

**Tribhuvan University**

**Tension between Tradition and Modernity: A Contextual Reading of Fyodor  
Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment***

**A Thesis submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

**By**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

DhurbaGautamhas completed his research entitled "Tension between Tradition and Modernity: A contextual Reading of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*" under my supervisor. He carried out his research from July 15, 2016 to May 27, 2017. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva

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**Approval Letter**

The thesis entitled The Tension between Tradition and Modernity: A contextualized Reading of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by DhurbaGautamhas been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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**Tension between Tradition and Modernity: A Contextualized Reading of  
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**Abstract**

*The aim of this research work is to explore the conflict between traditional and modern thoughts in the mid nineteenth century Russian society focusing on revolutionary spirit of the mid nineteenth century Russian society and the changing socio-political context of the mid nineteenth century Russia. The investigation of power structure and conflict for social identity through the subversion of traditional power makes this research work compelling. The research method consists of new historicist approach with wide review of relevant literature. This research work develops workable definition on relation between literature and society to study the contextual socio-political situation. The findings from this research work provide evidence that Fyodor Dostoevsky in Crime and Punishment makes response to the contemporary political, social, religious and economic system of Russia through the eye of power relation. The main conclusion drawn from this study is that Crime and Punishment shows the conceptual and ideological reformation of the mid nineteenth Russian society and the crisis and chaos created during the transitional period.,*

This research work explores Fyodor Dostoyevsky's response to contemporary reformation of Russia in the sectors of judiciary, criminology, economy, and other socio-political systems. Analyzing the Raskolnikov's different perspectives of world, Dostoyevsky portrays response of common people towards emerging social changes and divided mentality of common

people. Additionally, it examines the contextual relationship between literature and socio-psychological condition as well other matters of public concern and political change of society. The suffering of poor and under privileged people, class conflict between aristocratic and lower class people, new generation intelligentsia's thirst for social change are major concerns of this research work.

In every epoch of social and political changes, literature of the contemporary society tries to reflect the socio political condition of the society. The historical, social and political background in a text builds up the historical atmosphere to the literature. Text is created under the influence of the historical background and the author's own life experience and that the writers also want to make influence on readers about contemporary issues. New historicism believes that the text is produced under the influence of cultural and historical contexts. Along with social changes, literary texts sometimes satirize as well as celebrate the changes and explicitly and implicitly represent the ideologies of society and larger social structure to make the text compelling.

Fyodor Dostoevsky is regarded as one of the finest novelists for his modernist and realist writing. Depiction of deeper psychological reality of modern Russian people, mimetic analysis of Russian society and capturing the revolutionary motion of Russia, are main characteristics of his writings. He basically wrote about the analysis of pathological states of mind that lead to insanity, murder, and suicide and in the exploration of the emotions of humiliation, self-destruction, tyrannical domination, and murderous rage. His major works are also renowned as great novels of ideas that treat timeless and

timely issues in philosophy and politics. Psychology and philosophy are closely linked in Dostoyevsky's portrayals of intellectuals, who feel ideas in the depths of their souls.

Dostoevsky is also regarded as one of the greatest essayist, psychologist and philosopher not only in the history of Russian literature, but for the history of world literature. His writings are famous for theme of spirituality, and the internal tension of characters. His characters are struggling to construct the meaningful position in the society. One of the prominent themes of Dostoevsky is portrayal of political and social context of Russia. Literary modernism, existentialism, and various schools of psychology, theology, and literary criticism have been profoundly shaped by his ideas. His works are often called prophetic because he so accurately predicted how Russia's revolutionaries would behave if they came to power. In his time he was also renowned for his activity as a journalist.

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the contemporary Russian society of the 1860 is reflected. Dostoevsky's political and ideological alignment and emerging issues of the then society of Russia are characterized vividly. The influence of western culture, ideology and liberal and democratic political system, and other emerging issues of the nineteenth century Russia, are addressed by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky connects the characters to the philosophical and ideas and social movement of the mid nineteenth century Russia and shows people's departures from old dogmatic religious belief to new secular faith of religion which is unlike redemptive teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church but helps people search their own inner self for the path away

from misery. In the dawn of socialism, intellectual quandary was there in Russian people, people were still deprived of enjoying the full-fledged socialism and sense of freedom and equality. The class conflict, contradiction between conventional moral laws and progressive radical thinking was prevalent there. Contemporary thinkers and writers also pointed out the changing issues of Russia in their writings and literary works. Besides that there was influence of western literature, political movement as well as new approach in development modality.

Moreover, the eradication of serfdom, emergence of intelligentsia, people's thirst for the equality and eradication of the all kind of discriminations are the main issues of *Crime and Punishment*. The modern philosophical and ideological effect in Russian society and crisis appeared in intellectuals, noble, and rich people by new thoughts are also the concerns of Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*. The status quo of elite group and revolutionary attitude of lower and marginalized groups come to the stage of tussle in the transitory period of history. The power politics and identity politics of the 1860s Russian society is represented in *Crime and Punishment*. The political awareness of the people and influence of western radical thought especially socialism is signified in *Crime and Punishment*.

