

# **Psychosocial Alienation as Dehumanization: Dostoevsky and Tolstoy Revisited**

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**Psychosocial Alienation as Dehumanization: Dostoevsky and Tolstoy Revisited**

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*For a child no one is more precious than its parents; hence, I would like to dedicate this work to  
my beloved mom and dad*

*Selina Akter*

*And*

*S. M Jashim Uddin Ahammed*

*It is your immense love and blessings that have made me capable of exploring this world and  
achieving the best through virtuous deeds*

*Thank you for being the greatest parents on earth*

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## Abstract

In the world of philosophy, psychosocial alienation is a well-known concept. It is a notion that represents the psychic torment of an individual who experiences the feelings of isolation, despair or anguish and gradually regress as a social being through the influence of those demoralizing attributes. During the nineteenth century, when philosophers like Karl Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche posited their ideologies on human social life, economy, politics, etc. this concept of psychosocial alienation came into focus as a mode of existential predicament because of its fatal pessimism that effectively exploited human psyche and lifestyle.

According to these philosophers' capitalistic economy, rapid urbanization and industrialization are some of the major issues responsible for the development of psychosocial alienation among mankind. They believe that capitalistic and materialistic innovations undoubtedly elevate the standard of living, but in disguise, these aspects basically hamper the true essence of human beings by making them more mechanical or more artificial. As a consequence, feelings of isolation, anguish, impatience, worthlessness, bitterness and hatred infect the inherent morals or values of human beings creating a psychosocial vulnerability in them. Gradually, along with the philosophers, different psychologists, artists and literary figures have recognized this demeaning feature of alienation and therefore made the effort to raise awareness among the masses about its catastrophic effects or consequences through their works. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are two of these profound scholars who have not just explored the inside story of human psychosocial disorders, but also evaluated the manipulation of money-oriented advancement through the character portrayals and themes of their works.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the phenomenon of psychosocial alienation as a process of dehumanization through an analysis of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's novels. For this project, three different novels have been selected among which two are written by Dostoevsky and the rest is by Tolstoy. The initial novels are Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground*. Both of these novels significantly portray the psychosocial transformation of urbanized or modernized Russians in the nineteenth century. The last novel is Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* which not only highlights the remarkable distinction between urban and rural lifestyle, but also reveals the supremacy of patriarchal social conventions over female individuality or desire. Initially, it will try to find out the facts through which the concept of psychosocial alienation has established its place in the nineteenth century. Its connection with other existential

philosophies like existentialism, nihilism, as well as the philosophy of the absurd will be discussed next. Then, in view of these preliminary discussions, it will focus on three different characters (i.e. Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, the Underground Man in *Notes from Underground* and Anna in *Anna Karenina*) and the themes of the chosen novels to assess the degrading impacts of psychosocial alienation on individuals. As it is said already that, psychosocial alienation is a dehumanizing aspect which poisons human conscience with extreme pessimism, provokes people to do unlawful deeds, makes them hate their existence, the tragic accounts of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's characters successfully highlight these notions with their representations. While the character of Raskolnikov highlights how the intellect of an individual gets tormented after observing the socio-political disorders, the character of the Underground Man stands as an epitome of the distorted hybridity of Russian culture and traditions under western influence in the nineteenth century. Similarly, Anna's character symbolizes the dominance of materialism over individual desire or emotions.

The thesis will be divided into three chapters with an introduction in order to present the argument in a detailed manner. As mentioned above, that the introductory part will present a general discussion on the topic along with a brief overview of all the necessary philosophies like Marxist philosophy of alienation, Nietzsche's theory of nihilism, Sartre and Kierkegaard's principles of existentialism, etc. The subsequent chapters will elaborate the issue more broadly by examining the characters and the themes of the selected novels considering those theories. In the final segment, a conclusion will be reached at on the basis of all discussions to reclaim the fact that psychosocial alienation is an attribute that dehumanizes people by devastating their reasoning and conscience.

## Introduction

In one of his interviews, Michel Foucault, a prominent French philosopher talks about the concept of “panopticon” (146), which is nothing but a watchtower designed in the eighteenth century by the utilitarian theorist Jeremy Bentham as a mode of monitoring a large number of people, especially prisoners, with a few observers or overseers<sup>1</sup>. Foucault explains in the interview that, this system of observing and being observed in the “panopticon” reflects the power structure in human social-political strata where there is always a supreme “gaze” (154) or a supreme authority reigning over every individual actions of people and keeping them disciplined or organized. During the discussion, Foucault continuously refers to Bentham’s philosophy and elaborates that inside a panopticon two significant aspects play their roles for effective surveillance of the convicts, and those are “the gaze and “interiorisation” (154). Then he clarifies that “the gaze” or the inspection of the observers highly influences the convicts’ psyche and ultimately forces them to interiorize the feeling of being inspected every moment. In Foucault’s words, “There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze... a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising [Sic] to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself” (155). This statement signifies that, even if the overseers’ stop inspecting or monitoring the prisoners in the “panopticon”, they will inspect themselves by their own and will hardly think of escaping because the notion of surveillance will be interiorized by their psyche. My topic psychosocial alienation has a strong connection with this theory of the “panopticon”, as through psychosocial alienation people interiorize the feelings of isolation, frustration or despair so much that eventually they lose the control over their conscience and perform unlawful activities. This fatal interiorization also intimidates individuals’ social communication as the feeling of despair rarely allows them to be sociable or forthcoming and like this the dominance of psychosocial alienation develops further. Hence, the purpose of this project is to scrutinize this threatening influence of psychosocial alienation upon human psyche and behavior, along with its significant connection with other existential philosophies such as existentialism, nihilism and absurdism in view of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky’s novels.

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<sup>1</sup> For further details take a look into “The Eye of Power”, an interview of Michel Foucault in *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (pg. 146-165), taken by Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot.



Usually, psychosocial alienation is an element of modernity that has emerged with the development of capitalism or materialism. The ever-growing process of urbanization has boosted this system of capitalism which eventually made the human societies more materialistic and more competitive. As a consequence, all the inherent morals, values or ethics have become materialized and humans become like puppets that only know how to struggle hard in desire of money and power. While it is more important to emphasize upon the aesthetic or psychic demands of their soul as they are the facilitators of rationalization, intellect and moral judgment; humans decide to do the exact opposite under the influence of capitalism. However, because of these capitalistic initiatives like urbanization or industrialization, a modernized individual hardly gets any time to indulge in self-inspection and rather wanders around with a soul that is burdened with workloads or social problems and is devoid of pleasure, fun as well as enjoyment. This is how their process of devaluation starts. Their lack of self-analysis hampers the flow between their unconscious, subconscious and conscious<sup>2</sup> levels of the psyche which ultimately guides them to perform demoralizing activities like murder, suicide, rape and other violent crimes. These criminal activities not only reflect the torment of an individual's distorted psyche, but also signify the insignificance and inconvenience of human social management.

This is why, the theme of alienation has always been so interesting among the realists to experiment with, and Dostoevsky is also not an exception. In his two significant novels *Notes from Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, he has shown how the conflicted social and political aspects of Russia during the nineteenth century have hyped the conscience of its individuals. Initially, the effect of the industrial revolution along with the French revolution had inspired the Russians to inspect the flaws in their age old aristocratic heritage. Subsequently, the inefficiency of serfdom abolishment and the peasant unrest in terms of land distribution had instigated mass dissatisfaction towards the aristocratic feudal system. James DeFronzo describes in his article "The Russian Revolution and the Eastern Europe" that, Czar Alexander's II abolishment of serfdom in 1861 could not satisfy the peasants as they were still being dominated by their supreme landlords who imposed the curse of debt upon them (52-53)<sup>3</sup>. The rapid growth

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<sup>2</sup> These terms are used in Freudian psychoanalysis. See more in pg. 2 and pg 14, in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* by Jean Laplanche and Jean Bertrand Pontalis.

It can also be found in part III (from pg. 18-20) in "Beyond the Pleasure Principal".

<sup>3</sup> As the theme of DeFronzo's piece circles around the causes of the Russian revolution in the twentieth century, generally this part reflects about the social-political background of the pre-revolutionary Russia (from the ancient period to the late nineteenth century) and the impact of its transformation on the Russian mass.

of industrialization did create working opportunities for the Russians' but it also gave birth to several social problems like class-conflict, poverty, injustice etc. to challenge their fortitude. That was how on one side Russia's ancient agrarian empire was losing its necessity and lifestyle was becoming more advanced with the help of urbanization or industrialization; on the other side, individuals were getting victimized under a new kind of authority, the capitalistic authority. However, the chaos and conflict were not limited to the social level, but it also traumatized the psyche or the intellect of the Russians. Dostoevsky has presented that psychic trauma through the characters of his novels. Georg Lukacs praises this attribute of Dostoevsky in his book *Marxism and Human liberation* by saying that, "Dostoevsky is a writer of world eminence. For he knew how during a crisis of his country and the whole human race, to put questions in an imaginatively decisive sense. He created men whose destiny and inner life, whose conflicts and interrelations with other characters, whose attraction and rejection of men and ideas illuminated all the deepest questions of that age, sooner, more deeply, and more widely than in average life itself (181). Lukacs' statement signifies that Dostoevsky's characters are created in a way so that they can represent the changes both in the psychic as well as in the social level. For instance, when the reader comes in contact with the underground man's paradoxical personality in *Notes from Underground*, he realizes that, there is certain ennui attached to his psychic isolation which is responsible for his fragmented or distorted thoughts; and this ennui is nothing but an existential vice that has attained its supremacy over him with the help of social disorders like poverty, hunger etc. Then, Raskolnikov's murder in *Crime and Punishment* ultimately reflects how tortured he has felt as a social being when he encountered that degraded pawnbroker. He literally struggled with himself to control his rage against the corrupted attributes of that pawnbroker but failed to maintain it because of extreme psychic turbulence and made the dire decision of murdering her in order to improve his lifestyle as well as to establish social peace.

