the part of the story where Blumfeld's workplace is described it is written, "Such a job requires great energy; Blumfeld could guarantee that he was completely wearing himself out in this work, but that he will continue to master it completely he can henceforth no longer guarantee" ("Blumfeld" 199). Blumfeld is anxious about the uncertainty

whether he can handle the pressure he is exposed to everyday in his job, and being part of the bureaucratic system a man who gives up his job is worthless as an insect, as illustrated by Kafka in *The Metamorphosis*. The modern man is faced with an internal paradox to embrace his suffering in order to maintain his “security” in the society. Blumfeld is the actual representation of the reality of common man who is a part of modern institutions, who live in urban spaces, earn an income and are being regulated, resulting in their suffering, by bureaucratic institutions. It can be seen in one of Kafka’s passages in the story, despite the previous quote where Blumfeld contemplates that he cannot guarantee whether he can continue to continue his present job, “...in spite of everything he [Blumfeld] will stick to his desk as long as it is at all possible...” (“Blumfeld” 199). Modern human being suffer from psychosis, and rather than beings lost from actual reality the anxiety ridden and internally disjointed human beings of modern era make a reality of their own from their psychosis. This might be another possible interpretation of the magical appearance of the two celluloid balls which appear inside Blumfeld’s room.

In addition to that another important aspect of the story is Blumfeld’s life is such that he does not find himself connecting with anyone despite his attempts. For example, Blumfeld wants to present the charwoman’s son the two celluloid balls which he has trapped inside his wardrobe. However, upon asking the boy to take the key to his room from his mother, and keys of the wardrobe from Blumfeld, the charwoman’s son remains silent in a manner in which he is lost to the whole world. Blumfeld cannot empathize, or find connection with the silence of the little boy, who perhaps from a young age is lost in the complex labyrinth of the society. Blumfeld think, “Why a creature like this servant should prosper and propagate in this world” (“Blumfeld” 197). In this quote Kafka very appropriately showed how each human being, in the modern bureaucratic society, is mentally chained to the social class he/she belongs to. Blumfeld is a man

who was very high in the ladder of social hierarchy compared to the boy, who is the child of his maid servant, towards whom also Blumfeld has a negative view for no particular reason. When Blumfeld asks the boy whether he wants to take the ball the silent response of the boy angered Blumfeld. Blumfeld could not grasp the silence of the boy, and instead of showing affection Blumfeld thinks why such a creature should even exist and prosper in this world. In the modern capitalistic and bureaucratic society human empathy lacked amongst the mass as they were conditioned, through imposition of a particular lifestyle, to view themselves under the guise of belonging to a particular class, and due to this Blumfeld could not connect with the passivity of the child and saw him as a creature. Later, in the story Blumfeld is shown as a man who is frustrated with his life and work, and nothing significant happens around him. This immense boredom and monotony dominated the life of individuals who belonged under the modern society, and due to this all the sensitivity and appreciation of another human being's presence has totally diminished. Instead what individuals in a bureaucratic modern society sought is consent, and when they failed to receive consent, individuals like Blumfeld, who has been shown by Kafka as an apt product of the modern capitalist society, see no meaning in the boy existing in this world.

Nietzsche rightfully says, "Everything a man does in the service of the state is contrary to his nature- in the same way, everything he learns with a view to future state service is contrary to his nature" (383) and furthermore, he writes in the very same page, "This is achieved by...the lawgiver- and he who enacts the law; the teacher of discipline- and those who have grown hard and severe under discipline" (383). One very important point Nietzsche makes in the aforementioned quote, and by putting this into context here, it can be said that the bureaucratic society exercises its power over human beings because human beings remain passive to

domination. Both the lawgiver and he who enacts the law, both the commercial institutions in their exercise of bureaucratic regulations, “the teacher of discipline”, and the modern man, “who have grown hard under discipline” are responsible of the great and sophisticated system of dominance through bureaucracy and commercial system, which in Kafka’s time became an average human being’s everyday reality. If one contemplates the relation of Blumfeld with his two assistants, about whom Blumfeld thinks, “pale weak children...” and whose “rightful place was so clearly at their mother’s knee...” (“Blumfeld” 200), it is clear that Blumfeld, who wants a professional relation, receives two boys who are very much resemble in their presentation and description the two celluloid balls.

