

as children. The flashes of the children remain in the memory of the bereaved slave mothers as blurred images and influence the psyche of the Black mother. Baby Suggs epitomizes the slave mother who remembers only her eight children but do not cherish any memories of the moments of her motherhood. She could only share the pain of separation of all of them, either taken away or chased by the White slave holders. The agony of Baby Suggs is the verbal expression to the deep scars of every slave mother. The loss of her maternal affection with her children is also suggestive of the fact that these slave mothers were devoid of the natural maternal bonding with their children because they could not share the physical intimacy with their infants during the early post- natal period. These children are snatched away from their mothers during the first few days of their birth. It has been proved that mothers who have been separated from their premature infants for the first few weeks after birth tend to smile less at their infants, hold them less closely, and touch them affectionately less than mothers of infants who were allowed to touch and hold these infants (Chodorow 27). Carole Boyes Davies describes *Beloved* as “the most deliberate problematizings of motherhood that anyone has ever encountered”.

*Sula*, by Toni Morrison, is a fable of three generations. It is a story about the complicated mother – daughter relationship with out the unsaid bonding that exists between Beloved and Sethe in *Beloved*. Young Eva Peace, the resident of the poor household of the Bottom's community, sacrifices her leg under a train to get money for her children. Her condition was not different from other black mothers. Her husband leaves her alone with her children. The economic and social burden; to fulfill the needs of her children, becomes her sole responsibility. She leaves her children alone and comes back after five years. During these years the other women of the community take care of her children. The contemporary novel *Sula* also offers a new female centered psychology that defies the traditional male centered psychology and provides an entirely new paradigm. In “Family Structure and Feminine Personality” Chodorow states that “A woman identifies with her own mother and in this identification she re-experiences herself as a cared for child”. The dominant theme of the novel is the friendship between two friends Nel Wright and Sula; the two Black girls with opposite personalities. Both are shaped by the different family environment and the influence of their mothers. But there is a chain relationship that is formed. Their mothers were also influenced subsequently by their mothers. Hannah and Eva as mothers when compared to Baby Suggs and Sethe in *Beloved*, present a striking contrast in their mother- infant relationship. They love their children but do not like their children and the distinction arises from the character traits of their children. This dissimilarity is subject to the fact that though the mothers in *Sula* are the survivors in the Black community but they are not endangered to the threats of the society suffering the evils and horrors of slavery. These women typify the “community other mothers” who take care of the “biologically unrelated children”. This

kind of social responsibility empowers these Black women as “social activists”. Motherhood invokes the symbol of power when the slave mother takes the position of blood mother, other mother or community mother. Thus, the contribution of the Black mothers in African – American community was not only limited to their role of biological mothers but also to their social contribution made as these ‘community mothers’. These community other mothers work on behalf of the Black community; in the words of the nineteenth century Black feminists “to uplift the race” (Collins 51).

Gloria-Wade- Gayles speaks movingly of black women's ambivalences in reading fiction about the mother- daughter relationship indicating that they are often disappointed by the image of the cold, distant and domineering mother. We want mothers embracing their daughters-loving them openly and unashamedly. We want others and daughters sharing laughter and bearing their souls to each other in moments of intimacy. And yet we want the truths of our mother's lives; even if those truths are “cruel enough to stop the blood”. We must first see them as persons with dreams and needs no less important than ours, and then as mothers who sacrificed their dreams in order to put our hands on the pulse of person and self-hood. Toni Morrison has persistently delineated upon the mother daughter relationship in a society fraught with extreme poverty and racism. In *The Bluest Eye* Pecola Breedlove becomes the victim of racial contempt and loathing. Pecola's desire for beauty- the blue eyes remains unanswered till the end of the novel. The novel confronts us with some of the bitter realities of the life of these African-Americans which may fill the reader with a question that “how can something grotesque as the demonization of an entire race could take root inside the most delicate member of the society, the child; the most vulnerable member of the society; the female” (“Afterward” 210). Finally the climax of the novel again drives the reader to delve into the depth of Pecola's plight when she steps “over to madness” as the “damage done” to her is “total” (204,206). *The Bluest Eye* is described as a work which can make the readers feel “helpless and afraid” and also “ache for remedy” (Bouson 26,27). Pecola's rape by Cholly is the central emotional scene of the novel where the readers can actually relate themselves with the plight of Pecola, who suffers because of a complicit mother and a rapist father. The ninth novel *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison is a story of characters like Jacob Vaark, Rebbecca, Florens, Lina, Sorrow, Willy and Scully. They are the victims of the 1690s era when slavery made it unsafe for single woman to survive without the male support. It was the time when filial relations still held value. Florens, the seven year old little black girl is sold by her mother to the trader Jacob Vaark. This act is explained by her mother in the last six chapters of the novel as an act of protection for her daughter. She knew that the farm would provide a shelter to Florens which, she, though, being a mother was unable to provide. Thus, maternal acts are never an expression of concern in the novels of Toni Morrison. The mothers in her novel are women who are