Similar to Dostoevsky, Tolstoy has also pointed out the errors existing in the nineteenth century Russian societies through his writings. He has fictionalized the dominance of capitalistic power by portraying the contravention of the traditional family structure as well as through the social and mental sufferings of his characters. Vladimir Lenin, the revolutionary socialist leader of modern Russia mentions in his "An Appraisal of Leo Tolstoy" that, "His (Tolstoy) incessant indignation, full of profoundest and most impassioned feeling, his exposure of capitalism transmits in full the horror of the patriarchal peasants who senses a new, unseen and

incomprehensible enemy advancing against him, looming somewhere from the cities or from abroad, destroying all the “props” of village life, bearing unheard of ruin, poverty, famine, bestiality, prostitution and syphilis-all the evils of the epoch of “primitive accumulation”, aggravated one hundred fold by the transplantation to the Russian soil of the most modern methods of rapine devised by Sir[Sic] Dividend” (n.pg). Lenin’s comment reflects how Tolstoy’s writings have depicted the difficulties of modernization through capitalistic endeavors. Moreover, it also symbolizes the above stated fact, that Tolstoy did believe the process of industrial advancement will hamper the authenticity of Russian society. Andrew D. Kaufman scrutinizes Tolstoy’s famous works and presents this aspect in the introduction of his book “Understanding Tolstoy”. He writes:

...that the themes of passion, adultery, and the breakdown of family and social structures that were so important to Tolstoy in his middle career are fully addressed in *Anna Karenina*. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is a more controversial and openly polemical work, but it is also much narrower in its philosophical and artistic conception. The genius of *Anna Karenina* is that it offers a profound vision of the deep interconnectedness of many different people, places, and the social and spiritual problems of modern life. (Kaufman 4)

In this part, Kaufman takes Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* as examples in order to showcase the author’s awareness for the transformation of Russian social premises in the modern era. His comment also highlights the story of *Anna Karenina* where a young woman tries to assert her individuality rather than becoming a marionette of patriarchal social conventions; and then, society punishes her so hard with isolation and melancholy that she had to disassociate herself completely from it to achieve freedom or peace.

So far it has been conferred that both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy have depicted the exploitation of capitalism or industrialism through their theme of alienation or isolation. However, Dostoevsky is a bit more unique than Tolstoy in this case, because the critics believe that Dostoevsky investigated more about the existential philosophies than Tolstoy. Yet, there are some facts in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* that highly evokes the necessity to inspect it under the claimed thesis.

Before going into the further chapters, it is necessary for the readers to get some detailed information on psychosocial alienation along with the philosophies (existentialism, nihilism and absurdism or the philosophy of the absurd) which will be connected to the topic while analyzing the novels. As it has been mentioned earlier that psychosocial alienation isolates an individual psyche and hampers his or her social communicativeness, it is high time to learn why the paper is focusing particularly on psychosocial alienation. From Henry Winthrop's piece "Alienation and Existentialism in relation to Literature and Youth" we come to know the proper definition and classifications of alienation. Winthrop writes, "In a general sense, alienation refers to any psychological feeling of separation from persons, groups, institutions, ideas and ideals, places and things" (291). Then he categorizes alienation into seven different types among which psychological alienation comes first and social alienation comes in the fourth place. According to him, "First there is *alienation from oneself*, that is, from that basic pattern of abilities, impulses, and needs which are presumably native to the subject. Alienation from self means an interruption of the quest for identity.... A separate form of alienation, fourth on our list, is the alienation of *man from society*" (291). As this project wants to explore alienation both in the psychic and social level of the individuals, it has selected and connected these two types of alienation to move along.

Generally, the basic concept of alienation has been originated through Marxist philosophy or Marxism. Karl Marx in his book *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* talks about the elements of production as well as manual labor and elaborates their influence on human economy, politics, and social existence. In his theory, he discusses how the essence of human beings gets jeopardized under the pressure of capitalism or industrialization. He mentions that in a capitalist society an individual is forced to work hard and is forced to enter into the competitive world of materialism. As a result, he loses his inherent pleasure of working, his creative attitude toward his work vanishes and only the material need of earning money prevails. In the chapter called "Estranged Labor" of his book, Marx explains this demoralizing trait of materialism and categorizes its product which is alienation or estrangement into some criteria, and they are: workers estrangement from their produced product, workers estrangement from the work itself, workers estrangement from their individual spirit and lastly estrangement from their fellow mates. He explains that because of the influence of alienation not only the connection of the workers with their produced items gets detached but their act of working also becomes

pressurizing and distasteful for them (31). He mentions, “The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the workers as a commodity-and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general” (29). This means the effect of capitalism or materialism is so dreadful that eventually it commodifies human soul; the term “Estranged Labor” thus signifies the labor of a human being which does not have any human essence but has a mechanical or an artificial appeal in it. He also claims that “the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself-his inner world becomes, the less belongs to him as his own” (29). From this proclamation we understand that, the more competitive as well as productive a worker becomes, the more he loses his stamina and ultimately the more he loses his connection with the product produced. Therefore, Marxist alienation theory explores the alienation or separation between the producer and his products; it reveals that this type of alienation gradually leads toward psychological and social degradation through which an individual at first gets detached from his conscience and then from his society. Marx further declares, “Estranged labor turns thus: *Man’s species-being*, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being alien to him, into a means of his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect” (32). What Marx is trying to explain in this statement is that, pressurized or alienated workforce tears up the psyche of an individual by exploiting his human spirit and then influences him to act like a living commodity.

Hence, it is quite visible that the more domination an worker gets from his capitalist masters or society, the more psychosocially alienated he becomes. Marxist philosophy of alienation indeed focuses upon the economic attributes of the nineteenth century but it mainly highlights the psychosocial changes of people with its doctrines. Sean Sayers describes in his piece “The Concept of Alienation in Existentialism and Marxism: Hegelian Themes in Modern Social Thought” that people often label Marxist theory of alienation as a philosophy concerned of social-economic features, while it significantly reflects upon the psychological transformation of the alienated individuals (1). Then, Sayers connects this thought with the reference of another critic called Plamenatz and mentions “...it would be wrong to suggest that Marx uses the term ‘alienation’ exclusively to describe a social or economic condition. On the contrary, as Plamenatz argues, ‘two kinds of alienation’ can be distinguished in Marx’s work ‘social’ and

‘spiritual’”. Taking Sayers implication into consideration, this paper thus found it important to discuss Marxist view on alienation among the readers. While analyzing the themes and characters of the selected novels, Marxist perspective on alienation will again be demonstrated if needed.

The next theory which has a strong bondage with the titled topic is the hypothesis of existentialism. Though a lot of philosophers like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Sartre have researched on the existentialist philosophy, the focus will mainly be on Sartre’s ideologies because he is the one who has modified and presented the premises of existentialism more distinctively than his predecessors. Particularly, Kierkegaardian theistic view of existentialism got its atheistic stance through Sartre’s works; while Kierkegaard’s ideology explains that individual reason cannot take over the significance of spiritual faith, Sartre dismisses the concept of spiritual power over men and glorifies human individuality<sup>4</sup> (471-481). In his philosophy Sartre explains that despair, isolation, angst and artificiality are the elements of human existence, but man needs to decide what to preserve and what to avoid; it is he, who is responsible for his activities, for his losses and gains. Sartre mentions in his lecture “Existentialism is Humanism” that, “...we call existentialism humanism. Humanism, because we remind man that there is no law-makers other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfill himself as man, not in turning toward himself, but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfillment (14). In this part Sartre implies that when an individual confronts any type of torment whether it is psychological or social, he himself needs to decide the way out of it because existentialism teaches to glorify one’s individuality and free will as well as helps him to choose the path of his own comfort. However, if he represses any of his torments or sufferings, then he will have to face victimization. In his book *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explains this fact more broadly by declaring that, “The one who realizes in anguish, his condition as being thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation. But...most of the time we flee anguish in bad faith” (577). Again the implication is same, that people can achieve existential freedom by adjusting himself with the

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<sup>4</sup> This part is paraphrased from Paul W. Kurtz’s article “Kierkegaard, Existentialism and the Contemporary Science”. Read from page 471-481 of his article to learn his actual views on Kierkegaardian and Sartrian existentialism.

situation, but they mostly fail to do as such because of “bad faith” and through this “bad faith” Sartre symbolizes a person’s alienation from his conscience and his regret of facing the consequences (573). Therefore, after committing an error if an individual tries to escape from its consequences, then his psyche will be burdened and troubled because the impact of that mistake will keep haunting him continuously. This victimization or this troubling can be solved with a person’s positive free will but if someone mistreats his power of free will, then it will become obvious for him to be a slave of his own corrupted psyche and his own conscience will start deceiving him. Dostoevsky in his aforesaid novels has shown the glimpse of existentialism with his theme of alienation, which will be more comprehensible while the characters from those novels will be assessed in the subsequent chapters.

The last two concepts that will be at work with the topic are nihilism and the philosophy of the absurd or absurdism. Both these concepts are initially introduced by existentialism as some of its key facts to analyze human existential dilemmas, which later on appeared as distinctive philosophies with the help of some genius philosophers like Nietzsche and Camus. While Nietzsche is considered to be the most prominent nihilist philosophers of all time, Camus is famous for his ideologies about the absurd or absurdity. Nietzsche in his book *The Will to Power* explains about nihilism that it signifies meaninglessness, he writes, ““Everything lacks meaning” (the untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that *all* interpretations of the world are false)” (7). This statement highlights that in this universe nothing has an absolute meaning, and thus for the nihilists believing in anything is worthless. Nietzsche further mentions in his book, “it (nihilism) includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a true world. Having reached this standpoint one grants the reality of becoming as the only reality, forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities...” (13). In this part, Nietzsche’s implication echoes the same tone of Sartre that it is completely an individual’s choice of how he wants to experience life, but for that he should be a nihilist or a person who denies every meaning so that he can create his own existential meaning. He also suggests that pessimism and cynicism are two influential aspects of nihilism which help people to scrutinize the artificiality and absurdity of life (11-13). Keeping these aspects of nihilism in mind we can say that meaninglessness, isolation or alienation will certainly bother human life, but men should decide whether they want to be an existentialist or a nihilist to heal those

debasing aspects. From this point of view let us focus on Camus' absurdist philosophy in which he explains how an individual experiences the absurdity of existence. Camus' declares in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* that, "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (32). This statement reflects that absurdity is achieved when an individual looks for the meaning of his existence and gets nothing as such from the world. Camus then discusses looking for an absolute meaning of existence is absurd itself as there is none, so people mostly take suicide as an option to be free from their absurd living; Camus mentions, "One kills oneself because life is certainly not worth living-that is certainly a truth" (15). However, he suggests that instead of committing suicide one can simply be aware about the absurdity of his existence and live through his own conditions because committing suicide will never truly help them to eliminate absurdity but it will just create another one (62). Once again we see the connections between existentialism, nihilism and absurdism as all these theories highlight the free will or choice of men and preach that only they will be responsible for the consequences of their actions and decisions.