Furthermore, Blumfeld who is already so much distressed with his job, reinforces regulations upon his assistants by scolding and ordering them so that these young men will one day would totally succumb, like Blumfeld himself, to their distressful jobs. Blumfeld is a victim of the regulations of modern bureaucratic and commercial system, and despite being a victim he is also a part of the system due to which he is making his assistants slaves. In the story, the assistants, like the celluloid balls, are depicted as additional burdens on Blumfeld, however it is their innocence which makes them disobey and undertake mischief, “he [Blumfeld] ordered he assistants back into their glass-enclosed cubicles”. Therefore, it is evident from reading Blumfeld that he is a medium through which bureaucracy and commercial system exercises its power though in his office and in his private space he is a helpless alienated human being, finally it is easy to assume that those assistants of Blumfeld will turn out to be the same.

Chapter 5: “In the Penal Colony”

Perhaps Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” marks his greatest literary depiction of the evils of modern bureaucratic system. In the story there is a man, an explorer, who arrives in the penal colony and gets exposed to the harsh nature of human beings of the colony and the disgraceful nature of the system which surrounds the colony.

The story begins with a man being condemned to face a death punishment, and such a submissive man he is shown in the story as the lines suggest, “In any case, the condemned man looked like a submissive dog that one might have thought he could be left to run free on the surrounding hills and would only need to be whistled for when the execution was due to begin” (“In the Penal Colony”140). Perhaps such was the human condition which Kafka experienced and witnessed in his time as there are numerous stories and novels of Kafka where there are some characters submissive in nature. For example, the officer, at the beginning of the story, is a devotee of the “apparatus”. It can be claimed that the word “apparatus” in the story has been deliberately used by Kafka and needs a deeper contemplation. One of the most prominent French Marxists of the twentieth century, Louis Althusser, has put forth a term known as Ideological State Apparatus. The book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* mentions that Ideological State Apparatus can be referred to those institutions which acts as a separate institutions from the State, but these institutions injects within the individuals the ideology of the State through which the modern society, with its capitalistic and bureaucratic system, can maintain the desired order in a society. For example in schools, media, family, trade unions and in many such places the values of the state are being transmitted through which individuals are conditioned deliberately so that they can become blind and, in this case, efficient servants of the state. Kafka in In the Penal Colony very aptly showed, through the example of the

machine, how it controls people believes to that extent that they can give their lives for it. Although the machinery is /a separate piece of mechanical creation, but to the officer the machine has symbolic importance as the machine represents to him the values of the Old Commandant. Like Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus and its operation in the capitalist society, Kafka's presentation of the machine in this literary work also can be assumed to act in the same manner, to inject the values of the State upon human beings and make them conditioned for better governance.

In addition to that on the general level apparatus means technical equipment or machinery which is to be used for a particular purpose, and another meaning of the word is a complex structure within an organization or a system. The two meaning of the word is crucial towards the understanding of the story. The officer in the story is a devotee of the machine built to execute people, and the machine is referred to as "apparatus". This machine has been built by the old Commandant, and the officer is the successor of the old Commandant and wants to carry forward the old systems which established the penal colony. The machine fails to execute the condemned man and as the story progresses as the readers are exposed to the fact that the grave of the old Commandant, who was historically an important figure of the colony, is buried under a cafeteria of the colony, which is very derogatory. The officer, who is not considered as useful to the new Commandment is trying hard to fix the "apparatus", the execution machine, which is now mechanically useless and inefficient, and anything which remains inefficient in a bureaucratic society, which has been allegorically presented by Kafka through the Penal Colony, it slowly ceases to exist and its decline and diminution is inevitable.