In *Crime and Punishment* Russian society of mid nineteenth century is presented vividly. Raskolnikov the protagonist of the novel kills a lady pawnbroker and tries to justify murder as the death of a system not a person. The economic discrimination, class conflict and rising of middle class people were the emerging issues of Russia in the time of Tsar Alexander II. The change in



judicial, especially in crime investigation, influence of western literature and life style also had a great effect in the mid-nineteenth century. The aristocratic people were enjoying western life in very luxurious way but lower class and middle class people were influenced by radical and revolutionary event taking place in Great Britain and American society.

Women were deprived of social and economic visibility and still suppressed by patriarchal society and were suffered from domestic violence and sexual harassment. Women from poor family were manipulated by rich men of society. In *Crime and Punishment*, we find two kinds of women; Submissive, who just accept the patriarchal norms and radical who raise the voice against the discrimination of inequality in the name of gender and economic status. In the mid nineteenth century, Russian people were religiously divided into two groups; orthodox Christianity and liberal religion practiced in western countries. Raskolnikov in the beginning of the novel questions the people's faiths in religion has no any trust on it but at last he surrender in Church and wants to read Bible. This shows the contemporary situation of Russia where having question on God is impossible and one should follow the orthodoxy of Christianity. He suspects that if there is God why there is discrimination and people are deprived of social justice and equality.

Fyodor Dostoevsky himself was a political activist, who advocated for the socialism against the institute of serfdom. His political involvements, imprisonment and other personal accounts are reflected in *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov's idea of an extraordinary man resembles the concept of superman

theory of Friedrich Nietzsche and Hegelian parody of superhuman and extraordinary man. The radical discourse and philosophies, which scorns the authority and aims at inclusive social changes, were popular in the western countries. The intellectual people, educated youth and social activists of Russia had raised voice against the exploitative institutions of the society. Crime was a very real problem in Russia at the time the novel was written. Drunkenness and prostitution were commonplace, and the gap between the middle class and the poor was enormous. By documenting these facts of life, Dostoevsky provides social history and even social protest as part of his study of Raskolnikov's character.

Though the mid nineteenth century was paving way to freedom and social change with some of the major reformation in economy, judiciary and education, people were still reluctant to embrace a change in positive ways in Russia and there was a lot of contradiction and fear of not being accepted in the society. Dostoevsky wanted to show the young intellectual being influenced by various theories and then using these theories before he had had a chance to analyze them. For example, a typical contradiction would be that Raskolnikov will at one time maintain that the murder was committed to benefit mankind, but then he will maintain that the extraordinary man must be above mankind and not be concerned with what mankind will think of him.

Such an incomplete understanding of his own thoughts and such contradictory statements are the rationale that leads Raskolnikov to the possibility of redemption. A brief analysis of the various ideas will partly show what aspects

of the theories are borrowed and what aspects are the results of Raskolnikov's own thinking. Raskolnikov believes that, men who make new laws are always transgressors. To make a new law, you must break an old one. Raskolnikov insists there is nothing new in this idea, and he is essentially right. The examples he gives are Lycurgus, Solon, Mahomet, and Napoleon, who also have taken many lives away for the change in society and became real leader.

Dostoevsky had an unusually active role in this era of reformation as a writer as well as a political activist. Using the influences acquired with his literary achievements, he became involved in political intrigues of a questionable nature. He was, for example, deeply influenced by new and radical ideas that were entering Russia from the West, and he soon became affiliated with those who hoped to revolutionize Russia with all sorts of Western reforms. Dostoevsky published many articles concerning various political questions knowing full well that they were illegal and that all printing was controlled and censored by the government.

Russia in the decade of 1860 was in threshold of witnessing numbers of reactionary activities in the forms of movement, writing, and other cultural products. While adopting the new ideas, there was a kind of turmoil and contradiction among the people. Tsar government hesitated to accept the socialist movement and did not allow people to embrace innovative ideas and political discourses.

In this way, the conflicts, contradictions, doubts and thirst for social change are presented in *Crime and Punishment*. As a whole, *Crime and*

*Punishment* reflects the sociopolitical scenario, the power relation, dominant discourse of the time, and the ideological as well as cultural context of the mid nineteenth Russian society. The nineteenth century Russia was time of great reformation but still grappling with problems of crisis of morality, oppressive judiciary, poverty, prostitution, unemployment, destitution and abandoned children along with the religious and political conflicts between traditional institutions and new revolutionary alliances and radical intellectual. Thus, Dostoyevsky reveals the transitional issues of mid nineteenth Russian societies in terms of influence of western theories and movement like nihilism, utopian socialism, and utilitarianism, and crisis appeared while adapting them in Russian Society.

The above mentioned issues of *Crime and Punishment* are related to the issues that new historicism defines as historical and cultural condition of production of text. The main thinkers and critics of New Historicism include Stephen Greenblatt, John Brannigan and Michel Foucault. Stephen Greenblatt pioneered the new historicism in revisiting the Renaissance literature, especially to interpret William Shakespeare's plays. New historicism is a literary theory which interprets text as product of socio-political condition of particular time and place. New historicists also conceive of text as product and producer of cultural and political issues. New historicism has been most useful to the discipline of literary studies in exploring the relation between literature and history and demonstrating the ideological and political issues operating through literary texts. The visibility of the power is an important concept which new historicism aspires

to explore in the text. By making the power play visible, the text presents the political and social condition of the contemporary time.

