



An Illustration of Inhumanity in Franz Kafka's The Trial

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Abstract:

This paper presents inhumanity in society through the perspective of one of the renowned German writers Franz Kafka. Franz Kafka illustrated inhumanity in his one of the prominent novels entitled The Trial. He wrote this novel at the time of World War I. When he wrote this novel, the World War I became a catastrophe for the European Countries. Due to this War, several people died. At that time there created a question of inhumanity in human mind. The word inhumanity denotes lack of compassion or pity. It also explains inhuman behaviour or action towards man or woman. When a man gives inhuman treatment to others, it is known as inhumanity. So, the characters of Franz Kafka show inhumanity in their behaviour. The research paper highlights an explanation of inhumanity in the novel The Trail.

Keywords: Inhumanity, Cruelty, Alienation, Frustration, etc.

Franz Kafka, being a literary icon of German literature, was born on 3 July 1883 in Prague, Capital of Czech Republic. He belongs to a middleclass German family. He was famously known to the world for his two literary genres. First is novella and second is novel. Novella is a narrative prose fiction. It is a shorter than a novel and longer than a short story. It lies between the short story and the novel. But on the other hand, a novel is a long narrative prose fiction. It describes the story in details with time, nature, place, people with their minds and gestures, etc. His most popular works are The Metamorphosis, The Trial, The Castle, The Judgement, Letters to Felice, A Hunger Artist, etc. Several people of 20th and 21st centuries were influenced by his writing. The novel The Trial is considered as one of the best novels of Kafka. It is published in 1925. The major themes of the novel are absurdity and cruelty. It demonstrates majorly the idiotic system of the court and the people related to it. The people related to the court work meaninglessly. The researcher tries to find out that how Kafka illustrated inhumanity in his work The Trial. The word inhumanity demonstrates any action, behaviour or condition that does not have humanity or sympathy to the others. It is related to cruelty. Two kinds of people live in society. First is courteous people and second is discourteous people. When people behave generously with others, it is called humanity. But on the other hand, when people behave cruelly with the others, it is called inhumanity. Nowadays, we see in society that a few people show sympathy to others and several people show cruelty to others for their own shake. So, we can say that inhumanity is a deliberate process. The best example of inhumanity is Franz Kafka's well-known novel The Trial. The novel portrays the trial of Josef K. who is the protagonist of the novel. Josef K. is a common man and works as a chief clerk in a well-known bank. He is ordinary and ambitious man.

The inhumanity begins at the opening of the novel. K. is arrested by the two warders named Franz and Willem for the unspecified crime. K did not commit any crime. However, he is arrested by these two warders. These

two warders enter in the room of K., arrest him and instructs him to stay in his next room. When K. asks them a reason of his arrest, they say that they don't have any idea regarding it. Arresting anybody without any crime and not explaining its reason is a big inhumanity. Nobody can arrest anybody without reason. The nature has given freedom to everyone to live life independently. Hence, nobody can grab anybody's rights. But in the novel *The Trial*, K.'s rights have been grabbed by these warders i.e. the law and this is inhumanity. When one of the warders enters in the room of K. and invigilates him, K. requests him to leave him for a while to inform his landlady named Frau Grubach for the same. But he doesn't permit him for the same. When K. asks him the reason of his arrest, he says,

‘It is not our place to tell you that. Go to your room and wait. The proceedings have been set in motion and you will be told everything at the appropriate time. I am exceeding my instructions in talking to you in this friendly manner, but I hope there is no one to hear it apart from Franz, who himself has behaved towards you in a friendly manner, contrary to all regulations. If you continue to enjoy such luck as you have in the allocation of your guards, you can face the future with confidence.’
(Kafka, 6)

It is absolutely clear that the warder shows inhumanity to K. He does not have any sympathy towards K. He just imposes the orders of his senior on K. He instructs K. not by respects but by insult that it is not their place to explain the reason of his arrest. He also instructs him that he will be known the reason of his arrest at the appropriate time. If one can read this quote, he/she will tell that nobody can stop anyone to meet or talk for a specific time to his/her people if he/she is a criminal. It is allowed to a criminal in prison also to meet or talk to his/her people for a specific time. But in the *Trial*, it is not allowed for K. to do the same. Being a human being, he cannot meet his people for a specific time and he could not understand the reason of his arrest after requesting to the warders. This is a huge inhumanity for K.

