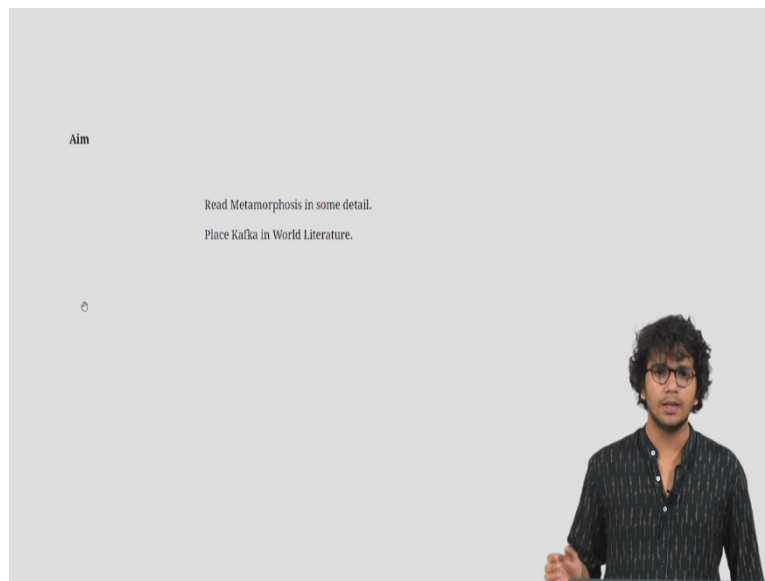


**Introduction to World Literature**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Metamorphosis-I**  
**Franz Kafka**

Hi, welcome to NPTEL course on introduction to world literature. So in this lecture we will be taking a look at Franz Kafka the German writer and especially his work called metamorphosis which is a short story for novel.

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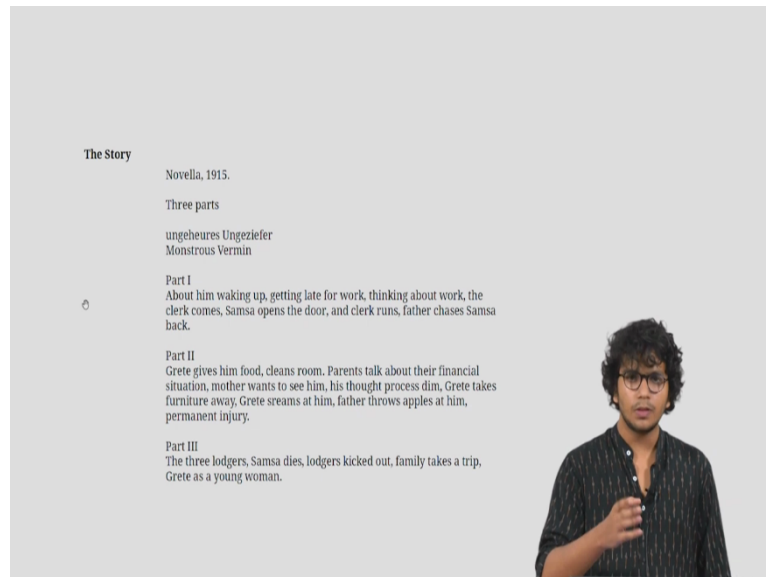
So we will be taking a look at metamorphosis in detail. In some detail because it's almost impossible to go through every interpretation that has been given to this story. But to understand the story completely will be huge task because the story has been put through rigorous academic analysis many a times. So to have a complete look at all of it will be mostly impossible.

We will try to read metamorphosis in some detail in this lecture and as part of the course in world literature as the name suggest we will try to place Franz Kafka in world literary canon and also try to have some idea about how this works especially contributes to Kafka's place in world literary canon. So there are 2 aims we have in this particular video that first thing, we read metamorphosis and try to stand at least a little bit about how this work works in literary canon and why it has got acceptance in literary canon.

Placing Kafka in world literature is immensely important because it also has political connotations in the sense of politics as we use in day-to-day life. But also there is a politics of

literary canon making which we do not see but if one looks into it deeply we can get some sense of how this literary canon production works. So we look at Kafka in that way too.

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So we will have a short introduction to the story and its plot. So that we can understand the analyses we will be going through, we will be putting this so that we can understand how to analyze this in light of so many academic rigorous analysis the story has been told. So the story in its form is classified usually is a novel which means it is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel.

Again we will see metamorphosis prescribed in university syllabi and there is a short story courses, courses on short stories and maybe in world literature for say trading is in German literature for example, so that's about the form. It was written in 1915 around 9 years before Kafka's death in 1924 and Kafka's divided the novella into 3 parts and that gives us a basis of classification of the event which happen in the story.