Furthermore, in this story, Kafka has presented one very important aspect of the modern bureaucratic system and has helped to make his readers understand and penetrate into the system

and the operating matrix of the bureaucratic regulations. In the story, the execution machine, the “old apparatus”, fails to kill the guilty condemned man, and is unable to carry forth the punishment, and the New Commandant also is seen to propagate the uselessness of the old laws. They are ineffective and worthless burdens upon the social order and the bureaucratic system replaces them with new and efficient systems of punishment and control. In his book, Peter M Blau writes, “The hierarchy of authority in a bureaucracy, essential for coordination, often produces among its lower echelons profound feelings of inequality and apathy that impede identification with the organization’s objectives” (69). As can be seen in the quote that in a bureaucracy exercise of authority is essential, and authority can only be exercised when there are efficient and useful modes through which people of the lower echelons can be disciplined and punished. Furthermore, Blau mentions:

Bureaucracies are not such rigid structures as it popularly assumed. Their organization does not remain fixed according to the formal blueprint, but always evolves into new forms. Conditions change, problem arises, and, in the course of coping with them, the members of the organization establish new procedures and...thereby modifying the structure. The organized patterns of activities and interactions that have not- perhaps, not yet, - been officially institutionalized reveal bureaucracy in the process of change. (57)

In the above passage some very fundamental aspects of the story “In the Penal Colony” can be found. Firstly, bureaucratic structures respond to the changing situation and modify their structure to exercise efficient authority over the prevalent social systems. In addition to that, in the process of this change or modification modern bureaucratic system developed subtler in a more sophisticated ways of regulation and control. “In the Penal Colony “the officer tries to persuade the explorer to state positive remarks about the apparatus of the Old Commandant. The

officer tells the explorer, “You are conditioned by European ways of thought, perhaps you object on principle to capital punishment in general and to such mechanical instruments of death in particular...” (“In The Penal Colony” 155), and furthermore the officer states that if the explorer shows his opposition to capital punishment, and tell the New Commandant that the criminal system in the penal colony is inhuman, the New Commandant will say, “A famous Western investigator, sent out to study criminal procedure in all the countries of the world, has just said that our old tradition of administering justice is inhumane. Such a verdict from such a personality makes it impossible for me to countenance these methods any longer” (156). What one can infer from the story is that inhumane ways of punishment are not applicable anymore in the penal colony as public might react towards these forms of punishment in a negative way, thereby it can be assumed with a certain degree of certainty that what the penal system will now undertake is to discipline, or use more enhanced mechanism of control, as means of punishment rather than direct execution. The officer’s guiding principle that “Guilt should never be doubted” (151) is valid, but the means through which a human being will be subdued due to his/her guilt has to be modified due to more practical ways of controlling and regulation. Perhaps that is why in other stories such as *The Metamorphosis* or “Blumfeld, An Elderly Bachelor” money and security become the mode through which they can be controlled.

Kafka realized the fact that people became exiles in the society where they belonged to, a society and a culture which was initially their own but which, through commercialism and modernization resulting in development of creation of a bureaucratic system, started dominating them and made the people its slave. Kafka was aware of the fact that, in the words of Wilhelm Reich in *Listen Little Man*, “You stand on your head and you believe yourself dancing into the realm of freedom. You will wake up from your nightmare, Little Man, finding yourself

helplessly lying on the ground” (40), human being, in their own constructed worlds, created a pseudo sense freedom all along being a mere slave of the bureaucratic system. The greatest illustration of the quote can be seen in Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony”. The officer who shows to the explorer the machine fails to realize, despite being fully aware of the fact that his machine is obsolete and no more of any value. Bureaucracy constantly evolves and those who were an important part of the system can become obsolete with time. The officer thinks somehow if he can make the explorer convince about the fact that the machine works and operates and has the ability to carry forth the activities of the penal colony than he will be able to revive the values of his master, the First Commandant.