Borrowing the ideas from Michel Foucault, new historicists believe that a text is product of power relation that creates hegemony and the writers also serve the authority. New historicism is a counter theory that looks for the subversion of the power within the text. New historicists believe that power is dynamic and unstable so there is always negotiation of power. New historicism tries to give justice to the marginalized groups like, poor, women, people of color, working class and so on. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky also tries to serve the political system, religious belief and judiciary which are considered as power of Russia on the one hand and he implicitly presents the Raskolnikov as an agent of revolution, who challenges and threatens the power. This challenge is example of the subversion of power and the seeking voice of marginalized group.

As a whole, *Crime and Punishment* works as part of the mid nineteenth century Russian society with the political, cultural and intellectual history. Domination of tsar regime, class conflict, emerging of the middle class people, influence of western liberal movement and revolutionary movement of the mid nineteenth century can be taken as the “thick description” of a given culture in *Crime and Punishment*.

Dostoevsky created the subjectivity of Raskolnikov as a process of self-fashioning with in the power position of Tsar Regime. The author of *Renaissance Self Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* Stephen Greenblatt writes;

Self-fashioning for such figures involves submission to an absolute

power or authority situated at least partially outside the self-God, a sacred book, and an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration. Marlowe is an exception, but his consuming hostility to hierarchical authority has, as we shall see, some of the force of submission. (Greenblatt 9)

As said by Greenblatt, Dostoevsky also shows Raskolnikov's surrender to court and his conversion to religious person as the submission to the authority. Though Raskolnikov dares to challenge the power and authority, he cannot escape from the grip of law and religious conducts. So Dostoevsky as the writer also implicitly serves to the authority. This is an example of how a marginalized poor student who dares to challenge the authority is gripped by the power of religion.

The literary and social identity of Dostoevsky is created in *Crime and Punishment* through the characterization of Raskolnikov. The spirit of revolutionary youths, the political and ideological agenda of the mid-nineteen century Russia is characterized in *Crime and Punishment* along with the depiction of the oppressed people in the environment of the city and surrounded by sentiments.

New historicism looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts. Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* writes "The literary text through its representation of

human experience at given time and place, is an interpretation of history. As such, the literacy text maps the discourses circulating at the time it was written and, is itself one of those discourses.” ( Tyson 295) In this way *Crime and Punishment* also response to the radical discourses of the 1860 Russia and the negotiation of the traditional and modern discourses.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, when he came to write *Crime and Punishment* in 1865, he had already witnessed the Crimean War and the death of Nicholas I. In this time a more liberal and regime flowered briefly in Russia and when the old order began to undergo irreversible change. The radical thinkers established the radical camp consisting of individuals with divergent opinions.

Moreover, the Western thinkers from whom Russian radicals derived the ideas were also the numerous and varied in belief ranging from utilitarian, socialist, and populist. Derek Offord in his essay “Crime and Punishment and Contemporary Radical Thought” states: “In his major novel, *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky makes explicit or oblique references, which are caustic in their context, to thinkers who defended them and vigorously disputes the traditional propositions of Russian society.” (119) According to Offord Dostoevsky disagrees profoundly with autocracy of Russia regime and demanded for more freedom. The Judicial system of the Russia was in process of reformation.

Numerous foreign books on judiciary were translated, published and reviewed in this period and the journals devoted much attention to legal questions. Thus the reference to changes in the law and its administration, the proliferation

of the legal profession, court case, the increase in crime and the description of the Raskolnikov's murder depict the judiciary context of the 1960s Russia. Offord further states, "Like their Western European mentors, the Russian radicals of the 1860s expressed deterministic view on the causes of crime which seemed to Dostoyevsky as oversimplified as their views on the of man and his society"(Offord 120) .The given citation clarifies that Raskolnikov as radical student, suffering from poverty is justifiable to commit a crime. Raskolnikov wants to call himself an "Extraordinary" man who has right to commit the crime for the betterment of humanity. When he gives justification of crime to Profiry, a government detective he says:

I simply hinted that an 'extraordinary' man has the right ...that is not an official right, but an inner right to decide in his own conscience to overstep ... certain obstacles, and only in case it is essential for the practical fulfillment of his idea ,sometimes, perhaps, of benefit to the whole of humanity. (Dostoevsky 464)

The given extract is example of the utilitarian thought. Raskolnikov's mathematical evaluation of the moral dilemma presented to him in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* exemplifies the practical view of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism attempts to distinguish between right and wrong by measuring a decision based on its calculated worth. Raskolnikov appears to employ the



fundamentals of utilitarianism by pitting the negative consequences of murdering his old landlady against the positive benefits that her money would bestow onto society.

New historicism also believes that there is always dynamic unstable tussle and interplay between different discourses, and they compete each other. This kind of interplay and overlapping of the discourse is called “*negotiating* exchange of power.” (Tyson 295) In crime and punishment we find the negotiation between traditional or religious discourses and the modern or secular discourses. As a radical youth, Raskolnikov want to make Russia free from traditional ruling system and want to bring democratic changes in society. Although he wants to use his freedom in full fledge irrespective of moral and ethical codes of society at last he cannot be free from the traditional religious codes of rule and regulation. Through the characteristic of Dunia, a religious girl who indulges herself in prostitution, Dostoevsky tried to show that freedom beyond the law and rules was still not possible in Russia.