And since this is the story which we usually see in most of university courses in literature, we will also see the formal, the textual implications of how the story is written and also the more wide, broader understandings and connotations which the story gives us. So the story starts with a very important sentence. I say this because that sentence is probably classified as one of those most important and loaded opening sentences of world literature.

So the story starts with a travelling salesman who deals in cloth waking up from a dream and realizing that overnight he has transformed into something nonhuman which is given in most translations as a monstrous vermin Ungeheures Ungeziefer is the German original and the

translation usually is as I explained monstrous vermin but many translations also give us the translation as bug, a big bug or huge beetle or a dung beetle or etc. and so on.

So I will give you a brief explanation of the 3 parts the plotline, so part one is about Samsa, Gregor Samsa is the protagonist of this novella, about him waking up and realizing that he has transformed into something nonhuman and he realizes that he is late for his work and he keeps thinking about his work and in this part get an idea of what Sabza is.

What is his job? What is his surroundings? How is his family? And etc then the clerk comes to meet Samsa because Samsa has not yet shown up for work and his mother, father and his younger sister named Grete is also getting worried about why is Samsa still not awake. So the clerk comes knocks on his door there is no reply and Samsa because he feels that he has a responsibility to show up for work opens the door and seeing his monstrous form as Kafka puts it that clerk runs away from the home and father chases Samsa back into his bedroom.

So this is the first part where we are given an introduction into the social surrounding and a brief look into Samsa's mind. From this section we also understand that Samsa's occupation and his financial situation in relation to his family is an important thing in this text. We will see that when it comes to the analysis part but also again we also see how Samsa's thinking process is. In terms of how he thinks about his work.

We also see how Samsa's thinking process is in relation to his work, so we have a huge a long description of how Samsa thinks about his work and the problems that might happen if he does not show up for work and it is possible ((7:53)) on the financial situation of his family and etc. So here we have both material and also a subjective insight into what the story is going to be about.

In part 2 we have his younger sister Grete giving him food. Now we understand that the family has come into terms with Samsa's condition as in how he is no more human and how he has turned into a beetle. So we will see the family going on as if it is a usual thing, as if there is nothing much which has happened but there is also an awareness in the family that something have happened already.

Because we see them talking about their financial situation because Samsa will not be able to go to work anymore. And also we see how the attitude change in people around Samsa. So for example Grete is very kind towards him now, she offers him food and she even

understand that Samsa because of his bug character he now does not like fresh food and instead starts giving him a rotted food which Samsa with very much of interest.

So this transformation which is detailed by Kafka is of interest to us. And we also see how Samsa's thought processes change because of his material transformation. So he is no more human in his appearance and so we have, how this physical transformation, physical metamorphosis plays in his mind and how his thought process had changed. So we see that Samsa had fallen into a deep depression of his condition and he also is aware of how the family around him is changing.

So we also have details like Grete and his mum taking the furniture away from his room, so that Samsa can move around freely and climb the walls and etc. This is also one of those important points when we see Samsa is reacting to his environment. So now he realizes that he can climb the walls and he can walk in the ceiling and etc etc. And he also hides behind the furniture or hides under the bed whenever his mom and sister comes in, so as not to scare them.

And in this moment in the story when Grete screams at Samsa and Samsa is unable to go back into his bedroom. His father chases him with a cane and throws apples at Samsa of which one Apple gets lunched in his back in a sensitive spot as Kafka said and Samsa becomes incapacitated to move order to think freely, so it causes him permanent injury and Samsa has to stay in his bedroom.

In part 3 there are 3 lodges in Samsa's house. So since Samsa is not able to go to work, his father, mother and sister had taken up some work and also to supplement their incomes they have invited 3 lodges stays in the Samsa house and the 3 lodges scene is very important because it is in the 3 lodges scene that we see how much Samsa cares about his sister, so the 3 lodges are sitting and dining and Grete is playing violin for them and Samsa moved by this music goes into the dining hall to listen to the music and the 3 lodges see him, gets scared and pretends Samsa's father that they will leave the house because of this monstrous vermin staying at his house.

And then Grete tells her parents that they need to get rid of Samsa somehow because he is making it tough for the rest of the family to live. So hearing this Samsa staying in his bedroom starves himself to death. So this is an ambiguous point in the story because we don't

know for sure if it is voluntarily starving oneself to death or is it because his body functions as.