As it is clear that these theories are interconnected with each other and are necessary to examine the premise of psychosocial alienation, from the next part of this thesis those theories will be connected with the contexts of the novels in order to explore how significantly Tolstoy and Dostoevsky have presented the theme of psychosocial alienation in their writings. Moreover, if needed, this paper may also import Freudian psychoanalysis, to understand the inner turmoil of the nominated characters. Freud's process of examining a person's psychic potency by exploring the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of his mind has undoubtedly created a remarkable transformation in psychological map making.

The succeeding chapters will explain these discussions and theories in a more comprehensive way with an analysis of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's writings. *Crime and punishment* will be the first to get scrutinized, *Notes from Underground* and *Anna Karenina* will be investigated elaborately from the next chapters. The concluding part will simply be a synthesis of all the discussions and findings.



## Chapter One

### *Crime and Punishment: Struggle of a Tormented Conscience*

*Angry, bewildered, like a drunken man by whom  
All objects are seen double, I locked my door, and heard  
My frozen heart cry out with dread in the hot room, —  
That what was so mysterious should be so absurd!*

(Baudelaire, "The Seven Old Men", ll. 45-48).

Charles Baudelaire, one of the greatest modern poets discloses the complexity and anonymity of urbanization or industrialization during the nineteenth century in his above mentioned poem called "The Seven Old Men". It is a highly symbolic and ironic poem which reports an individual's bewildering feeling after observing the transformations of his city with the help of mechanical innovations. This bewilderment has got its full shape in the above quoted stanza where Baudelaire presents the trauma of an urban individual for the artificiality and obscurity of modern advancement through the experience of his bemused protagonist of the poem. His hero describes a terrifying incident of meeting a sinister looking old man in the streets, who with his ethereal appearance has not only hypnotized him (the protagonist) with a frightening or startling feeling but also astounded his thought process by leaving him in a frenzy. The protagonist and the old man are two crucial symbols of this poem that fictionalizes the dichotomy of the dominant and the subordinate or the manipulator and the manipulated with their representations. Furthermore, the appalling appearance of Baudelaire's old man epitomizes the malevolence of mechanical or industrial advancements in the late nineteenth century, and the trauma of his protagonist represent the trepidation, the helplessness of those individuals whose authenticity has been threatened through those artificial inventions. Hence, Baudelaire reflects upon the intricacy of urban life in the pre-modern era through his mystified and overwhelmed personifications. Marshall Berman mentions of a poet named Banville in his book *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of modernity*, who writes on Baudelaire that, "He (Baudelaire) accepted modern man in his entirety, with his weaknesses, his aspirations and his despair. ...he had thus revealed the sad and often tragic heart of the modern city. That was why he haunted, and would always haunt, the minds of modern men, and move them when other artists left them cold" (135). Banville's reference on Baudelaire determines the fact that although

he was a pre-cursor of the modern poets, his research on the theme of modernity and the modern man has equally distinguished his position among the other writers. He has effectively portrayed the deadness and despair of the urban mass through the satirical verses of his poems. Similar to Baudelaire, Dostoevsky has also looked upon these aspects with his realistic novels. Joseph Frank writes in his book *Through the Russian Prism*, “Dostoevsky too was fascinated and horrified by the *fourmillante cite*, and used it very effectively as background for the social misery and despairing isolation of his characters” (181). By quoting Baudelaire’s imagery *fourmillante cite* (teeming city) from his “The Seven Old Men”, Frank implies that Dostoevsky was also aware of the rapid urbanization and bourgeois exploitation happening around him in the nineteenth century and therefore he found it necessary to fictionalize these aspects through his characters while creating his masterpieces. In his renowned and philosophical novel *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky presents a similar view like Baudelaire’s where the protagonist becomes tormented by observing all the manipulative or exploitative attributes of his society and ultimately tries to appease his anguish by committing a vicious felony. In general, this novel portrays the distorted but effective control of urbanization, the degrading features of capitalism or materialism and the psychosocial transformation of modern individuals along with the social, political and economic changes during the late nineteenth century in Russia. Moreover, with his depiction of a negligent, proud but rambling hero Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky experiments upon the intrinsic dilemmas of human psyche, its effect and side effects, the dominance of poverty over morality or ethical judgments along with the extremity of free will or existential ideologies.

As it is discussed previously that, the agrarian economy of Russia were having a transformation with the expansion of city based industries and factories, the rise of the working class and the bourgeoisie sect evolved in the urban areas at the first place. There was hardly any flexibility between agricultural and industrial sectors of working and the workers in both the sectors were highly exploited by their masters. While the rural poor were oppressed under the power of their feudal lords even after the abolishment of serfdom, the urban poor were oppressed by the bourgeois traders. Alexander Trapeznik writes in his “Worker unrest in late nineteenth century Russia: Tula, a case- study” that, “Worker protest came to concern specifically industrial issues: wages, authority relations within the factory, the enforcement of rules and so on. In Russia, industrialization began to have these effects by about the end of the 1860s, the decade of the Great Reforms. Until then, worker protest had remained limited, and most unrest was linked

to peasant demands...“(25). From this statement we can understand that Russian economy both in the rural and urban areas was in turmoil with the pressure of urbanization or modernization unlike the other European countries in that specific period and its workers were in distress. The main reason for which it was happening was the shifting of the rural peasants into the cities in quest of improving their status but the dramatic and continuous social-economical transformation victimized them with poverty, hunger, misery and labeled them as the urban poor. In plain words, because of rapid social-political transformations in the nineteenth century, the economy of Russia was suffering with inconsistency. While some individuals were enjoying the solvency of wealth left of by their fore-fathers, most were struggling to earn their livelihood with dignity, to maintain a humble and steady lifestyle.

This inconsistent economic situation gradually led toward a versatile but an exploitative class orientation in which the working class stood as the embodiment of sufferings and despair and their wealthy counterparts signified manipulation or dominance.

There are several characters in *Crime and Punishment* such as Marmeladov, Svidrigailoff, Sonia, and Looshin whose analysis can give a perfect portrayal of the Russian bourgeoisie versus working class scenario but let us begin with the two major characters (Raskolnikov and Alena Ivnovna) first. Among the characters of Raskolnikov and Alena Ivanovna, Raskolnikov is the one who represents that unfortunate group of people who failed to achieve a standardized living in the Russian society during the late nineteenth century because of economic mismanagement and thus, suffered to maintain the fundamental needs of existence like education, food, shelter etc. On top of this, Raskolnikov with his story reveals the inadequacy of ethics and intellect in that age of mechanical development as these moral attributes were defeated by artificiality and hypocrisy and ultimately failed to create dignified earning opportunities for the enlightened mass. Conversely, Alena Ivanova's character portrays those manipulative capitalistic feudal lords (which we have seen in Baudelaire's poem represented by the sinister looking old man) whose dishonest and corrupted dealings have not only degraded the social values but also highlighted how dehumanizing the sway can be. Kieran James mentions in his piece "Raskolnikov Speaks Today: Marxism and Alienation in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*" that, the old pawnbroker is none other than "petty bourgeois exploiter of the poor and a mercenary capitalist" and therefore Raskolnikov frequently compares her with a "louse" to symbolize her catastrophic and bloodthirsty exploitation (2). Moreover, with these character

portrayals Dostoevsky reflects on the overpowering domination and insignificance of the Tsarist aristocracy in the modern era and emphasizes to the establishment of a more democratic or liberal Russia which did come into being with the Bolsheviks in the year of 1917<sup>5</sup>.

So far it has become clear that the urban poor of Russia could not improve their financial condition because of the bourgeois exploitation, this regret might have been the driving force for them to enter into the devastating sphere of psychosocial alienation as it turned their abilities into a humiliation. Let us scrutinize this fact with Dostoevsky's hero Raskolnikov because each era sets its mark, gets modified and describes about its aspects with the literary works that are produced under it.

From the initial parts of the story we come to know that Raskolnikov used to be a student but currently is unemployed and lives in a very pitiable condition. The narration gradually moves forward by describing Raskolnikov's physique and his intellectual thoughts regarding his miserable state of existence which is actually a hint from the author to inform that his protagonist might be financially poor but his intellect is definitely remarkable. Dostoevsky's narrator describes in the novel about the character of Raskolnikov, "He was by the way exceptionally handsome, above the average in height, slim, well built, with beautiful dark eyes and dark brown hair. Soon he sank into a deep thought or more accurately speaking into a complete blankness of mind"(9). Indeed this comment gives us a short overview of Raskolnikov's thoughtful characteristic. However, we need to see whether his thoughtfulness is in control or not, whether instead of guiding towards the right direction, his conscience perplexes him and forces him to perform a dreadful work or not. There is an omniscient speaker in the novel that explains all these attributes from the very beginning, and at times this narrator goes behind the curtain and the characters come forward with their own voice. According to Pierre R. Hart's view in his piece "Looking over Raskolnikov's Shoulder: The Narrator in Crime and Punishment" that, "Despite the shift in the point of view, the work retains a sense of the first person narrative, an effect due to the particular combination of omniscient description and "narrated monologue" employed by the narrator" (168). Hart's comment signifies that there is a combination of narrated dialogues and the characters' own personal monologues for which the telling has become this effective. For instance, the initial description of Raskolnikov's character is given by the narrator which later on achieves its full form through Raskolnikov's own dialogues. The