sold, whipped, brutalized, hanged and treated as objects in the hands of the savage white society. Through the portrayal of a terribly fraught mother-child experience she justifies the position of the black mother to be “a ship and a safe harbor for the community's survival”. According to the writer's perception the loss of the essence of fulfillment of a mother's role for a black mother leads to the personal and cultural destruction. Though they are not the ideal mothers but they express their unconditional love in an unconventional manner. Their ways of mothering explains their situation warped by the existence of slavery. It becomes impossible for these slave mothers to attain the norms of expected gender role. The strain on the mothers in the novels of Toni Morrison is revealed in the unconventional expression of love. To support the conclusion, DeLeancey can be quoted in this respect when she describes what she regards as the trinity of mother love: “...a trinity of mother love's lethal possibilities: mother love as a destructive force that 'kills' by burdening a mother in the realm of the material, mother love that 'kills' by burdening a mother in the realm of the emotional, and mother love that – quite simply and literally – kills”.

#### References :

- Bouson, Brooks J. (2000). *Quiet as its kept: Shame, Trauma and Race in the novels of Toni Morrison*. Albany, New York: State University of NY Press, Print.
- Chodorow, Nancy J. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering*. California: University of California Press, Print
- Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. (1970). Great Britain: Vintage-Random, 1999. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sula*. (1973). Great Britain: Vintage- Random, 2005. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Beloved*. (1978).. Great Britain: Vintage- Random, 2000. Print
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Mercy*. (2008) . Great Britain: Vintage-Random, 2009. Print.
- Scott, Patricia Bell. (1991). *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers & Daughters*. Boston: Beacon Press, Print



## The Concept of Crime in Dostoevsky

- Poornima M

**Abstract:** The present paper analyzes the concept of crime in Dostoevsky, who asserts that, crime is not essentially a physical act; rather an ideological intoxication. His novels effectively bring in the rift between the two ideologies- individualism and materialism of the Westerners; and the social spirit and brotherhood for the harmonious growth of the individual and society advocated by the Slavophiles.

**Keywords:** Crime, Punishment, Sin, Suffering, Faith.

The concept of crime and punishment is as old and diverse as man is. They cannot be separated as crime in itself demands punishment. Crime can be defined as a behavior that violates legal laws, rules and regulations established by a society. There are many conflicting theories and opinions about the rules and customs that regulate everyday life. The line that distinguishes the Right from the Wrong is very thin. As a result more than anything else, crime has become the greatest problem of the modern society. Everyone is concerned with the increasing tendency in crime which is faster than population. So is Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky (1821-1881), who invites the readers to think about crime and punishment, in other words sin and suffering. His works effectively brings out the various facets of moral development of his criminal characters. He describes the motif, the problem of alienation, poverty, the idea of superman, the psychology behind crime. Starting from his first novel all his characters represent a moral development. He feels that evil decision is momentous, what matters is a few seconds, the decisive seconds in a man's life. They believed in utilitarian ideology, that is, the greatest happiness for the largest number of people. They followed the Napoleonic tradition of super human existence. The struggle for self respect, a sense of human respect, and the humiliation to which they are exposed form the major themes of all his novels. He argued that man himself is responsible for his actions. A true Christian will accept the responsibility whatever the environment is. He argues that crime is a personal-moral responsibility and believes in collective guilt.