We know that it is an ambiguous point in the story because we do not know whether the death of Samsa is voluntary by starving himself to death or an accident because his bodily functions have declined over time. This is a very beautifully written part of the work. So we can see Kafka's craft at its May be Best because few of these sentences in which Kafka describes Samsa's that is quite beautiful.

And then we see the family taking a trip outside the home because of the sudden freedom they can afford because Samsa is dead and story ends with the parents realizing Grete has matured into a young woman and to find a husband for her. So we see that the metamorphosis has 2 implications, one is the metamorphosis of Samsa to a monstrous vermin and the other is metamorphosis of Grete from a younger child into a mature young woman.

This is the basic plot of the story which is given as a basic pattern outlined to you but one should read the entire text to understand how Kafka portrays this and also reading the original is important because only by reading the original we have a feeling about how the text flows to get a feeling of the texture that is important. So this is the basic plotline which will come handy when you are trying to understand the text but it is in imperative that one should read the original too.

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**The Story**

Novella, 1915.

Three parts

ungeheures Ungeziefer  
Monstrous Vermin

Part I  
About him waking up, getting late for work, thinking about work, the clerk comes, Samsa opens the door, and clerk runs, father chases Samsa back.

Part II  
Grete gives him food, cleans room. Parents talk about their financial situation, mother wants to see him, his thought process dim, Grete takes furniture away, Grete screams at him, father throws apples at him, permanent injury.

Part III  
The three lodgers, Samsa dies, lodgers kicked out, family takes a trip, Grete as a young woman.

So this is the beginning sentence of this work. So there are so many translations available of the same work but certain translations are more poetics in a sense, I find this translation

interesting to read, so this is how the story begins. The first sentence I have isolated the first sentence and put it on the screen, so that we can understand the force with which Kafka launches the story.

So as Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. So if you were to think about this particular sentence, you see that the monstrous vermin comes in the end. And there are so many things going on in this one single sentence alone because you see that he is waking up from sleep, despite will be important to us later. And also he had an easy dreams and he has transformed for metamorphosized into a monstrous vermin, a nonhuman entity.

So this is to show how Kafka had crafted the beginning of the story by giving us a very powerful hook into the story and this sentence work as a single point in the story but you can see almost all connotations that the story give are concentrated. So as I have said earlier it is important to read the original to get a sense of how the formula Le Mans of the text also works with the ideological connotations that the text has.

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**Franz Kafka**  
(1883-1924)

Born in Prague, Kingdom of Bohemia, Austria-Hungary. German-speaking Jewish family.

*"Such poets as Rilke or such novelists as Thomas Mann are dwarfs or plaster saints in comparison to him."* - Vladimir Nabokov

Twentieth century Modernism; existentialism, bureaucracy, alienation.

Kafkaesque.

Worked as an insurance claims adjuster

Kafka's sexuality.

Self-image

Influence of his father.

The slide also features a small video inset in the bottom right corner showing a man with dark curly hair and glasses, wearing a dark patterned shirt, speaking and gesturing with his right hand.

Now we will have a brief look at Kafka's biography because it is important to understand how Kafka lived and the context in which Kafka lived to supplement whatever the text alone refers us. So it is going to be a mix of both the text and the context which will be useful for us in understanding Kafka. So he was born in Prague in the Kingdom of Bohemia Austria Hungary in 1883 and he has borne into a German-speaking Jewish family.

This is of importance to us which we will understand when we talk about it later. So the German-speaking Jewish families of importance to us. And also the year of but we should notice it 1883 and he lived till 1924, so this time period is also of importance to us because to place the story in a context and to understand the consciousness of the author working into manufacturing such a story becomes clear only when we see the time period in which he was located.

So 1883 to 1924 is the modern age as in it is part of the modern age and so we should take note of the age and also his identity as a German-speaking Jew living in Prague which is not a German-speaking place. So just to give you an idea of how Kafka usually looked at by literary figures, we have a quote from Vladimir Nabokov. So Vladimir Nabokov has had so many opinions on so many people, so it's very interesting to note what he has to say about Kafka.

So Kafka says such poets as Rilke or such novelists as Thomas Mann are Dwarfs or plaster saints in comparison to him. Him, he is obviously Kafka and we should see who have these figures which Nabokov is referring to. So Rilke, Rainer Maria Rilke and Thomas Mann who are kind of literary star words in the round Canon. He is comparing them to Kafka as dwarfs.

So most probably means something and where do we place Kafka? 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernism. So 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernism as we have seen from 1883 to 1924, so these 3 words here 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernism, so this is quite important in understanding Kafka because 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism means a lot as in, modernism entails so many moments which happened and it is an entire worldview in which we are trying to place Kafka. So it is important to keep in mind the connotations these words have in modernism.