Raskolnikov is in the puzzle of freedom in *Crime and Punishment* because he, through his dealings to know the possibility of freedom, spends the course of the novel on a journey to correct his disordered view of freedom. Raskolnikov starts the novel as a morally brutal person, and throughout his journey makes strides towards becoming a virtuous person. In his literary criticism *Chesterton, Dostoevsky and Freedom*, Mark Knight notes:

In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov believes that he is  
free

to operate about the law, but he spends most of the novel coming to term with the fact that he is not as free as he first thought. Indeed, the murder that he commits actually restricts

his freedom by consuming his thought to the extent that he loses the ability to think and act rationally. (Knight 46)

Knight identifies Dostoevsky's belief that the ability to think and act rationally is essential to freedom. Raskolnikov must achieve this state if he is to be truly free. This extract also gives the hint that in Russian Society to be revolutionary was taken as immoral and irrational. The power play between the law and individual freedom is presented in *Crime and Punishment*. The duality shown in Raskolnikov and Sonya character presents the uncertainty of the 1860s Russian society.

New historicists believe religion as a form of power. In *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky also tries to show the religion as the governing factor which has great influence in people. The Christian fundamentalism which had great influence in governing laws and making rules. The strong belief on orthodoxy and dogmatic thinking of people did not allow them to involve in resistance and dare to challenge the traditional rules and regulation. So we can assume that Dostoevsky purposely stands Sonya as the antithesis to Raskolnikov radical thought of radical transgression. Sonya is a prostitute but she has strong belief in God. Sonya is the principal mover in Raskolnikov's transformation towards what Dostoevsky considers a correct view of freedom, but other

characters come into play as well. Religion and freedom are contrary to each other and always looks for establishing their position in society.

Another significant character who affects Raskolnikov and points him towards this view of freedom is Porfiry Petrovich, the police inspector. Porfiry helps Raskolnikov along on his journey to true freedom in a very important way. Porfiry represents authority and rules. According to Raskolnikov, and by extension advocates of the radical ideology, he is the enemy. He and his kind, the authority figures, make the rules and regulations which oppress people and restrict freedom. In a novel centered on this philosophy of freedom, Porfiry would build a case, call witnesses, and arrest Raskolnikov for murder.

Porfiry tells Raskolnikov on multiple occasions that he knows Raskolnikov is guilty, and every indication is given that, if he wanted to, Porfiry could arrest Raskolnikov. In part six, Dostoevsky writes, “‘Yes RodionRomanych, sir, it was you and no one else, sir’ Porfiry whispered sternly and with conviction.” (Dostoevsky 545) Porfiry, therefore, represents not the oppressive authority figure, but the figure who allows Raskolnikov to make his own decision and finally Raskolnikov surrender to authority. Kindness of Porfiry also could be an example of reformation in judiciary from authoritative to liberal.

In *Crime and Punishment* female characters are portrayed as a contrast to their male protagonist. There is always tension and conflict between them but most often are defeated by male characters. Women are raising voices, they are capable to decide, run family. In the one hand Dostoevsky presents women as capable and independent. On the other hand they are presented as dependent to

male. The pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna has huge property, Sonya earns money through prostitution, Katerina Ivanovna Marmeladov manages the family when his drunkard husband Semyon Zakharovich Marmeladov is careless to his family, Duniya Raskolnikov's sister is well educated and Raskolnikov's mother works hard to manage money for Raskolnikov's education.

In this way, women are capable and have great contribution. At the same time these women are compelled to face murder, involve in prostitution and trapped by rich men. Michelle A. Nogas in her dissertation *Dostoevsky's Women: Finding a Voice* writes: "Dostoevsky presents women as modern and empowered but at the same time he creates limitation on women's freedom." (Nogas 56). This kind of dualist character of women suggests that Dostoevsky cannot go beyond the stereotype women character; however he gives the hints on employing modern women character in his writings in specific and in realistic writing of the mid-nineteenth Russian literature.

While it is not surprising that 19th century male-authored literature does not feature women as the primary protagonists, female characters are nonetheless integral to Dostoevsky's works. Before analyzing specific characters featured in Dostoevsky's works, it is important to establish what general roles females play in the plot development of the author's novels. First of all, none of Dostoevsky's major works are titled for female characters (Straus 2). Additionally, Dostoevsky often portrays men acting violently or dishonorably toward women. Nina Pelika Stratus, author of *Dostoevsky's and the Women Questions: Rereading at the End of a Century* writes: "In fact Dostoevsky's compulsions to depict men's cruelties

to women and their variable reactions to these cruelties is more than an element in his work; it is a constitutive part of his vision and his metaphysics.” (Pelika19)

Sonya is presented both as prostitute and as rescuers of Raskolnikov through his sin. In the early stages of their relationship, Sonya sees mainly the kind and generous side of Raskolnikov personality. She is drawn to him as a strong, protective man who is socially and intellectually above her and through whom she can gratify her needs for devotion, submission, and a vicarious sense of superiority. When she begins to learn his true state, she immediately casts herself in the role of his savior. Through her love, fidelity, and piety, she will bring about his redemption. So Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*, maps the negotiation between traditional and modern women character and search for the liberation and freedom.

Many critics have commented that Dostoevsky made response to the newly emerged literary theories, and cultural practices of the 1860s Russian society in *Crime and Punishment*. The popular theories of European nations had great influence on Russian society and intellectual groups of Russia have followed the western thoughts to fight against the autocratic rule of tsar regime and bring the social transformation in Russia. M.H Abrams in his book *Glossary of Literary Terms* remarks:

Any text is conceived as a discourse which seems to present or reflect an external reality, in fact consist of what are called representations and; that is verbal production which are the

‘ideological products’ or ‘Cultural constructs’ of the  
historical

condition of to an era. (Abrams 245)

The nineteenth century Russia was time of great reformation but still grappling with problems of crisis of morality, oppressive judiciary, poverty, prostitution, unemployment, destitution and abandoned children along with the religious and political conflicts between traditional institutions and new revolutionary alliances and radical intellectual.