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<sup>5</sup> See DeFronzo's *ibid* piece...from page 35-38

narrator describes that the hero's mental state is not at peace as there is always a kind of anguish and disturbance torturing him, he says, "It was not that he had been terrified or crushed by his misfortune, but that for some time past he had fallen into a state of nervous depression akin to hypochondria. He had withdrawn from society and shut himself up, till he was ready to shun, not merely his landlady, but from every human face" (1), which means that the reason of Raskolnikov's melancholy has slightly to do with his poverty but mostly with his distaste for the society and its individuals. Moreover, this torment has increased with the artificiality and filthiness of his surroundings as well. The narrator describes, "The crowd, the sight of lime, bricks, scaffolding, and peculiar odour [Sic] so familiar to the nostrils of the inhabitant of St. Petersburg who has no means of escaping to the country for the summer, all contributed to irritate the young man's already excited nerves (2). This statement explains that the lifestyle in the cities is so mechanical that an individual hardly gets any time to take a break and this motorized environment with its gloominess highly pressurizes on the disturbing feelings of Raskolnikov's mind. Hence, we see that Raskolnikov has already alienated himself from the society and now is under process of achieving psychic alienation. This aspect will be more comprehensive if we interpret his dreams. As we know from Freud's psychoanalytical theory that dreams are a powerful medium to understand an individual's inner conflicts, Raskolnikov's dreams represent his disgust for the bourgeois oppression. The first dream which he experiences describes an incident of his childhood when he encountered a discourteous peasant who tortured his mare to death in front of him (46-47). This incident has always had a strong influence on Raskolnikov's mind with its reflection of how the mighty exploits the weak. Therefore, when Raskolnikov makes his plan to kill the old money-lender Alena Ivanovna with a hatchet, it actually reinforces the situation of his dream where the mare was also killed with a hatchet by its master. This reinforcement again evokes the aspects of Raskolnikov's psychic turbulence for aristocratic exploitation in which he himself comes across as the mare and Alena Ivanovna as the exploitative master; and that is why to change the fate of his sufferings, he desires to kill her. However, we must keep in mind that this decision is not a result of his logical conscience and it has been produced under a fragmented mental condition. Roger B. Anderson mentions, "His higher logical faculties prove inadequate before the press of unconscious preoccupations, and he falls back on a more basic mode of thought and behavior that can appropriately be called

primitive”<sup>6</sup> (2). Connecting Anderson’s comment and Freudian theory of id, ego and superego (unconscious, subconscious and conscious) we can understand that because of his mental disturbance Raskolnikov has failed to utilize the connection between these levels of his psyche and the trauma of his childhood dream that has been repressed in his id or in his unconscious mind has successfully toppled over his consciousness and influenced him to commit the murder. Moreover, we can say that because of his psychosocial alienation he has failed to control the chain of the id, ego and superego, and the dominance of his conscious mind has been spoiled.

In addition to his hatred for the capitalistic social system, his own poor financial condition has also manipulated his psychic distortion. By exploring the novel further, we come to know, that in order to fight with his poverty Raskolnikov goes to Alena Ivanova and borrows money in exchange of his valuables. Doing this pawning business with Alena eventually strikes his psyche so hard that the humiliation of being financially weak covers up his mind evoking an extreme hatred for the entire thing and he thinks of destroying it completely. Raskolnikov reflects after borrowing money from the pawnbroker:

“How loathsome it all is! Can I, can I ever? –no, it is absurd, preposterous” added he mentally. “How could such a horrible idea ever enter my head? Could I ever be capable of such infamy? It is odious, ignoble, repulsive! And yet for a whole month-”. (6-7)

This excerpt perfectly shows how Raskolnikov with his intellect questions or judges his murderous thought for destroying Alena Ivanova and her despicable money lending business; and as soon as he realizes, that his thoughts are unlawful, he starts to feel disturbed and guilty. Yet, his intellect cannot attain the tolerance to overlook Alena Ivanovna’s hypocrisy and his psychic conflict becomes more and more intense. Likewise, each time he experiences this moral dilemma, he feels distorted and aggrieved, he neither can watch the money lender’s decisive business going on nor can he justify his decision to solve it through a criminal act at the first place. This dual torment and confusion increased his psychological estrangement which flourishes further with his isolating lifestyle and creates the final impact by establishing him as a murderer.

Other than this, there are some more reasons which generated his mental uproar; his meeting with Marmeladov is one of them. The author writes that Marmeladov is a retired

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<sup>6</sup> This comment is quoted from Roger B. Anderson’s scholarly piece “Raskol’nikov and the Myth Experience”.

military official who encounters Raskolnikov in a bar and discloses the account of his pitiable existence to the protagonist. Raskolnikov learns how Marmeladov's family struggles hard each day to uphold their living, how his only daughter Sonia had to enter into flesh trade to earn some money, and how his incapability of earning has led Marmeladov to the habit of drinking. Marmeladov explains to Raskolnikov, "...I earned nothing. I had lost my situation in the meanwhile, without any fault of my own; changes in the administration led to my office of being abolished, and then I took to drink!"(13). Marmeladov's statement again highlights to those inefficiency that has happened by the name of social transformation in the nineteenth century Russia. However, the story hurt Raskolnikov but when he learns about the description of Sonia's sufferings, his pain increases more than ever. That is why, after coming back from Marmeladov's home he reflects by recalling Sonia, "Ah, well, Sonia, they have found you a good milch [Sic]-cow and they know how to turn you to profit" (22). His soliloquy once more portrays the bourgeoisie oppression which has exploited the innocence of a young girl with its nastiness. Moreover, Marmeladov's story again brings back Raskolnikov's tormented feeling toward social injustice or hypocrisy and he starts feeling the necessity to do something.

Next, when he gets his mother's letter from which he comes to know the heart touching story of his sister Dounia, who is ill treated and ousted by her employer Marfa Petrovna on the basis of Marfa's suspicion that Dounia has tried to seduce her husband Mr. Svidrigaloff's while exactly the opposite has happened (26-27). However, the mother also informs that after losing her work, Dounia thinks of settling down her life as well as her brother's future by marrying a snobbish, materialistic man named Looshin, which instantly hurts Raskolnikov's mind. Within a moment he realizes that this capitalistic world is trying to take the advantage of their helplessness and planning to exploit them for their own good just like it has done with Marmeladov and his family members; just like Sonia, Dounia's poverty has also victimized her and people like Looshin are waiting to bait her with the dream of marriage, solvency and peace. He reflects with disgust, "Do you know, Dounia, that Sonia's fate is no more degrading than yours with Mr. Looshin? 'Of course there can be no particular love' my mother writes." (36). At this point, Raskilnikov's anxiousness for his sister's marriage to Looshin comes into view. His comment describes that marrying Looshin will not be an exception than the work of prostitution, as a bourgeoisie like Looshin only desires to tie the knot with his sister Dounia to lionize his supremacy over her and he will never treat her with love and respect. These humiliating thoughts

again pressurize Raskolnikov to think about his initial planning of destroying Alena Ivanovna, because whenever he confronts any account of suffering or exploitation that old pawn broker comes in front of him as a crucial element of it and his desire of killing her thus increases.

Definitely, Raskolnikov's desire of killing the old pawnbroker (Alena Ivanova) has got its fuel from those above mentioned aspects but his isolated or alienated lifestyle also played a crucial role in that. Dostoevsky's narrator reveals that the hero lives like a beggar and hardly communicates with anyone. The narrator explains that once he had some friends when he was in the university but at present he feels comfortable with his loneliness. From the beginning of the novel he has communicated with only two characters, one is Nastasia-his maid and another one is Marmeladov, but the reasons of his communicating is nothing more than need and curiosity. He does not have any desire to mingle with people in terms of friendship or social bonding because he hates the social management and so chooses to live alone in his cave. Gradually his loneliness and isolation originates superstitions which makes him more stubborn and more fragmented. At a certain point he feels that he is the one who should deracinate the cause of injustice and social malice and for that he can only think of killing the pawnbroker Alena Ivanovna. As a consequence, continuously being misguided by his alienation he ultimately commits the murder. S Leonard Rubinstein discusses in his article "Dostoevsky and the Identity of Crime and Punishment" that Raskolnikov's thought of murdering the old pawn broker follows three significant steps before achieving its full form and he coins them as fantasy, necessity and opportunity; he analyzes that Raskolnikov's wretched condition of living or poverty is the main prompter of his vicious fantasy concerning Alena Ivanova which steadily ties with necessity when he finds out about Sonia and Dounia's misfortune, then the information of Lizaveta's (Elizabeth) absence gives him the opportunity to transform his thought into a deadly action (131). This comment ties down all the aspects together and signifies Raskolnikov's purpose of the murder. Though Raskolnikov has only wanted to kill the money lender, he also had to kill Elizabeth to destroy the evidence of his crime and after committing the second murder when he got into his senses, he has become horrified. Dostoevsky writes that Raskolnikov's rage and aggravation has hypnotized his soul so much that he himself was unable to realize how he will be able to face the consequences of his act. As the narrator of the novel states, "he sunk on the couch again, exhausted, another fit of intolerable shivering seized him and he mechanically pulled his old student's cloak over him for warmth, as he fell into a delirious sleep. He lost all his



conscience to himself”(74). In this comment the development of Raskolnikov’s seclusion is being reported. It also reflects that whatever he has done, he has done it out of his psychosocial rage but the trauma of his act has tortured his psyche more intensely than before and destroyed his stream of consciousness.

Ultimately Raskolnikov allows his family and friends to come closer to him in order to improve his condition. Characters like Razoumikhin, Sonia and Pulcheria Alexandrovna (his mother) plays their part to abolish the protagonist’s fatal flaw and to create a new beginning for him. When Raskolnikov explains to Sonia that he has murdered the pawn broker not only to improve his financial condition but also out of his fascination of becoming a revolutionary reformer like Napoleon (330), Sonia becomes astonished and forces him to surrender explaining to him that instead of living a tormented life like this, he can just admit his guilt and can face the consequences of his deed, only then he will be able to achieve the actual freedom. The Sonia requests Raskolnikov, “Go forthwith, go this very moment, to the nearest public place, prostrate yourself, kiss the earth you have stained, bow down in every direction and proclaim at the top of your voice to the passers-by, I am a murderer! And God will give you peace again!” (334). Sonia’s advice to Raskolnikov highlights her extreme religious faith which Raskolnikov lacks. When Raskolnikov asks her about praying, Sonia replies, “what could I be, what should I be, without God?” (249). This thoughtful remark of Sonia not just highlights her surrender to a supreme authority but also contradicts her personality from Raskolnikov. Raskolnikov has always been a man of reason and thus he always wanted to live on his own conditions, as he says to Sonia, “It is necessary to reason seriously, and to see things in their true light, instead of weeping like a child, and relying on God!” (254). This statement of Raskolnikov effectively invokes the concept of nihilism. As Nietzsche declares in his book *The Will to Power* that nihilism preaches to “rebound from “God is truth” to the fanatical faith “all is false” (7) and also helps a man to make himself the “only reality” (13) negating all other realities. Raskolnikov has also attempted to create his individual reality by denying the supreme authority of God and by committing the murder but the influence of psychosocial isolation has ruined his effort. In this context we can also bring out the theory of existentialism. As we know that existentialism glorifies an individual’s free will but in Raskolnikov’s case he has killed the money lender or the pawn broker out of his psychic despair and social isolation, therefore, he is not a successful existentialist. Moreover, after doing the deed he has feared to surrender to the police and lastly

surrendered because Sonia and Porphyry Petrovitch (his advocate) has forced him to do so (365-367). His dread of facing the consequences of his act also makes him a failure as an existentialist. Conversely, the character like Svidrigailoff who has committed villainy with his wife Marfa, Raskolnikov's sister Dounia got his realization in the end of the novel, then donated all his money among people and committed suicide to punish his own self for all those infamous actions he did in his lifetime. Moreover, the character of Razoumikhin who in spite of being poor always tried to help people and always remained positive to face any challenges of life. Therefore, A. D. Nuttall writes in his piece, "The Intellectual Problem II" that, Razoumikhin and Svidrigailoff are not only the perfect foils of Raskolnikov but they also prove him as an existential failure who has failed to control his emotions, desire and overall his own self (24)<sup>7</sup>.