K. tries to prove himself that he is an innocent man. He attempts to show that he does not belong to any crime. He strives to say that he is a Chief Clerk in the bank by showing a proof of identity. He requests the warders to check his identity proof and rescue him. But they do not accept it and also tell him that it is pointless for him to explain all these things to them because they are minor officials. They also tell that there is nothing in their hand. They also state to K. that they cannot save or help him in any situation. Here one can understand that if the law does not rescue to an individual after showing the identity proof, it is a tremendous inhumanity. The warders tell K. that he has to present before the supervisor. When K. goes to the supervisor, it seems him all meaningless. K. then asks the reason of his arrest to the supervisor. But the supervisor avoids his question and discuss the other things that are meaningless. He then forces to K. to wear the black coat as his uniform. Leaving the main thing aside, the supervisor focuses all other meaningless things. K. asks him several times the reason of his arrest but he does not answer it and says that the trial is over on that day. So, this is an inhumanity in the life of Joseph K.

The first examination of K's trial is scheduled on next Sunday. When he goes to the trial room, he sees that everything is disarranged there. When he starts to talk to the examining magistrate, the examining magistrate does not pay attention to him. Finally, he says,

‘Listen. About ten days ago I was arrested — as to the fact that I have been arrested, it means this to me, but that's beside the point. They descended on me early one morning, while I was still in bed. Perhaps — from what the examining magistrate has said it's not impossible — perhaps they'd been ordered to arrest some painter who's as innocent as I am, but they chose me. The neighbouring room was occupied by two hulking guards. They couldn't have taken better precautions if I'd been a dangerous robber. And these guards were corrupt riff-raff, they kept going on at me, they wanted bribes, they tried to get clothes and linen out of me under false pretences, they demanded money in order, so they said, to bring me some breakfast, after they had brazenly eaten my breakfast before my very eyes.’ (Kafka, 36)

K. tries to get justice from the judge of the court. Therefore, he keeps all his questions in front of him. He complains against the guards at the first time of his arrest in his apartment. He says that he has arrested before ten days. He also states that the guards arrested him early morning when he was in bed. He also tells him that the examining magistrate arrested to an innocent painter also. He talks about the guards that how they were corrupt. He says that they tried to get cloths and demanded money from him. He also narrated that the guards

told him to bring them breakfast and after bringing the breakfast they ate it. After listening all these things, the judge does not give K. any kind of justice. K.'s first trial goes waste. If one reads these statements, he/she can understand that this is very big inhumanity.

One day, three men come to K.'s bank to meet him. These three men are Franz, Willem and a stranger man. The man who is a stranger carried a long cane in his hand. K. knows only two men named Franz and Willem because they are guards. Franz and Willem cry before K. by stating that K. did complain to the examining magistrate against them. They also say that due to K.'s complains their boss expelled them from the job. So, it is the question of bread and butter in front of them. Willem says,

'Sir if you knew how badly we're paid you'd think better of us. I have a family to feed and Franz here would like to get married, we try to make money wherever we can, it's not possible through work alone, not even the hardest work, your fine linen tempted me, naturally we guards are forbidden to behave like that, it wasn't right, but it's a tradition that the linen goes to the guards, it's always been like that, believe me.' (Kafka, 58)

When K. listens all these, he surprises and disagrees all these things. K. then admits that he described only those things which have happened in his apartment with him. He also says it is not a complaint against them. The above quote states that the law punished Franz and Willem for their cruel behaviour with K. but the law ordered them to behave like that with him. Here, Kafka tries to show that the law instructs the individual to behave in a specified manner. If an individual behaves in the same manner, the law punishes him/her for committing the crime. Any law does not punish to an individual after following the rules and regulations of it. But in the novel *The Trial*, the law punishes to the innocent people. So, this is a huge inhumanity.