Thus, Dostoyevsky reveals the transitional issues of mid nineteen Russian societies in terms of influence of western theories and movement like nihilism, utopian socialism, and utilitarianism, and crisis appeared while adapting them in Russian Society. Influence of scientific theories is one of the major foundations for the modern thought in Russia. Raskolnikov as educated youth, migrated from village to St. Petersburg is also evolved with scientists are great thinkers around the word. From Dostoevsky’s perspective, Raskolnikov is the product of both a religious upbringing and an atheistic culture. His crime and the theories by which he justifies it are symptomatic of the diseased state of modern life in which selfishness and rationality have come to dominate man’s spiritual nature. Bernard J. Paris claims:

Crime and Punishment dramatizes the consequences of  
modern

secular thought. Unbelief leads to nihilism, to crime, and to

various forms of self-destruction. The novel also dramatizes the persistence of spirit—of God's power and man's unconscious faith in the midst of atheism. For those who are not too far alienated from the religious side of their natures, crime may lead to spiritual rebirth. The violation of its dictates awakens the conscience and generates inner conflicts that can only be resolved by turning toward God. (Paris iii)

The tension between religious and secular ideology was grappling in Russian society, and there was confusion, fear and as well as attraction to new scientific and empirical ideas.

In *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky creates two types of people; (i) modern and revolutionary who is evolved with new thoughts and want to bring change in society, (ii) modern but not revolutionary who want to stay neutral and have faith on religion. People in first category like Raskolnikov, are capable of implementing revolution and practice the theoretical rebellion these people of the second category acknowledge their dissimilarity to the mass and boldly mark themselves off from it by their acts, by their habits, by their whole way of life. Here the individual attains his full self-liberation, his full individuality and independence. The second categories like Raskolnikov's mother, his sister,

Razumikhin, Porfiry, and Sonya are educated also but unable to practice because of fear of isolation from society and they don't want to lose the mass.

Raskolnikov steps forward with radical thought that his mother called her son is going against the god and is corrupted by modern thoughts and beliefs. It is his mother who first provides formulation of Raskolnikov's inner conflicts:

Do you pray to God, Rodya, as you used to do, and do you believe in the mercy of our Creator and Redeemer? I am afraid, in my heart, that you too may have been visited new spirit of infidelity and, by the fashionable modern unbelief. If that is so,

I will pray for you. (Dostoevsky 79)

We are to see Raskolnikov as torn between the secular thought sweeping the educated classes and the Christian beliefs he imbibed in childhood. Raskolnikov's mother believes in traditional moral laws and values which are religiously guided rather than scientific and practical. Though Raskolnikov wants to adhere to the modern scientific and practical practices for bringing the changes in society ensuring equal rights to the people of all standards, his mother condemns him being misguided by as Raskolnikov's mother says "modern unbelief."

(Dostoevsky 80)

The "modern unbelief" that leads Raskolnikov to crime is associated with utilitarianism. He says the old woman is louse and thousand can be "saved from



corruption and decay” (Dostoevsky 737) by her money. The Russian radical thinkers of the 1860s, much influenced by Comte, Darwin and other Western writers who adopted a supposedly scientific approach to the problems that interested them, also treated as absolute and binding only the empirically verifiable scientific law and rejected any understood natural laws. It is clear from the way in which Raskolnikov frequently expresses his thoughts in *Crime and Punishment* that he too, like many other members of his generation, is a devotee of the scientific method. He presents mathematical equation, in which the discoveries of Kepler and Newton are weighed against the lives of “one, ten, a hundred and so forth people who might prevent this discovery or might stand in the way as an obstacle.” (Dostovesky 689)

He neatly divides humanity into ‘two categories’ and repeats the terms ‘first category’ and ‘second category’ and expresses qualifications parenthetically as if in a mathematical formula. As Raskolnikov sees it, the death of God means, for those who fully perceive its implications, that historical reality is absurd and there are no absolute values. The liberated man steps into the place of the deity and makes his own laws. Human history shows that great men have somehow realized this and have trampled on the pieties of their own time. From the point of view of their societies, they committed horrible crimes, but later generations have come to celebrate them as heroes. Both history and ideology confirm that might is right.

The particular form of Rskolnikov’s idealized world is profoundly influenced by cultural forces, development activities, as well as European spirit of

development thought, especially atheistic thought and the example of Napoleon. Raskolnikov compares himself with Kepler, Newton and Napoleon. The experience of foreign countries and the development of foreign countries also affected the Dostoevsky writing in depicting need of modern development in Russian society. Dostoevsky lived in Petersburg's Haymarket area in the 1840s and 1860s, and closely observed, the tensions and dislocation created by unplanned urban growth. Raskolnikov has spirit of changing the outlook of Petersburg and make the city well planned. Before he goes to murder the pawn broker he thinks:

Before, when he happened to picture all this in his imagination, he sometimes thought that he would be very much afraid. But he was not very afraid now, he was even completely unafraid. Gradually he came to the conclusion that if the Summer Garden were extended to the whole Mars Field and even joined with the garden of the Mikhailovsky Palace, it would be a beautiful and most useful thing for the city (Dostoevsky, 140).