Raskolnikov's failure as an existential nihilist (nihilism mostly gets connected with existentialism and appears as existential nihilism<sup>8</sup>) is again confirmed by Dostoevsky as he compares his hero's situation with Lazarus signifying that just like Lazarus, Raskolnikov will also achieve a new life after finishing his course of sufferings and in his journey of rejuvenation Sonia will be with him to give him the support of love and hope (433-437). Dostoevsky's conclusion for his hero is indeed remarkable as he has shown that the burden of sin can be removed through sufferings and repent, as Philip Paul Hallie mentions in his article "Raskolnikov, the Scholar and Fresh Air", "Dostoevski's [Sic] key image is that of Lazarus rising from the dead, of the resurrection of a spiritually dead human being named Raskolnikov. His voices were telling him that he could come back to life only and simply by suffering, by the misery of imprisonment" (580). Nevertheless, this resolution of Raskolnikov's life equally highlights the fact that, the hero cannot be able to live on his own conditions anymore and he will have to be under the authority of Sonia's love and as well as religious faith as he has misused the chance of creating the meaning of existence by his own through isolation and egoism.

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<sup>7</sup> This segment is paraphrased from A. D. Nuttall's "The Intellectual Problem" where he explains all the reasons of Raskolnikov's failure as an existential character. See from page 22-28 to learn more on this aspect.

<sup>8</sup> This information is collected from E Heier's article "Tolstoy and Nihilism", pg 454.

## Chapter Two

### *Notes from Underground: A Psyche in Perpetual Despair*

*And I have known the eyes already, known them all-  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To Spit out all the but-ends if my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?*

(Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", ll. 55-61).

The insightful question evoked in the above stanza by Eliot's fictional protagonist Prufrock of "how should he presume" is a fundamental query of every individual on earth as signifying the ambiguity of life has always been a challenge for them to accomplish. Each time people try to scrutinize existence with certain ideals or values, its abstractness and flexibility bemuse them and create a feeling of worthlessness in them. The quoted lines thus symbolize Prufrock's personal implications about the discrepancy of human subsistence which is equally paradoxical and complicated. In addition to this, Eliot with his hero Prufrock's solicitous allusion signifies the fact of how the inability to define the absolute meaning of life victimizes people with the feelings of isolation that eventually destroys their individuality or uniqueness. Generally, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is a poem through which the poet (Eliot) attempts to investigate how the process of industrialization and urbanization are affecting the psychosocial attributes of men or increasing the ludicrousness of existence in the guise of advancement. The entire poem deals with this theme but the metaphorical soliloquy of Prufrock in the cited stanza summarizes the fact most remarkably. "The eyes" about which Prufrock describes is a metaphor embodying the dreadful power of materialistic advancement which has not just dominated over his human authenticity but also "pinned and wriggled" his psyche by making him as artificial or motorized as the power itself. A. R. Jones mentions in his article titled as "Prufrock Revisited" that, "The poem introduces a sick and ominous world...Clearly Prufrock is about to be operated on - to be dissected, sprawled upon a pin, as he sees it - and the image defines the poet's stance, a detachment of a surgical, clinical kind; Prufrock as patient is about to

suffer the impassive scrutiny he so much dreads and which he goes to such lengths to avoid” (220). Jones’ comment implies that Prufrock as a part of this sadistic world gets pinned by his conscience to introspect the anxiety and isolation of being unable to confront the existential absurdities which he always repressed within himself. Nevertheless, Prufrock’s account is totally comparable with Dostoevsky’s Underground man who also expresses the torment of how instead of dictating life with his own terms, he has been dictated and controlled by it. Although Eliot is a twentieth century modernist, the influence of his predecessors like Dostoevsky is clearly visible in his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” as it deals with the same themes which Dostoevsky mostly exercised in his writing like psychic isolation of individuals, deformity of modernization etc. Eliot’s Prufrock and Dostoevsky’s Underground Man are thus connected with each other as they both have attempted to look for a solid answer, a logic that can pacify their torment or can rescue them from their isolated limbo. However, from this time forth the discussion will mainly be based on Dostoevsky’s Underground Man, the character who with his paradoxical or fragmented narration in the novel *Notes from Underground* reflects upon the iniquities which he has achieved from his psychosocial agony.

While in *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky fictionalizes the theme of bourgeois exploitation over the proletariats with the character portrayals of his psychosocially alienated hero Raskolnikov and the degraded pawn broker Aloyna Ivanovna; in *Notes from Underground* he highlights the incongruity of all those foreign ethics or ideologies that have corrupted the authenticity of the Russians for ages, through the fragmented and disoriented intellect of his Underground Man. Richard Pevear, one of the prominent Russian translators gives a reference from Dostoevsky’s “Winter Notes on Summer Imprisons” in the foreword of the novel *Notes from Underground* where Dostoevsky has expressed his dissatisfaction about the western or European influence over Russian society and culture. As Pevear quotes Dostoevsky’s rhetoric, “Why, everything, unquestionably almost everything that we have-of development, science, art, civic-mindedness, humanity, everything, everything comes from there-from that same land of holy wonders! Why, our entire life, even from very childhood itself, has been itself, has been set up along European lines” (xi). This reference is used by Pevear to explore the connections between Dostoevsky’s discontent about Russian social-cultural hybridity and his reason behind creating a character like the Underground Man. According to Pevear, “In the social displacement of an imported culture Dostoevsky perceived a more profound human displacement, a spiritual

void filled with foreign content” (xi). This comment again indicates to the fact that not just Russian cultural aspects have been polluted through the influence of European philosophies or logics but the psyche or the intellect of the Russian mass has also been polluted by it. Therefore, by creating a psychosocially isolated character which is the Underground Man, Dostoevsky personifies the absurdity of Russian social-cultural dislocations or transformations in the nineteenth century.

Generally, the novel, *Notes from Underground* is presented as an autobiography of the Underground Man to the readers where he describes his hatred for existence as it has always humiliated, tormented and taunted him with its ambiguities. The narrative is divided into two parts. While the first part explores on the intellect of the Underground Man, his individual opinion about existence and its absurdities, the second part describes his experiences as a social being on the basis of which his intellectual thoughts are formed. Moreover, the two parts represent two different phases of his life and by examining his past he tries to judge his present. However, the process of judging his personality is highly paradoxical as well as symbolical. Paradoxical because there is no absoluteness of his speech; he, who initially introduces himself as a “wicked man” (3) later describes him as an empty person by referring, “No, just wicked, no, I never even managed to become anything: neither wicked, nor good, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect (5). This kind of fragmented and conflicted opinion undeniably highlights the psychological turbulence of the Underground Man which he admits in one of his implications, as he says, “Gentlemen, I am tormented by questions; resolve them for me” (32). In this statement the Underground Man expresses the torment originated from his conscience to figure out the significance of the aspects like reason, rationality or logic. Moreover, this statement also reflects his previous assumption that extreme consciousness is a fact of torment which he suddenly disapproves by saying that “not only too much consciousness but even any consciousness at all is a sickness” (7). The Underground Man initially addresses his audience as “Gentlemen” but lastly explains that it is a pretense done by him only to scrutinize his psyche more efficiently and there is no such audience because he is essentially having a conversation with himself in order to explore his own individuality and ideas. He says, “And may be also that I’m purposely imagining a public before me so as to behave more decently while I write. There may be a thousand reasons” (40) which means that the reasons of pretending to have addressees can be many but the major reason is to scrutinize his conscience more

competently than ever. James Lethcoe mentions, in his article “Self-Deception in Dostoevskij’s Notes from the Underground” that, “the underground man’s interlocutors seem, then, to be only another aspect of himself. The source of their remarks is the same as that of those he voices in his own person” (11). Lethcoe’s comment again proves the fact that Underground Man’s imaginary audience is none other than himself judging his psychological attributes to justify his deeds. However, Lethcoe in his article also mentions that this justification process has failed to achieve its importance because of the protagonist’s contradictory or conflicted narration. Lethcoe says, “There are two general ways in which an author may alert the reader that his narrator is lying: first by creating a self-contradictory narrator, secondly by investing the narrator with certain psychological traits that render his testimony suspicious” (13). This assertion highlights, that the narration of the Underground Man can be absurd because his thoughts are highly paradoxical and he himself neither knows the actual significance of his implications nor he fully understands his own desires or demands. He indeed describes a lot of aspects about himself but it is not necessary to have faith on them because he is an unconfident or insecure being who at the same time acknowledges and doubts his thoughts. As he mentions:

...if I myself believed at least something of all I’ve just written. For I swear to you, gentlemen, that I do not believe a word, not one little word, of all I’ve just scribbled! That is, I do believe, perhaps, but at the same time, who knows why, I sense and suspect that I’m lying like a cobbler. (37)

Therefore, when an individual’s psyche becomes so fragmented that he fails to comprehend his own logic or desire, the connection between the psychic id, ego and superego (unconscious, subconscious and conscious) becomes vulnerable and initiates the process of psychological alienation.