K. is so worried and disturbed to solve his case. He takes immense efforts for his case but he cannot get the success. He cannot pay attention to his work. He always thinks of his case and tries to come out from it. He handled his case to Dr. Huld who is a well-known lawyer. But Dr. Huld does not pay attention to his case. He does not support K. to solve his case. Therefore, K. has decided not to handle his case to Dr. Huld. But anyhow he has to solve his case and has to come out from it. Several lawyers are disloyal in the court. He knows that the common people cannot get justice from the court. As far as the lawyers and the court system are concerned it is clear that they don't think about the justice of the common people. If the lawyers and the court system cannot give justice to the common people, there comes a question of justice in front of them that who will give them justice. So, it is a huge inhumanity.

One day, when K. was working in the bank, the manufacturer suggests K. a name of the painter Titorelli to help in his trial. When K. goes to Titorelli and requests him to portray the judge of the court due to which he could get the ideas to solve his case, the painter, instead of helping him, gives countless clarifications by stating that he is loyal to the court and denies to help him. Finally, K. becomes disturbed. If the painter, instead of helping him, explains the importance of the court, it is clear that he is related to the court.

K. is so disturbed due to his trial. He tries to search the solutions of his case but he cannot find it. He appointed a lawyer named Dr. Huld to solve his case but the lawyer talks meaninglessly instead of helping him. So, K. has decided that he has to dismiss the lawyer from his case. Therefore, K. goes to the house of Dr. Huld and tells him the reason of dismissing the lawyer. He says,

'But I was just going to add that I would have expected better judgement from you than from the others, especially since I've given you a better insight into the way the court works and what I do than I usually give clients. And now I find that, after all, you haven't sufficient trust in me. You're not making things easy for me.' (Kafka, 134)

Dr. Huld was very disturbing for K. K. had numerous expectations from the lawyer. But the lawyer did not pay much attention to K.'s case. He was just wasting time of K. Therefore, K. has decided to dismiss the lawyer from his case. In the above quote, we can see that how K. is angry over the lawyer. K. had expected so many good things from the lawyer as compared to the other lawyers. But becoming disappointed, K. says that the lawyer did not make him easy things. There are several reasons like this to dismiss the lawyer from his case. So, this is a huge inhumanity in the novel.

K. is disturbed to his case. He did several things to solve his case but he couldn't get success. He had arrested on his 30th birthday. One year has passed but he couldn't solve his case. He took immense effort for that. On his 31st birthday i.e. in the second year, he was arrested unexpectedly. When the two gentlemen come to arrest him, he becomes ready to go with them without demanding any explanation. He doesn't demand any explanation from them because he knows that there is no point to ask them the reason of his arrest. If he asks them the reason of it, they will not explain it. He becomes very sad by the thought that instead of enjoying his special day i.e. his birthday, he has to go with these two gentlemen. When they were going in the street, these two gentlemen behaved with them badly. When they were behaving with them badly, K. didn't say anything to them because he knew that there is no meaning to speak them. Finally, K. was killed by these two people by a knife. K. died like a dog. So, this is an inhumanity in the novel.

Franz Kafka presented the scenario of 20th century Germany where the writers of the 20th century wrote on various issues like isolation, inhumanity, meaninglessness, greed etc. through their works. Kafka tried to show through *The Trial* that humanity is lost among the people and people behave selfishly with others. Due to selfish behaviour of people, they behave cruelly and unkindly with others. Kafka says inhumanity is an anti-humanistic term. He also depicts that it is harmful to human being. He explained in the novel that how man destroys due to inhumanity. Inhumanity doesn't allow the things like kindness, sympathy, love, etc among the people. Man destroys because of inhumanity because it is a deliberate activity. Kafka explains that in inhumanity, man does not show any sympathy or kindness to the next person. So, it is a cruel activity.

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