So, this is also another utilitarian propose of Raskolnikov crime that he will spend the money in renovating of city. Adele Lindenmeyr in his essay *Rskolnikov's City and the Napoleonic Plan* remarks;

The boldest attempt to meet both the aesthetic demands of a capital city and the physical needs intensified by changing urban conditions was to be found not in Russia but France during the Second Empire. The rebuilding of Paris by Napoleon III and his Prefect of the Seine, Georges Haussmann, was the most prominent example of farsighted city planning in its day, and Provided Dostoevsky with the model for Raskolnikov's plan to rebuild Petersburg (Dostoevsky 41).

Dostoevsky drew upon Napoleon III, especially his justification of Napoleon Bonaparte, and himself in his book, for the character of Raskolnikov and his theory of the exceptional man, standing above ordinary laws and morality. Dostoevsky also incorporated Napoleon III's reconstruction of Paris into the novel as the source of Raskolnikov's plan to rebuild Petersburg, and thus linked Napoleon and Raskolnikov again.

While on his way to commit the murder, which his theory justifies, Raskolnikov develops the theory further. Emulating Napoleon III, he devises a plan for a city both beautiful and useful. His plan for rebuilding Petersburg is

based on the assumption that a rational, superior man can control and change his environment. Thus the plan and the crime are directly related: they share the same ideological foundation and draw upon the example of Napoleon. Raskolnikov's scheme to rebuild Petersburg based on the same principles of utilitarianism and superior will that underlie the crime, should have buttressed his conviction that the murder is justifiable. So his plan to renovate the city identifies Raskolnikov as a modern man of the Russian society who want to bring paradigm shift in Russian society following the great leaders of the European city.

The economic inequalities and the problem of poverty is another issue of *Crime and Punishment*. After the eradication of serfdom the village peasant migrated to city areas and started working in factories and industries. Especially in cities like Petersburg peasant were working hard to uplift there economic status. There were still aristocratic person who wants to control over lower class people in the name of money and they could manipulated poor people. The voice against the class discrimination was rising. The class consciousness among the aristocratic people and the desire for economic upliftment is minutely presented in *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov mother wants her son to be partner to Pyotr Petrovich, a rich person and Dunia's suitor in the Petersburg, hoping that Raskolnikov can resume his university study. On contrary to it, Raskolnikov refuses it and want her sister not to marry with Pyotr Petrovich. In the letter to Raskolnikov her mother says:

Dunia is firmly persuaded that she will gain everything by her good

influence over her future husband; this she is reckoning upon. Of course we are careful not to talk of any of these more remote plans to Pyotr Petrovitch, especially of your becoming his partner. He is a practical man and might take this very coldly, it might all seem to him simply a day-dream. Nor has either Dunia or I breathed a word to him of the great hopes we have of his helping us to pay for your university studies.(Dostoevsky 74)

Raskolnikov mother's desire to have relationship with rich man indicates the desires of lower class people to have equal status of upper class family of society. She wants her son to feel equal footing when she first meets PyotrPetrovich. She hopes that after daughter marriage with Petrovish, she will be legitimate to stay with her daughter and be happy with it. The sense of security and stability she can feel from the wealth and property. People were money minded and for the sake of earning money corruption, robbery and murders became common and lower class people were guilty of all the crimes. Zossimov, a medical doctor who takes care of Raskolnikov when he was in delirious mood after the murder of pawnbroker, says:

In one place one hears of a student's robbing the mail on the high road;

in another place people of good social position forge false  
banknotes;  
in Moscow of late a whole gang has been captured who used to  
forge  
lottery tickets, and one of the ringleaders was a lecturer in  
universal  
history; then our secretary abroad was murdered from some  
obscure  
motive of gain....(Dostoevsky, 277)

The unfaithful, immoral and corruption have spread the city areas and people prioritized to get richer overnight forgetting the moral values and religious faith. One of the major reasons of crisis was the scarcity of jobs in city area after the eradication of serfdom in 1861. "There are many economic changes." (415) says Zossimov. The discussion on economic changes and economic equality among the intellectual people of Russia was common in the decade of 1860. The intellectual character like Raskolnikov, Zossimov and Razumihin in the part II, chapter three of *Crime and Punishment* is another example of intellectual discussion of social issue. Zossimov further says:

Everybody is getting rich one way or another, so I want to make  
haste  
to get rich too. I don't remember the exact words, but the upshot  
was

that he wants money for nothing, without waiting or working!

We've

grown used to having everything ready-made, to walking on crutches,

to having our food chewed for us. Then the great hour struck, and every man showed himself in his true colors. (Dostoevsky 278)

This shows the people inclination towards the materialist quest and aspiration for financial security. So Raskolnikov wants to blur the line between upper class and lower class, though his crime is taken as the irrational and immoral by the law. As people were influenced by the "great hour struck", the time of class equality and eradication of serfdom, Dostoevsky tries to elucidate the necessity of economic equality in Russian Society.

According to the Foucauldian discourse analysis, which had great effect on New-historicism, text is product of the materialistic condition of time. John Brannigan notes :

New historicism is a mode of critical interpretation which privileges power relation as the most important context for text of all kinds.