His characters are not habitual criminals but highly educated youth, influenced by the Western liberal ideas, who fail to interpret the Western philosophy and the concept of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. They are too proud of their intelligence, and fail to understand that theories are only a matter of intellectual exercise. He writes in *The Diary of a Writer* "The moment we have taught a man to read and write we shall make him take a sniff of Europe. We will make him ashamed of his former best shoes and kvaas, of his ancient song. They suffer from the contemporary chaos of life. Because of the failure to comprehend the things taking place all around that their conception becomes disintegrated (960)." Most of his heroes are not only university students but men of remarkable

intelligence. They are potential, naïve and frank young men, in the age group of 20-30; the age which is easily influenced by the diseases of Western philosophy. He wrote “youth can borrow only satirical ideas, but nothing positive, that is, in what to believe, what should be respected and adored, what should be sought (*The Diary of a Writer* 544)”. He contended that root cause of all evil lies in our conviction in the succession of ideas. “There was a conviction in every Russian that one's own face is necessarily trivial and shamefully comic, and that if he should assume a French, an English – in brief somebody else's face, something more respectable would come out of it, and that in this guise he would not be recognized. We were contaminated with the ideas of the then prevailing theoretical socialism (*The Diary of a Writer* 144/147).” It is this handful of intellectuals who carried the bane of freedom. They fail to realize that science would not increase happiness in the world; but it would lead to more and more suffering. He wrote, “All young people appreciate, above all things, human intelligence. Intellectual smartness and abstract rational deductions entice you. But youth so confident in its own intelligence, which tramples under foot every obstacle forget that nature is the most transparent of mirrors.” (*Crime and Punishment* 265).

In *Poor Folk* Varvara and Devyushkin love reading books, discuss and exchange their views. She was carried away by the romantic stuff of the novels. She prefers to marry Mr. Bykov, a boorish country gentleman to Maker Devyushkin who truly loves her. She fails to realize that, “Books are destructive of morality; and thoughtlessness and impulsiveness were the ruin of inexperienced youth.” She writes, “I thought for a long time, I pondered many things, I wore myself out thinking, my friend; at last I made up my mind. My friend, I shall marry Bykov, I ought to accept his offer. If anyone can rescue me from my shame, restore my good name, and ward off poverty, privation and misfortune from me in the future, it is he and no one else. What more can one expect from the future? (263)” This clearly shows that Varvara is more practical, who prefers individual-material happiness to pure love out of selfish interest. Later she regrets her decision for she writes, “God knows whether I shall be happy, my fate is in His holy, inscrutable power. I am sure you will understand my wretchedness. What will be, will be; as God's will (263).” In *The Landlady* young Ordynov is a man of science who was devoured by the deepest and most insatiable passion, which absorbs a man's whole life and does not provide any niche in the domain of practical daily activity. It consumed his youth, marring his rest at nights with its slow, intoxicating poison. According to Dostoevsky he was creating a system for himself. Ordynov wrote an article relating to the history of the church. He expresses his fervent conviction in it. But later at the end of the novel he gives up this idea for he realizes his folly. Whereas Murin was a clever man, who has read many books and tells others the truth. In *Notes from Underground* the nameless underground man, a collegiate assessor said that, “Man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic. Our choice is usually mistaken from a false view of our advantage. We sometimes choose absolute nonsense because

in our foolishness we see a supposed advantage.” (43/47) After his realization, he is most capable of feeling every refinement of all that is good and beautiful. He believed that the enjoyment was just from the too intense consciousness of one's own degradation. According to him man loves to do ugly deeds, and becomes responsible for his failures, believing in his right to vengeance or in the success of his revenge knowing that from all its efforts at revenge one will suffer a hundred times more than he on whom he revenges. If he opens his eyes to his real normal interests then at once he would cease to do nasty things. Finally he understands that, “Reason is nothing but reason, and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all impulses”. (48) In *Crime and Punishment* Rascolnikov was a university dropout, contaminated with the ideas of the prevailing socialism. It is his selfish interest that motivated him to murder the old pawn broker. He wanted to kill the old lady with the misconception of the idea that he can set right the society. For him Napoleon, a superman governed by other laws, was a liberating force. The image of Napoleon symbolizes the motive of power and provides an excuse for him to step over the barrier of right and wrong. In his article he divides the society into two groups of ordinary and extraordinary people and he wanted to be a Napoleon. His ideology to prove himself as a shadow of Napoleon leads him to murder. But later he realizes his mistake for he said to Sonia “It is true that I wanted to help my mother but that was not the real reason. Failing in courage to bear my own burden, I have imposed it on another- because I seek in the anguish of others some mitigation of my own. I shall never forgive myself for that. Later he said, “Did I really kill that old woman? No, it was myself I killed – it was myself that I have irrevocably ruined”. (334)