The reasons which are responsible behind Underground Man’s psychological alienation are explained in the second part of the novel. The protagonist describes the accounts of his pathetic childhood, his boring working career as well as his inability to be friendly with others. The first description which he narrates is his working experience as a petty clerk. He explains that in his office everyone uses to give him a taunting look which he believes are done to humiliate his position as well as his individuality. He explains that he only works to earn money and has no pleasure for his work, “I for example sincerely despised my service employment, and if I didn’t go around spitting, it was only out of necessity, because I was sitting there getting

money for it” (46). Undergrpund Man’s remark in this segment efficiently indicates its connection with the ideologies of Marxist philosophy of alienation. As previously discussed, that according to Marx, in the capitalistic society an individual initially becomes psychologically alienated through his work which gradually develops by creating a permanent sense of despair or isolation within him. This isolation consumes his inner pleasure or creativity of working and hampers his connections with his fellow colleagues. As a result, the individual not only fails to concentrate on his work but ultimately loses the significance of his existence. All these aspects are visible in the narration of the Underground Man. He describes that in spite of trying he cannot maintain a friendly relationship with his colleagues because of his intellectual superiority as well as because of their romantic philosophy about life. He says, “Of course, I could not sustain this friendliness with my colleagues; I’d spit in their eyes and as a result of my still youthful inexperience, even stop greeting them, as if I’d cut them off” (48). In this statement the Underground Man expresses how the hatred of romantic ideologies has despised him to continue his friendship with his fellow colleagues. According to him, romantics are none but scoundrels who amuses people with their “beautiful and lofty” (47) lies about life, because, for him life is mostly bizarre rather than being beautiful and hence it is necessary for everyone to assess their existence with a realistic attitude. As the Underground Man declares about the romantics, “Time and again, I repeat, such practical rogues come out of our romantics (I use the word “rogue” lovingly); they suddenly display such a sense of reality and such knowledge of the positive that the amazed authorities and public can only stand dumbfounded, clucking their tongues at them (47). His analysis about the romantics signifies his pessimistic and tormented personality which has exaggerated the faith of realism so much that it has forgotten to glorify the beauty of life.

Another aspect that signifies his psychic conflict is the experience of his miserable childhood which he has always tried to repress within himself. Yet, he had to recollect the memories of his childhood because his unconscious mind or the id has preserved it and presented it through an upsetting dream to taunt his psyche. He explains that he is an orphan who has achieved education with the help a distant relative (66). Then, he describes how he has been despised by his schoolmates because of his insignificant family background as well as for his ordinary appearance. He says, “My schoolfellows met me with spiteful and merciless derision, because I was not like any of them...I could not get along so cheaply as they got along with each other” (66-67). His assertion simply underlines that along with his poor social background, his

introvert personality has always hampered his communication with others, and his relationship with his schoolmates is the perfect example for it. Subsequently he explains that, he did try to change their attitudes toward him by becoming more studious and eventually did achieve a distinguished position in the class through hard work, but his classmates rarely gave him any value for that. As he mentions about the approach of his school mates, “The derision stopped but the animosity remained and cold strained relations set in” (68). This comment brings back the account of his working place of how his colleagues has provided him with same kind of derision like his classmates and how a hateful relationship has been emerged from it between him and his colleagues. However, after presenting his schoolmates as rude as possible, he suddenly narrates that it is his unsociability that has equally prohibited him and his schoolmates to be friendly (68). Lethcoe mentions about this aspect in his same article, “It is quite likely that others do not really look on him with loathing and that he is merely projecting his own feelings of inferiority into others” (34). Lethcoe, through this statement implies that because of the conflicted characteristics of the Underground Man, it will be unwise to believe that he has been looked down by others while it can also be possible that his own inferiority has pressurized him so extremely that he just projected the effect of his personal flaw that made him wanted to be humiliated by others always. This attribute again symbolizes how through his psychological isolation his social life has been violated.

All these notions of psychosocial torment have continuously forced him to do “little debaucheries” (57) with others. He then describes some incidents to give an overview of his wickedness, first he explains how he has deliberately made a plan to collide with a policeman because the latter has accidentally bumped with him in a tavern, the Underground Man reflects, “Why is it invariably you who swerve first? I kept nagging at myself, in furious hysterics.... “Why preciously you and not him?...” (53). In this part, he recalls the event when the police has involuntarily bumped with him as he was standing in his way, but he believed that the police has done it purposefully to humiliate him and therefore he extremely felt the urge to teach that man a lesson by repeating the same phenomenon with him (the policeman). The Underground Man thinks, ““what if I meet him and...do not step aside?...how will that be”” (53). In due course, he fulfills this plan, bumps with the policeman and glorifies his wickedness. Afterwards, the notion of his wickedness is represented through his inviting himself to Lieutenant Zverkov’s farewell party where he mocks Zverkov by declaring his hatred for “gallantry and gallantizers” (77) just



to disgrace the honor of Zverkov. However, among all his wicked acts, his cruel treatment towards Liza has been the most remarkable one. The Underground Man describes in the last part of the novel that it has been necessary for him to break down Liza's personality because he could not be able to tolerate the fact that a prostitute like Liza would also despise him like the entire world did (94). Therefore, he at first sympathizes with Liza about her condition and then elaborates the significance of love and family life for one's existence, only to dominate Liza's self dignity. He provokes Liza to tell her secret of how she has been forced to prostitution by her family and then soothes her pain by saying, "Evidently you saw no goodness in your family, since you talk that way. You're one of the truly unfortunate ones....it all comes mainly from poverty" (95), his comment generally reflects his sympathetic feeling for Liza's situation but when he declares that he has made those statements only to win over her personality, the wickedness sparks. He narrates, "For a long time already I'd sensed that I had turned her whole soul over and broken her heart, and the more convinced of it I was, the more I wished to reach my goal quickly and as forcefully as possible. It was the game, the game that fascinated me" (103), this game is nothing but the game of debauchery which he has played with people to calm down his feeling of humiliation and isolation. Joseph Frank mentions in his article "Nihilism in Notes from Underground" that, "Not having been able either to subdue his companions earlier or to insult them with sufficient weight to be taken seriously, the underground man characteristically anticipates revenging himself on the helpless girl (27). Definitely, the Underground Man has wanted to dictate over the personality of Liza to pacify his psychic frustration and Frank's comment proves it. Lastly, in spite of abusing Liza mentally and physically, the Underground Man fails to achieve mental peace and his psychic torment remains the same leaving him in perpetual isolation.

From the characteristics of the Underground Man, we can understand his incessant effort to be on his own and to create his own meaning in a meaningless world. Hence, we can label him as an existential nihilist because he has worked according to his will and also faced the consequences of his deeds by being psychosocially isolated and tormented till the end. However, he has failed to be an absurdist, as instead of accepting the absurdities of life with an open mind, he has made ways for new absurdities with his wicked acts.

## Chapter Three

### *Anna Karenina: Self Submission into Profound Solitude*

*One latest, solitary swallow flies  
Across the sea, rough autumn-tempest tost,  
Poor bird, shall it be lost?  
Dropped down into this uncongenial sea,  
With no kind eyes  
To watch it while it dies,  
Ungessed, uncared for, free:  
Set free at last,  
The short pang past,  
In sleep, in death, in dreamless sleep locked fast.*

(Rossetti, "Autumn", ll. 18-27)

The position of women in literature has always been a sensitive issue to explore for the scholars, critics and authors. It is because, the age-old male dominated or the patriarchal social structures have mostly preserved and presented women as the counterpart of men than focusing upon their individuality or uniqueness as God's creature. From religious scriptures to Shakespeare's literary masterpieces, women's subjugation by men is remarkably comprehensible in terms of social customs, intelligence and strength. However, from the beginning of the eighteenth century idealizing women as simple better half of men started to change when several women writers came forward to discuss the concepts of female empowerment, their potential, inadequacies as individual beings, etc. This attempt not only helped the sect of women to identify the absurd social dogmas created for their victimization, but also made them more confident about themselves to accomplish any challenge. Christina Rossetti is one of the successors of those early female writers who with her poems have effectively portrayed the desires and dilemmas of the nineteenth century women. The above quoted stanza is taken from Rossetti's highly metaphorical poem "Autumn" in which she narrates about a solitary female character who being trapped in a tower desolately romanticizes her victimization with an "uncared swallow" that achieves its freedom through death. Generally, Rossetti's "Autumn" explores upon the torture and pain that every woman experiences as a part of the male dominated

society. The “solitary swallow” is none but the embodiment of the confined protagonist that has lost its meaning of life and aimlessly roamed around till death grasped its soul. Kathy Alexis Psomiades, a critic who has compared Rossetti’s “Autumn” with Tennyson’s poems mentions in her article “Feminine and Poetic Privacy in Christina Rossetti’s “Autumn” and “A Royal Princess” that, Rossetti’s “solitary swallow” symbolizes her heroine’s isolation but as it could be free with death which the heroine or the narrator yet to achieve, makes her (the heroine) envy the fate of the swallow (192). Without a doubt, the account of Rossetti’s protagonist is as similar as Tolstoy’s Anna, because she also becomes victimized by the patriarchal social conventions when she tried to establish her individuality in terms of her own decisions or conditions. Her struggle to look for a perfect resolution of life has failed her and mostly tormented her with despair, aimlessness and egoism. Hence, Tolstoy, with his one of the most remarkable heroines of all time reflects upon the facts of female psychosocial vulnerability in the male dominated society, extremity of passionate love and true value of family life in his *Anna Karenina*. All the other male and female characters of the novel have equally shared their connections with the protagonist to highlight some more themes such as noteworthy differences between urban and rural life, significance of faith over reason and mainly the authority of men over women in the socio-political realm of the nineteenth century Russia. This part of the paper will attempt to scrutinize all these aspects presented in the novel by keeping the character of Anna in the core.