So we can see here that we have associated a few words with modernism, say existentialism, bureaucracy, alienation. So these are those buzzwords which everybody knows about exceptionalism an important moment in philosophy which also laid into literature. Bureaucracy, bureaucracy the connotations go into multiple discipline, so social for example and alienation, alienation happening due to the modernist trends or alienation happening due to the modern age is also another buzzword which we see in Marxist literary criticism and so on and so forth.

So how can we take these things into account while reading Kafka, so as to see what the text gives us and also to see, how this entire ideological enterprise which manufacture text work

to Kafka. So Kafka's works has also given us a new word Kafkaism which refers to the moods which Kafka usually gives us through his works. So this is also of important to us which we will discuss later.

And his work as in his profession, so Kafka worked as an insurance claims adjuster in Bohemia and this piece of information will also be of much importance to us. And another thing which all Kafka scholars talks about is Kafka sexuality. So this is also an important point which we should take into consideration because as we know so many figures for example Floyd and so on let us talk about the roles sexuality plays in human culture.

So Kafka sexuality and his attitude towards the same is of importance to us because it comes out in certain ways in his text as symbols or as instances or as specific scenes. So once we understand how Kafka's views on sexuality was linked to his internal workings of his consciousness, it gives us a sense of the author and the authors consciousness working in his literary constructs as if the consciousness of the author is also manifesting itself as a literary form.

So this is also of importance to us and we will discuss it later and his self we mean, so by this also link to Kafka sexuality. So how he viewed himself in relation to the society is also very interesting because as we see in his other works, so let's say "hunger artist and so on" we get an idea of how Kafka viewed himself in relation to the world. So again this goes back into Kafka's sexuality as in we are not going to discuss his preferences or anything.

But we will be looking into how our sense of in advocacy has crept into Kafka's works because that will give us insights into how Kafka's insights into how metamorphosis works as a text. The influence of his father, this yet another huge key point which all Kafka scholars again speaks a lot about because there is a father figure in metamorphosis who is very controlling and very authoritative and we also have to look at influence of Kafka's father in his life because that will also give us deeper insights into Kafka's literary productions specially metamorphosis because there is a huge authoritative father figure in metamorphosis whom we should analyze a little bit.

So these biographical details including Kafka's times, the times in which Kafka lived and his identity and including his sexuality and self-image and profession and also influence of his family on him these things will be of great interest to us as we move along.



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**Themes:  
Specific and  
General**

- Biographic- Father, Professional life, Sexuality, Religious, His Diaries and Letters
- Feminist- Grete
- Textual- Literalisation of Metaphor, Samsa, Tradition
- Psychoanalytic- Double, Reality-Fantasy, Return of the Repressed
- Marxist- Anarcho-communist, anti-statist, anti-militarist, "Remember Kropotkin".
- Modernity- Professionalism, Alienation, Inter-generational Struggles, Bureaucracy, systems of arbitrary power.
- Existence
- Identity- Destroying one identity to build another, Struggle-identity
- Minor literature- Deleuze and Guattari
- Tradition- Event, as described by Slavoj Zizek
- Funniness of Kafka- David Foster Wallace

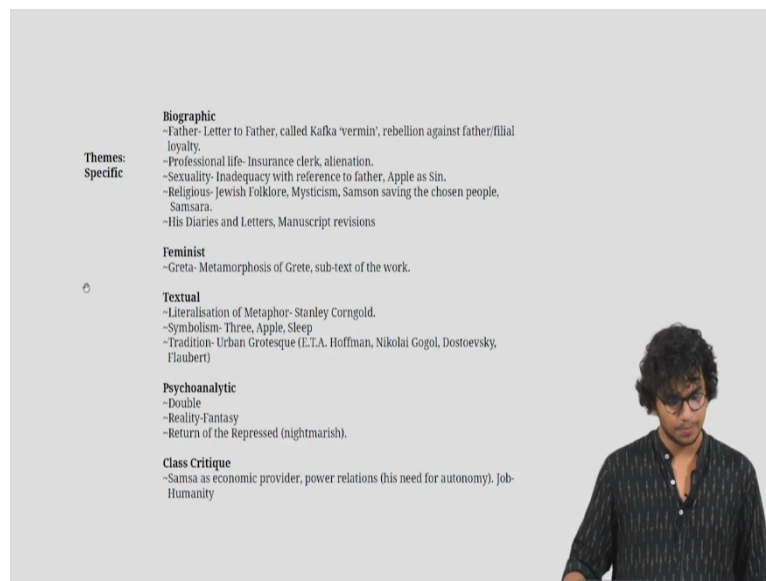
Now we will take a look of the themes which we can see in metamorphosis, so for ease of understanding I have classified the teams into 3, one, the first classification is a specific theme and a 2<sup>nd</sup> category is the general theme and a 3<sup>rd</sup> category is that influential figures in literary circles and Academy has brought about Kafka. The specific things which I have listed here is her huge makes a different understandings of metamorphosis.