As a

critical practice it treats literary text as a space where power relation is

visible and there is subversion of power. (Brannigan 6)

Raskolnikov's desire for the blurring of the line of class stratification in society and his bountiful idea of using the money of pawnbroker to needy people are the example of the rise eradicating the class hierarchy. Raskolnikov wants to bring the equality of in the society but the aristocratic people like pawnbroker, Svidrigailov, and Luzhin want to dominate the lower class people and rule upon them.

Marmeladov wife Katerina is from aristocratic family, presented as degraded women as she marries with a poor drunkard widower, who loves to declare her as aristocratic women and he always violates his husband and insults him. For example, in the wake of her husband's death, Katerina indulges in a luxurious funeral despite her poor, financial condition. Christopher Sanacore in his essay *The Failed Übermensch: A Marxist Reading of Crime and Punishment* writes:

Her own pathologic obsession with her ostensible, aristocratic heritage becomes the evident gap in which her desire to be considered of noble origin is presented in her articulated delineation of upper class, culture capital and she always to show off her class consciousness( 4).

The tension between religious belief and progressive belief is another issue of *Crime and Punishment*. Youths were prepared to undermine or even destroy an oppressive system that seemed finally to be on the edge of abrupt change in Russian Society. The new political system and the movement had great effect on



the political scenario of Russia. Dostoevsky himself also took part in counter movements and got exiled and was compelled to surrender to the authority. Some critics have explained *Crime and Punishment* as Dostoevsky's dual characteristic and his neutral position towards the progressive ideas and the traditional values of society. Janet G. Tucker, in his book *Profane Challenge and Orthodox Response in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment* writes:

Dostoevsky had become strongly affected with Utopian Socialism even before he began writing *Crime and Punishment*. Time and again he shows in his major characters

the persistence of something he considers 'Russian as a precursor for Heaven. Like nihilism, Utopian Socialism arguably anti-Christian and certainly anti-Russian—was now

on Dostoevsky's hit list. (Tucker 13)

Dostoevsky was profoundly influenced modern western thoughts during this crucial period<sup>6</sup> surely heightened his suspicions of contemporary Western thought in the hands of the Russian Socialists. If the Socialists wanted to use literature for tendentious purposes, he was ready to answer with tendentiousness of his own. In one hand Dostoevsky wanted to make his reader aware of new and progressive ideas but at the same time he wanted to make people aware that he had not swayed from traditional values.

Dostoevsky also tries to show the duality of modern man through the portrait of Raskolnikov traits. In the beginning of the novel readers expect Raskolnikov firmness not to surrender but at the last he surrenders. Though he tries to prove himself as an extraordinary man, at last he surrenders to authority and breaks the hope of readers. The plot structure of the novel is very confusing and beyond the expectation of reader. The plot structure is also helpful to show the possibility of halt to the revolutionary ideas and the manipulation of the radical thought back to traditional one.

On the one hand Dostoevsky shows the contradiction between the characters through the crime and investigation scenes. On the other hand he shows the inner conflict of characters. Dostoevsky, through Raskolnikov's monologues and the ambivalent characteristic of Sonia shows, the confused, uncertain and threatening situation of Russian youths. Tuckers in his essay *Alterity or Otherness* writes:

To wit: Raskolnikov in particular is quite obviously suspended between the two worlds of Western rational thought and Russian Orthodox belief. He functions as a representative, an exemplar, of contemporary society and wants to implement the western thoughts in Russia. ( Tucker 190)

The above given citation shows that Raskolnikov does not only fights against the traditional values of Russia but also is grappling within himself to check the guts of self-esteem and self-confidence. The young were vulnerable, ready to scrap all tradition. They were prepared to undermine or even destroy an oppressive system that seemed finally to be on the edge of abrupt change.

The contradiction between the native Russian principles and the imported Western principle is another issue of *Crime and Punishment*. In the novel, we find two types of character supporting native and foreign principles respectively. Sonia and Razumihkin irrespective of being young generation support for the Christian love and goodness and believe on non-revolutionary way of social change but Raskolnikov believes on radical revolutionary means of social change. A.D. Nuttall in his essay *The Intellectual Problem II* points out:

Razumikhin's vision of freedom is really symptoms of  
innocence. He may echo Raskolnikov's radical doctrine but  
he  
fails to transgress himself from the native Russian orthodox  
and  
we are undistributed the notion of Razumikhin interest for  
revolution. (6)

The above mentioned citation shows the split among the Russian youths. Razumihkin also wants to revolt against the traditional systems but he fears to apply the radical means. This shows the hesitation to bringing in the western

thoughts in Russia and believing in alternative way of movement that is truly born out of own country Russia. Furthermore Joseph Frank notes:

Raskolnikov (from the Russian “raskolnik”, “dissenter”) was created to exemplify all the potentially dangerous hazards contained in such an ideal, and the moral-psychological traits of his character incorporate this antinomy between instinctive kindness, sympathy, and pity, on the one hand, and on the other, a proud and idealistic egoism that has become perverted into a contemptuous disdain for the submissive herd. (Frank 484)

The above mentioned citation clarifies that in Russia the radical thoughts were taken as immoral and perverted. Dostoevsky thus employs the Raskolnikov’s conflicting mentality to show the duality of the period.