According to Fyodor Dostoevsky, “...*Anna Karenina*, as an artistic production, is perfect....the novel is something inherently ours, our own, specifically something constituting our Russian peculiarity as distinguished from the European world, our national “new word”, or at least its beginning-precisely such a word as one doesn’t hear in Europe, which, however, she needs so badly, despite all her haughtiness” (759)<sup>9</sup>. Dostoevsky with his appreciation of Tolstoy’s novel reflects upon a very important matter and that is the authenticity of Russian literature. As it is said in the previous chapters that, during the nineteenth century the social, cultural as well as political issues of Russia were undergoing severe transformations having the influence of Western or European ideologies or philosophy in the nineteenth century; Dostoevsky feels that Tolstoy with his *Anna Karenina* has made it possible to overlook all these outdoor influences and has successfully preserved the Russianness through it. That is why before

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<sup>9</sup> “The Russian View of Human Guilt and Crime”, an acknowledgement on *Anna Karenina* by Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, published in the Norton edition of Louise and Alymer Maude translated Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, edited by George Gibian.

moving onto the main discussion, it is necessary to analyze how Tolstoy has portrayed the details of Russian social-cultural aspects with his *Anna Karenina* and showed its distinction from the other European countries. The initial factor that has helped Tolstoy to distinguish his motherland from any other states is its age-old heritage of agriculture. Tolstoy has taken this issue into consideration, observed the process of urbanization around him in the nineteenth century and carefully created the parallel between the urban and rural life in his novel. This is one of the main themes that have been revolving around in the entire text, even have helped the formation of the characters. Nikolai N. Strakhov, a critic of Tolstian era mentions in his article “Levin and Social Chaos” that, “The story falls into two parts, or two layers, only loosely connected in their outer form, but having a close inner connection. The first concerns the urban, metropolitan life and tells how Anna fell in love with Vronsky....The second plane, which is more general and has greater basic significance, is the story of the country dweller Levin...”(762). This analysis of Strakhov evidently indicates that Tolstoy has deliberately created a parallel between urban and rural social structures of Russia and has sorted his characters accordingly. The reason behind Tolstoy’s action is nothing but his desire to showcase how urbanity changes the psychosocial values of individuals with its artificiality and gloominess, similarly how rural or pastoral living glorifies the soul of mankind with its natural charm. As humans are an essential part of nature, it is only nature and its elements that can heal all the psychological and existential crisis of their mind.

There are several characters that have represented this urban-rural dichotomy with their actions and thoughts in *Anna Karenina*. While Anna the main protagonist of the novel and her family members such as her brother Stiva, her sister-in-law Dolly her husband Karenin, her lover Vronsky along with some more characters have presented the intricacy of urban life, the character of Levin highlighted the simplicity of rural life with himself and with his Russian peasant subjects. Tolstoy has formed quite a few episodes to emphasize upon this topic of urban-rural distinction. The first one appears when Levin comes to meet Stiva in Moscow with a view to propose Stiva’s sister-in-law or Dolly’s younger sister Kitty. As Levin and Stiva argues over the distinctions between urban and rural lifestyle while eating at a stylish restaurant in Moscow, Levin says, “Possibly; but still it seems to me strange that while we country people try to get over our meals as quickly as we can, so as to be able to get on with our work, here you and I try to make our meal last as long as possible, and therefore eat oysters” (33) and following that Stiva

comments, “ ‘Well, of course’, ... ‘The aim of civilization is to enable us to get enjoyment out of everything’ ” (33). Indeed, Levin and Stiva both have shared their own opinion about human existence in this segment through their comments, but their argument also reflects upon their distinctive personalities. While Levin’s statement symbolizes that human beings should earn not just their earning but their reputation with hard work, Stiva’s response reflects only about existential pleasure omitting the essential part of how to achieve that pleasure. This particular episode is also important as it shows the enthusiasm, the eagerness of the rural people to explore life, and conversely the insensitivity or the frivolity of the urban mass towards their existence. Gradually, Tolstoy reveals how this insensitiveness creates the psychic distortion of the urban individuals while he describes the characters like Stiva, Anna and Vronsky with more details in the subsequent parts of his novel.

The opening chapter of the story describes Stiva’s characteristics who has been disloyal to his wife Dolly and has done adultery with the governess of his children, therefore appears to be tormented by attaining his wife’s despise in the first place (3). Gradually, Tolstoy reveals that Stiva is tormented just because he has failed to hide his misdeed from her and there is nothing more than this he feels apologetic for. Tolstoy’s narrator says, “He could not feel repentant that, he a handsome amorous man of thirty-four was not in love with his wife, the mother of five living and two dead children and only a year younger than himself. He repented only of not having managed to conceal his conduct from her” (3) and then the author elaborates that Stiva cares less for the pain of his wife because he is influenced by liberalist views according to which, “marriage was an obsolete institution which ought to be reformed; and family life really gave Oblonsky (Stiva) very little pleasure, forcing him to tell lies and dissemble...”(6). This segment primarily shows the unconventional, liberal minded and careless personality of Stiva which later becomes more vibrant while he dines with Levin in the above mentioned episode. Stiva’s true feelings towards his wife Dolly again signifies the worthlessness as well as the objectification of women in a male oriented society where women only appears to be the necessity of men who must preserve her loyalty and emotions for their male counterparts while men can do whatever they want. Critic Gayle Greene does a feminist research on *Anna Karenina* in her “Women, Character, and Society in Tolstoy’s “Anna Karenina””, and refers to Simone de Beauvoir’s to coin Dolly’s character as “victim of the reproductive cycle” (110) as Dolly has only succeed to produce Stiva’s children, but failed to produce love in his mind for her as well as her

individuality in his life. Greene criticizes Tolstoy for presenting Dolly as such by saying, “Tolstoy understands, with regard to Dolly, that a woman is what she does, that what this woman does has prohibited her development as an individual; but while he shows sympathy for her plight, he approves it” (110). Greene scornfully expresses her dissatisfaction for Tolstoy’s portrayal of Dolly as an inactive and oppressed being who only lives to fulfill the means of her husband and her family. However, Dolly and Stiva’s account is essential to have further discussion because it has a vital influence behind Tolstoy’s heroine Anna’s development and her demise in the novel.

Anna Arkadayevna or Anna Karenina’s character is the most unique among all others and therefore, Tolstoy has titled the novel upon her. The initial chapters of the novel describes that Anna is Stiva’s sister and Alexey Karenin’s darling wife who comes to Moscow from Petersburg in order to solve the dispute between her brother and sister-in-law Dolly regarding the matter of her brother’s adultery. However, as soon as she completes her work to bring Dolly and Stiva closer, she becomes a victim of adulterous love herself with one of Kitty’s (Dolly’s younger sister) suitors, which is Vronsky. Though the progress of Anna-Vronsky’s relationship happens much later, the spark of ardent love ignites at the very day when Vronsky first meets Anna in the Moscow railway station with his mother. Tolstoy writes about Vronsky and Anna’s first encounter with each other, “He apologized for being in her way and was about to enter the carriage, but felt compelled to have another look at her, not because she was very beautiful nor because of the elegance and modest grace of her whole figure, but because he saw in her sweet face as she passed him something specially tender and kind” (56). Vronsky’s initial liking ultimately turns into passion which not only diverts his attention from Kitty forever but also makes him desperate to achieve Anna’s love. As a consequence when Anna leaves Moscow for Petersburg, Vronsky rushes behind only to express his love for her. While Anna asks Vronsky during her journey why is he coming to Petersburg, Vronsky replies ““You know that I am going in order to be where you are, ...I cannot do otherwise’ ” (94). Anna then discourages Vronsky thinking about her husband and her only son Serezha but when she meets her husband at the platform, she suddenly feels that her feelings for her husband have changed. Anna thinks in her mind when her husband Karenin comes to take her home from the station, “She was particularly struck by the feeling of dissatisfaction with herself which she experienced when she met him. It was that ordinary well-known feeling, as if she were dissembling, which she regard to her

husband; but formerly she had not noticed it, while now she was clearly and painfully conscious of it” (95). Anna’s thought for her husband implies that Vronsky’s ardent love has started to touch her soul for which her year old familiar life with her husband suddenly becomes strange to her. Even when she meets Serezha, her beloved son, this strange feeling did not appear, Tolstoy mentions, “Her son, like his father, produced on Anna a feeling akin to disappointment” (97). This is how the social alienation of Anna steadily begins. She tries her heart and soul to forget Vronsky but the more she forces her feelings, the more rebellious it becomes. As a consequence, Anna finally agrees to Vronsky’s love while meeting his cousin Betsy in a hotel with other women, Vronsky thinks after confessing his love to Anna, ““This is it! he thought with rapture. Just as I beginning to despair, and when it seemed as though the end would never come...here it is! She loves me! She acknowledges it!”” (127). This merriment between the two lovers are not overlooked by the women presented there and they started to make a fuss about Anna-Vronsky’s illegal relationship (127). Afterwards, when Anna’s husband Karenin tries to warn Anna about her activities, she immediately thinks that, “It’s late, it’s late, she whispered to herself, and smiled. For long time she lay still with wide open eyes, the brightness of which it seemed to her she could herself see in the darkness”. This thought of Anna highlights two things, the end of her marital bond with Karenin and the beginning of her adulterous relationship with Vronsky.

The novel then moves forward to one year and shows the development of Anna and Vronsky’s unconventional association with each other. Gradually, living a normal life becomes troublesome for Anna as she gets trapped in a situation that neither allows her to go back to Karenin or to maintain an impassive life with him nor does it help her to leave Vronsky as she feels bound to his love. This in-between status starts tormenting Anna and she frequently experiences a particular nightmare in which both Karenin and Vronsky appears as her husbands. The narrator says, “ she dreamt that both at once were her husbands , and lavished their caresses on her. Alexey Alexendrovich (Karenin) wept, kissing her hands, saying: how beautiful it is now! and Alexey Vronsky was there too, and he also was her husband!” (136). This dream proves that Anna has tried to repress the fear of being in between the two men, Karenin and Vronsky in the subconscious level of her mind, which then by appearing as a dream torments her psyche. As we know from Freudian psychoanalysis that dreams are the ways through which individuals get to come across their subconscious mind. However, later on this fear of getting in

between establishes as Anna becomes pregnant with Vronsky's child and Karenin refuses to divorce her because he does not want to humiliate neither Anna, nor himself.