In the epilogue Dostoevsky speaks of the consequences of alienation and religious redemption. The novelist tells us that Rascolnikov was bitterly wounded, he was ill from wounded pride who still believes that his crime is just an error. It is the dream that changes his views where he saw a virus sweeping over the country which causes it's victims to suffer a madness. He falls ill and realizes his mistake. His revulsion to Sonia turns to love. His true love for her brings in an ecstasy in him. For the first time Rascolnikov was truly happy in his life. The change in his character is the culmination of months of suffering. Sonia brings in a complete change in him through her perseverance and revokes his faith in God. The novel ends with a note of drastic change in Rascolnikov. His reading of New Testament reveals his newfound love for mankind. The story of Lazarus brings in him a Lazarus like resurrection. In *The Possessed* Stavrogin was influenced by Stephan Verkhovensky an idealistic historian and Moscow professor of History. His name was mentioned almost in the same breath as those of Chaadyev, Belinsky, Granovsky and Herzen. Such a highly sensitive liberal idealist, who fought for social justice, was appointed to take up the education, and intellectual development of eight years old Stavrogin. Mr. Verkhovensky managed to touch the deepest-seated chords of his young pupil. As a result Stavrogin becomes a demonic criminal because for him everything is permissible

and he does not obey any moral order. The false Westernisers murder Shatov because they think that he is a threat to their conspiracy – not materially but ideologically. Shatov recognizes “Socialism healthier than Roman Catholicism, he sees it as a form of atheism because it dreams of a society based on science and reason and this is opposed to the Russian spirit which is linked to Orthodox Christianity. For him the problem of revolution is essentially a question of God and Religion, and man's place in the Universe.” (699).

He writes in his last work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, that the learned people of Eighteenth century analyzed everything divine that was handed down to mankind in the Holy books. As a result of this cruel analysis they had nothing left of all that was sacred of old. At the same time they analyzed only parts and over looked the whole. This resulted in the conflict between the Good and the Evil. The Socialistic liberal ideas of Ivan Karamazov could only be understood by another liberal Muisov. Muisov was a liberal free thinker and an atheist who had not even been to church for thirty years. He was a man of enlightened ideas and of European culture who lived many years in Paris. He had known Proudhon and Bakunin and followed the Liberal of the type common in 1840s and 50s. He regarded it as his duty as a citizen and as a man of culture to open an attack upon the 'clericals'. In a religious discourse he quoted a French idealist who said that 'the socialist who is a Christian is more to be dreaded than a socialist who is an atheist'. Ivan Karamazov fails to understand anything because he accepts God but he doesn't and cannot accept the world created by Him. “I accept God and am glad to, and what's more, I accept His wisdom, His purpose- which is utterly beyond our ken; I believe in the underlying order and the meaning of life; I believe in the eternal harmony in which they say we shall one day be blended. I believe in the Word to which the universe is striving, and which itself was 'with God'. Yet in the final result I don't accept this world of God's; although I know it exists, I don't accept it at all. It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand, it's the world created by Him I don't and cannot accept (213).” Another character, the illegitimate son of Fyodor Karamazov, Smerdyakov ridiculed the very faith and concept of God. When Gregory read him from the scriptures he reacted how it can be possible that God created light on the first day, and the Sun and the Moon and Stars on the fourth day. He wanted to know from where did the light come on the first day. It is Ivan's liberal ideas that provoked Smerdyakov to commit parricide, symbolically suggesting the death of old order, the father land. Ivan Karamazov who believed that all things are lawful; believes in it intellectually. But once the deed is done he cannot muster enough courage within himself to accept his own responsibility in crime. Dostoevsky tries to convince in his works that there is a clash between men's suffering and acting powers. Freedom without conscience will lead to tyranny. He believed that God is the custodian of moral values guarding the individual consciousness. Man is irrational by nature and only curbed by a higher power and not by reason. His characters having exhausted themselves become bankrupt of both good and evil. They either submit to God or finally destroy themselves. Varvara in *Poor Folk*