*Crime and Punishment* is interplay between traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the Russian culture during the mid-nineteenth century Russia. Dostoevsky tries to undermine the traditional norms and values, prevailing power structures of the Russia. Through the revolutionary story of novel, Dostoevsky presents the experience of underprivileged groups. The sorrow

of poor people, lower class people and women and their attempt to establish their position in society is the main new historic element of *Crime and Punishment*.

Though the entire plot revolves around the Raskolnikov's crime, this novel takes the readers to different stories of character with different sense of world. Raskolnikov's motive of murdering the pawnbroker is not for the fulfillment of his personal desires but for the welfare of entire society. Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov fights for justifying his crime, although he could not convince the majority about his novel cause. Raskolnikov is empowered and motivated by modern thoughts like nihilism, utilitarianism and populism. He advocates for the equality and he relentlessly fights for eradication of any kinds of injustices. His revolutionary nature is an example of subversive voices against the traditional power structure.

Traditional power structure in *Crime and Punishment* are autocratic judicial system, higher class people, male domination and religious institution. Raskolnikov challenges the power structure and looks for the liberation from all kinds of discriminations. These power structures are being threatened and questioned in *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov wants to marry landlady's daughter and wants to dismantle the gap between upper class and lower class.

As new historicism believes that text is a product of contemporary ideology, Dostoevsky's writings were shaped by contemporary intellectual and political movement. *Crime and Punishment* is a product of Dostoevsky's alignment in Russian intellectual movement like populism and his membership in Intelligentsia, in personal level, but in social level *Crime and Punishment* is

response to the revolutionary voices appeared in Russia to the autocratic Tsar regime and reformation and changes which were paving ways for their great succession in Russia following the western thoughts.

New historicism also believes that religion is a power that always rules the people. Dostoevsky in the beginning of the novel, present Raskolnikov as bold, daring and determined youth, who dares to challenge religion and defy God and prove himself as an extraordinary man and is isolated from society contrary to the other characters of novel. But at last Raskolnikov is becomes soft and surrender to authority, starts reading bible after his imprisonment. In this way Dostoevsky wants to prove that religion is on the verge of questioning and is threaten by radical thinkers and he also wants to show Raskolnikov nit as anarchist but he wants to bring reformation in religion also.

Dostoevsky as a modern writer wants to make the readers aware about the necessity of changes and reformation in Russian society. The ascendancy of middle class, eradication of serfdom, urbanization, anticipation of socialism and liberal judiciary are the major reformation of the nineteenth century Russian society. Dostoevsky has made the ruing authority aware about possibility of the revolution and the voices against the autocratic Tsar regime. As a political activist who was imprisoned for raising the voices against authority through his writing and his involvement in Petersburg group, the group of Russian Intelligentsia, Dostoevsky implicitly implied the effect western revolutionary thought in Russian Society of the mid-nineteenth century.

In conclusion, *Crime and Punishment* aims to show the conceptual and ideological reformation of the mid nineteenth Russian society and the crisis and chaos created during the transitional period. Replacement of traditional system and bracing of new modern theories like Marxism, nihilism, theory of superman and utilitarianism and spirit of social change is vividly presented in the novel. Rejection of traditional dogmatic value, proliferation of scientific theories, people reactions to newly introduce theories, and the tussle and crisis appeared while amending the new system is also explained in *Crime and Punishment*.

The revolutionary spirit of the Raskolnikov represents the spirit of the mid nineteenth century Russia. He is inspired by the new movement and he wants to step over the problem of society with the help of the theory and grant the justice and quality in society for the welfare of humanity. *Crime and Punishment* reflects the power relation of mid nineteenth century Russia. The political, economic and the other social changes taking place in Russia during the decade of 1980s are presented in *Crime and Punishment*.

Dostoevsky as a writer of the age employs the novel *Crime and Punishment* as the reaction towards the contemporary revolutions and the contradictions of Russian society. Dostoevsky very minutely presents the reformation of Tsar Alexander II like local governance reform, military reform, and independent judiciary. Most of the younger characters in the novel are revolutionary and are counter argumentative to the authority. Raskolnikov as a young student wants to prove himself as an extraordinary person and justify his crime as a useful means for noble cause.

The decade of 1860 Russia has witnessed the so many reformations and the debates. The influence of western thought over the native Russian system and the people attraction as well as the hatred towards western thoughts is explained in *Crime and Punishment*. The contradiction between the religious faith and doubt in God due to the scientific innovation and the technological advancement is another tension of *Crime and Punishment*. The irony of modern people; neither they can do not deny god nor stop challenging the God, is shown by Dostoevsky.

As new historicism believes on ‘the historicity of the text and the textuality of the history’, *Crime and Punishment* also serves as the reflection of political, religious, judicial, and the other reformation of the Russian society in 1960. The power relation between the lower class people and aristocratic people, emergence of middle class people, the contradiction between old and new systems are subtlety presented in *Crime and Punishment*.

*Crime and Punishment* is a product of the material and cultural condition of the mid nineteen century Russia. Dostoevsky tries to respond to the troubles, crisis and hopes of transitional period along with the subversion of marginalized groups and their struggle against authority to bring social change.

This research has been conducted to find out the contextual social and political conflict of the mid nineteenth century Russia through new historical perspectives, there are ample of possibilities to apply various related theories to study the revolutionary spirit of Russia. The counter argumentative theories like, Marxism, Cultural Materialism and feminism can be applied in this novel to find



out he voice of marginalized people and study the contemporary culture of Russian Society.

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