Living as a wife of Karenin and at the same time as a mistress of Vronsky, again humiliates Anna. She frequently asks for divorce to Karenin but Karenin does not approve this demand in want of punishing her. As the narrator describes Karenin's thought about the divorce, "Karenin come to a conclusion that there was only one course to be followed: to keep her with him, hiding from the world what had happened, and taking all necessary steps to put a stop to her love-affair, and above all (though he did not confess this to himself) to punish her" (257). Karenin's decision of not giving a divorce torments Anna more than before by humiliating her desire to live life on her own conditions. Later, while giving birth to Vronsky's child Anna begs for forgiveness to her husband Karenin in fear of death. Karenin approves it and decides to be with her forever (291). Then as soon as she recovers from her illness, she leaves Karenin and returns to Vronsky to start her tale of illicit love anew. Tolstoy writes, "The mistake Karenin had made when, preparing to see his wife, he had not considered the possibility either of her repentance being real or of her recovery, faced him in all its significance two months after his return to Moscow" (381). In this part, Tolstoy's narrator implies that Karenin has understood that Anna's plead of forgiveness has not been made in a conscious mind but out of pain which she felt during her childbirth. R. F Christian mentions in his article, "The Problem of Tendentiousness in Anna Karenina" that, when Anna asked for Karenin's forgiveness that was natural and predictable, and after recovering from her illness when she had returned to Vronsky that too was natural, as two indomitable forces were tormenting her conscience which is one of the reason for her ultimate demise (287). What Christian is implied with his comment that, Anna is a mere human being who is tormented by the dual forces of love and responsibility, she loves Vronsky but also shares an attachment of responsibility with Karenin and Karenin's decision of not giving her a divorce has pressurized her psyche, for which she once thought of living with Karenin and repent and then again after being recovered has gone back to Vronsky's arms.

Day after day Anna's problem becomes more extreme and she turns out to be irresistible and impatient. Finally, she loses her soulful connection with Vronsky as she starts doubting his loyalty towards her. They often get involved into quarrelling and their string of love gradually falls apart. The narrator reveals one such incident when Anna and Vronsky argues with each other and Anna realizes her relationship with Vronsky is at stake:



Never before had they been at enmity for a whole day. This was the first time it had been so, and this was not even a quarrel. It was an evident acknowledgement of complete estrangement. (679)

This incident happens when Anna quarrels with Vronsky out of her irrational suspicion that Vronsky may be emotionally got involved with Princess Sorenka who in fact has been helping him to regain his financial condition (678-679). Vronsky at first tries to avoid her but when she starts speaking about his mother in an impolite manner; he becomes agitated and leaves her (677-678). Anna then requests him to come back but gets Vronsky's response that he will come after finishing his work (688). After getting this reply from him, Anna becomes restless, starts to judge her deeds out of despair by thinking:

Well, I get divorce and become Vronsky's wife! What then?...And between Vronsky and myself what new feeling can I invent? Is any kind-not of happiness even but of freedom from torture-possible? No! No!...It is impossible! Life is sundering us, and I am the cause of his unhappiness and he of mine, and neither he nor I can be made different. (691)

These questions that have tormented her mind could not get any answers, and thus in search of a resolution as well as to punish Vronsky she commits suicide by throwing herself under a forwarding train. This decision of hers has got its influence from the death of the old peasant who died the same way in the Moscow railway station when she went to Moscow and met Vronsky for the first time. Anna thinks right before her fatal step towards death:

Where am I? What am I doing? Why? She wished to rise, to throw herself back, but something huge and relentless struck on her on the head and dragged her down. (695)

Anna's death evokes some important facts about which Tolstoy wants his readers to think. For instance, Anna's position as an individual being in the society after entering into the adultery with Vronsky, her psychosocial torment in desire of the meaning of her life etc. Tolstoy particularly highlights the duality of reason and faith with Anna's death. We see, while in the train to Moscow Anna hears a French Woman's comment who says, "Reason has been given to man to enable him to escape from his troubles" (693). This comment has pierced Anna's heart as she could not justify her deeds with reason and finally takes the step of embracing death.

Therefore, Tolstoy has shown that it is reason which is menacing and troublesome for human soul and glorifies faith with his foil of Anna's character and that is Levin.

In the last part of the novel we see that Levin also looks for the meaning of his life and by not getting any satisfactory resolution thinks of suicide several times but does not transform his thought into action and keeps searching for it (714). Then suddenly one day while talking with one of his peasants, he comes to know that the meaning of life is to live for others and not for himself (719-720). This thought enlightens Levin's soul and he starts to approach life differently from that very moment. Tolstoy thus gives an existential outlook between these two characters, Anna and Levin. Anna, who does adultery in order to lead an unconventional life with Vronsky eventually fails to keep struggling and commits suicide; while Levin keeps struggling to find out a perfect resolution and therefore finds it in the end with the feeling of a kind of spiritual faith. As we know from the theory of existentialism and absurdism that it is up to individuals how they want to experience their life, Levin can be distinguished as victorious on the basis of this premise. Indeed, There are ambiguities of life but individuals should not surrender and should keep moving on by embracing those ambiguities or absurdities, otherwise, they will become isolated and despaired which we have seen in Anna's account. Anna fails to confront the absurdities or the consequences of her actions and as a result becomes a victim of isolation, finally a catastrophic death. However, one cannot fully blame Anna for her fatal decision in the end because even if she decided to live, she would have to obey the patriarchal conventions which would have torment her soul more than ever. That is why when she thinks that even if she gets a divorce from Karenin, her life with Vronsky will never be same because Vronsky is a man who is full of himself and rears liberal view about life or other social institutions like marriage, family etc. and therefore, they can never be happy with each other. However, as we have discussed Camus' philosophy of the absurd, we know that suicide is a way to abandon the absurdities of life completely but it itself is a highly absurd action. Therefore, considering Camus' ideology, we can say that being influenced by psychosocial isolation or alienation Anna has failed to define the true value of life as well as to confront its absurdities with her act of suicide.

## Conclusion

The three novels that this paper deals with, shows the torment, anguish and meaninglessness towards the human beings with an analysis of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's characters. The reasons which have been considered responsible behind the psychological and social trauma of people are urbanity, the extremity of advancement, capitalism, poverty and self-centeredness. Both in Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's novels, significant comments and discussions have been made to explain the virtue of friendship, forgiveness and love so that the curse of despair and alienation can never occupy their soul with its maliciousness and can never force them to do inhuman activities like murder, rape and suicide. This paper also tried to bring in the theories of Marxist philosophy of alienation, existentialism, nihilism and absurdism only to generalize the topic as well as to help the readers to find out the connection between these theories with psychosocial alienation. Though in three subsequent chapters of this paper, three major characters of both the authors have been discussed, the themes, narrative techniques of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy have also been briefly explained along with the social-political background of Russia in the nineteenth century in order to make the analysis more prolific. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are such gems of Russian literature, whose writings are immensely rich with information, brilliantly presented with philosophical comments and amply filled with ideas that help the readers to think about their psychological and social standards as human beings. That is why, by analyzing their works, this paper itself has tried to pin down the ways through which human existence can be more glorified, more significant and how its devaluation can be stopped.

The first chapter of this project works with Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The novel which has portrayed the turbulence of an educated Russian, Raskolnikov, who after observing the spite and artificiality of his social surroundings becomes frenzied and starts thinking of doing something to save himself from it along with others. His torment steadily increases so much that finally he himself loses the control over his thoughts and murders the old money lender or the pawn broker Alyona Ivanovna to soothe his mind as well as to take revenge upon the capitalistic exploitation over the poor Russians in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this dehumanizing action influenced by his psychosocial alienation has increased his torment more and permanently victimized him with the fear of law and justice. Lastly, we have seen that

in order to overcome his fear and to forget the moral consequence of his deed, he relies upon Sonia and his beloved ones to attain some courage with which he can take up the burden of his dreadful act. It has also been shown that, though Raskolnikov has moved forward to a fresh and guilt free life by surrendering himself to the police in the end, he cannot achieve the distinction of an existentialist because of his reliance on his family or friends and because he has surrendered himself only after being pressurized by the people who loved him.

In the second chapter, another Dostoevskian novel has been scrutinized which is *Notes from Underground*. In this part, an entire psychological analysis has been done with Dostoevsky's isolated and psychologically conflicted hero, the Underground Man. This nameless hero and his story of life significantly reveal the psychic turbulence of a despaired existentialist who has tried his best to punish existence with his absurd and wicked works like annoying regular people, humiliating his friends and ultimately raping a prostitute only to glorify his superiority over them. However, all these works have created the opposite and humiliated, disgraced as well as isolated his own being the most than tormenting others. He with his conflicted narrative not only admits this fact that by trying to humiliate other he has humiliated himself but also asserts his eternal persecution to despair and frustration.

In the final chapter, Tolstoy's famous and epic novel *Anna Karenina* has been investigated to scrutinize how patriarchal conventions or male domination can cause psychological and social degradation in women psyche. Initially Tolstoy's view on urban and rural lifestyle has been discussed. Then, after considering that urban advancement along with its artificiality degrades the moral values of individuals and makes them more insensitive towards life with the characters like Levin and Stiva, the focus has been transferred to Anna, the heroine of the novel, who with her act of adultery with Vronsky has effectively shown the unconventional and irresponsible attributes of urban life. Anna's husband Karenin's inactivity to give her a divorce has shown male authority over female individuality and her lover Vronsky's effective discontent towards her overdependence upon him again reflects upon the insensible attitude of urbanized people. Moreover, Anna-Vronsky's relationship in parallel with Stiva-Dolly's relationship has proved the artificiality and hypocrisy of love that has been nurtured with heavenly bonds like marriage and parenthood. Though, Stiva and Dolly has continued with their game of deception till the end, Anna could not bear it as she continuously tried to find some answer for her life but ultimately realized no resolution could make her happy, and thus

committed suicide. On the contrary to Anna, Levin who has led a happy, simple life in the countryside with his beloved wife Kitty and his peasants ultimately finds his answer of life from his own people. This parallel between Anna and Levin's life has been explained with the theories of existentialism in the end to showcase how effectively one can control the psyche by changing their outlook and perception of life.

Therefore, in this paper the aspects which can distract people from their moral values or ethics have been shown. It is a project that has tried to reveal that whatever happens, the meaning of life never be scrutinized with hopelessness and depression because these factors only torments people and forces them to do inhuman acts. It has also tried to describe the true essence of existential philosophies like existentialism, nihilism etc. with a view to enlighten people that not philosophers or writers in this world has ever tried to glorify destruction or isolation or other dehumanizing aspects with their theories but has always shown the ways with which life can be celebrated in new forms, with new meanings.

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