

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Failure of Communication: A Comparative Study of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis***

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**By**

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## Abstract

Dostoevsky and Kafka examine the failure of communication as an existential predicament of human being in their novellas *Notes from Underground* and *Metamorphosis* respectively. The protagonists of both of these novellas fail to communicate as soon as they realize the "Self" in an existential crisis.

Underground man is an ex-civil servant of lower class. Given his low status, the society treats him ill. However, he doesn't accept the status given by the society. So he strives to have his social identity. In course of social transaction, he comes to realize that his identity is captured by the "others". His "self" is defined by the society. He loiters around his world to maintain his identity, but all of his efforts end in failure. The husky- six footer-officer, Zverkov, Lisa and Apollian stand for the "Others" who define the underground man. He rejects their projection but can't make his own. He finds himself at the verge of existential crises, which cause him failure of communication.

Like the underground man, Gregor, the protagonist of *Metamorphosis*, also undergoes a similar destiny. Gregor is a salesman. Because of the unfavourable situation of the business he is doing, he is afraid of being sacked out from the job. Since he is the only support for his family, he has to maintain his job at any cost. His existence depends upon the job. But the sense of being kicked away from the job generates dread into him. While undergoing into subjectivity, he finds himself being metamorphosed into a bug. The bug symbolically represents his being a social misfit. As a social misfit, his plead is not heard by the "others". In this way he is secluded from the society and he becomes a victim of failure of communication.

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