However, as the story progresses the readers clearly discovers that the officer “is standing on his head”, in his own little pseudo world the officer has created great hopes of freedom and revival of old values of the penal colony. In the later part of the story the explorer also discovers that the grave of the founder of the penal colony, of the First Commandant exists underneath the cafeteria, a mere place of absolute insignificance. When the officer wakes up from his hopes he kills himself in the very machine which he glorifies, helplessly he commits suicide by “waking up” from his pseudo sense of freedom. The explorer discovers that the penal colony, a symbol depicting the modern bureaucratic society, constantly evolves totally rubbing off its past and creating new systems of domination.

Conclusion

Kafka unfolds an alienated world before us which is unchangeable. He exposes the world which is governed by its own logic. This is world is our, yet it is not. We encounter with people and situations that are real, yet they are strange. Kafka creates an atmosphere of haunting anxiety and darkness. Kafka's works are full of symbols and parables. If we want to look for symbols from *The Trial*, we can sense that this novel has layers of meaning. The court is very symbolical in this novel. The complex structure of the court symbolizes the corrupt and complex bureaucratic system. Joseph K's story depicts an absolutely alienated atmosphere where mankind has no hope in the meaningless world. K does not die as a result of absurd situation, but he is already dead at his arrest. It shows that for humans, it is hard to survive within this web like system. They are giving up on this modern system physically and mentally. K becomes aware of the bizarreness of the court and the trial process. Modern law means ruled by narrow-minded bureaucrats. K is also aware about the corrupt legal officers that they have rights to do anything against him. Legal rules overgrow without any specific direction where individual like K can live in the state with full legal system and still be crushed for no reason. The final scene represents the horrific nightmare of K and we can understand that the strange aspects of the court also indicates K's inner turmoil.

The officer from "In the Penal Colony" is an extreme devotee of the machine. This machine has no mercy on people who breaks rules or do not obey the modern discipline. This particular strange piece brings justice by giving punishment for twelve hours long. The time is very symbolical because, it is indicating the lengthiness and torturous abyss of the modern bureaucratic system. Again, the machine inscribes a life lesson through sharp needles on skin.

This is how bureaucratic system also injects humans through needle like rules. However, the court and the machine represent the system of discipline, punishment and complexity. It is hard for any individual to understand the entire thing. According to Kafka, the specific center of this system is unknown. The more it is getting sophisticated, the more it becomes complex. This system is not less than a web; no one knows where the exit door is.

Furthermore, the opening lines of *The Metamorphosis*, assures the transformation of Samsa who has turned into an insect. Kafka uses very simple terms to describe the extraordinary situation. He creates a chaotic world rather than rational. Samsa becomes totally isolated from his job, family and humanity. *The Metamorphosis*, is a powerful indication of intense trauma and sufferings of an individual within the large commercial bureaucratic society. However, the insect represents the inner turmoil and dehumanized state that is brought upon by modern social orders.

The large modern organizations are complex in process. They always have a specific purpose whatever it may be is unknown. Humanity is in the dilemma of bureaucracy. It supposed to help people but enjoys injuring them because it knows these people are weak physically and psychologically. They cannot fight with the powerful system. Modern bureaucracy takes away the basic desires of humans to enjoy complete freedom and liberty. Kafka's works have direct or indirect attention on modern bureaucratic society. He has a strong sense the humor of those who feel powerless in the face of this legal system. The vague legal proceeding points something far more sinister. Kafka shows the tyrannical mystery of modern law to explain the illogical situations. On one hand, readers can easily relate the Kafkaesque of the today's world. People of modern society depend on confusing system of administration. This system is controlling every aspect of human lives. On the other hand, Kafka also reflects the forthcoming of our society. He wants to remind us that we have the power to change the world for better.

However, Kafka criticized the modern social norms. Through his works, he clearly picks the vague practices of large government, commercial system and modern society. The hollowness of this system shows as if it splits off from its own foundation, remains directionless. He is trying to give us hints that there will be a society raising voice to the injustices that threatens human liberty. Kafka's indication is truly about the torturous notion of modern bureaucracy that still exists to this very day.

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