So this is specific to metamorphosis while the 2<sup>nd</sup> part which is the general themes are not specific to metamorphosis but appearing metamorphosis and is also seen across most of the modernist writings. So say modernity and influences of modernity and how humans shape their identity, their search for identity and the existence, so huge words but very meaningful too.

So that is the 2<sup>nd</sup> part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> category which is neither specific nor general but contemporary writers and thinkers have spoken about Kafka and his works. So how we are going to go about discussing metamorphosis is by starting with the specific things then trying to place these specific things along with a wider understanding using a few general and then we try to understand some interesting but very relevant insights into Kafka's writing.

So we will start with a bit of biographical interpretation and a bit of feminist literary criticism and textual understanding and of course psychoanalytic understandings and then maybe a little bit of class critique and that's how we will go about with this.

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**Themes: Specific**

- Biographic**
  - Father- Letter to Father, called Kafka 'vermin', rebellion against father/filial loyalty.
  - Professional life- Insurance clerk, alienation.
  - Sexuality- Inadequacy with reference to father, Apple as Sin.
  - Religious- Jewish Folklore, Mysticism, Samson saving the chosen people, Samsara.
  - His Diaries and Letters, Manuscript revisions
- Feminist**
  - Greta- Metamorphosis of Grete, sub-text of the work.
- Textual**
  - Literalisation of Metaphor- Stanley Corngold.
  - Symbolism- Three, Apple, Sleep
  - Tradition- Urban, Grotesque (F.T.A. Hoffman, Nikolai Gogol, Dostoevsky, Flaubert)
- Psychoanalytic**
  - Double
  - Reality-Fantasy
  - Return of the Repressed (nightmarish).
- Class Critique**
  - Samsa as economic provider, power relations (his need for autonomy), Job- Humanity

So let's start with the specific thing. So now this is very interesting because whatever we know about Kafka in his biography comes into play with the text. So let's go through the biographical art first. So his father figure, so as we saw earlier we already spoke about his father being an authoritative figure in his life and how it must have leading to his literary productions.

So let's see, Kafka wrote 20 pages odd letter to his father, so he published a letter to his father and it gives us very interesting insights into how Kafka's consciousness have placed his father. So the father figure which we see a metamorphosis is very close to his biological father, Kafka's biological father called, his name was Hermann Kafka. So there were specific details which are of interest to us.

So for example see that his father had called W Kafka's vermin. So which we see transforms into metamorphosis as a monstrous vermin and rebellion against father is another main thing here. So Kafka was not a rebel in the Le Mans sense of a term because we don't see details in his biography were, he had actively opposed his father but there is always a sense of in advocacy in Kafka in relation to his father.

So we see that there is a kind of real loyalty of Kafka with his father in his real-life. So that kind of leads into metamorphosis too because we see that Samsa is terribly afraid of his father this must have built into his literary production's too because we see in metamorphosis that the father figure while being very authoritative and cruel to Samsa.

In Samsa's mind the father is always a winner figure, he is placed in a pedestal not to be touched, not be opposed, so this also is very tightly related to psychoanalytic understanding of metamorphosis but we see that the father figure has played a lot of influence in his real-life and it has bled into how he wrote metamorphosis and how he understand metamorphosis.

The professional life is also very important. So Kafka's professional life was as an insurance clerk in her huge firm. And Kafka was not very impressed with his work because he always thought, we can see from his letters and diaries that he always had a problem adapting into work life as in, as we can easily see from his letters and diaries Kafka always had a problem adjusting to his professional life because he thought that his professional life is thieving from himself the time he could have invested writing.

So there is that issue and also the profession is very interesting because as a clerk this is removed from any active process of producing something. He is a clerk is a cog in a mission who is easily exchangeable as in the clerk does not have a face, it is faceless because if not for Kafka somebody else could have been in his place, so there is always a feeling of being nothing here.

So we can extend that as an example of alienation in modern ages. So the professional life is also very much important and the profession again is of importance because the clerk is a cog in her youth system called bureaucracy, so bureaucracy is tightly linked into modernity is again tightly linked into rationalization and treating people as expendable and also as replaceable. So there is a link between the historical time and Kafka, so we can see that in work here.