**Chapter II  Dostoevsky and Tolstoy**

1. **Introduction**

Vissarion Belinsky then helped create a new intellectual environment in Russia where literature was considered to be the prime mover of societal change. The Belinskian vision taken up by Chernyshevy and other populist intellectuals and given a more radical twist achieved great popularity among a section of the intelligentsia. Art and creativity devoid of any social purpose came to be regarded as useless. Journals like the *Contemporary, Fatherland Notes* and *Russian Wealth* geared themselves to monitor the kind of literature that was to be published and to discourage purely artistic aspiration in creativity. A form of censorship ultra radical in disposition came to impose certain restrictions on freedom of artistic expression in a manner which on occasion might have been as oppressive as the censorship imposed by the Autocracy. While admitting that N. A. Nekrasov, M. E. Saltykov Shchedrin, G. I. Uspensky and N. N. Zlatovratsky made important contributions to the cult of populism through their literature highlighting the life of the masses, for many, adherence to the populist cause and the need for populist patronage was vital for the success of their art.

However at a time when populist domination of the arts seemed inescapable, two major writers of the period Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were able to present their writings in the very same journals which were totally populist in their tone (*Contemporary* and *Fatherland Notes*) unencumbered by any ideological constraints. Both these writers achieved immense success in their life times - within Russia and abroad and thereby continued to draw Western attention to Russian literature as had been the case in the work of Pushkin and Turgenev. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy writing as they did at the height of populist enthusiasm within Russia asserted the cause of aestheticism in literary art which had been undermined by the radical intelligentsia of their time.
2. Dostoevsky

Dominating the literary scenario in the 1870s with his colossal masterpieces such as *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, F.M. Dostoevsky was to posit a new dimension in the fabric of Russian literature in the form of the psychological novel. The ultimate recognition by Russian critics, writers and readers of Dostoevsky as a master-mind of his generation whose works represented an important milestone in the development of Russian literature was preceded by years of experimentation and struggle, on his part to establish himself in the literary field.

In spite of being enrolled in the St. Petersburg Military Engineering School from 1837 to 1843, the young Dostoevsky was attracted to literature from his early youth. The voracious young reader was well versed in Russian literature and acquainted himself with the novels of Narezhny and Weltman, the narratives and histories of Karamzin as well as with the tales of the Cossack Lugansky.

The Westernisation of the Russian intellectual was typified in Dostoevsky's reading of Schiller and in his absorption of Homer, Shakespeare, Hoffman, Hugo, Goethe, Balzac, George Sand and Eugene Sue. We find Fyodor Dostoevsky


Vasily T. Narezhny (1780-1825) was an important prose writer of the eighteenth century who also wrote poetry and drama. His *Slavic Nights* (1809) and more famous *A Russian Gil Blas* (1814) and novels such as *Zaporozhets* and *Bursak* (1824) were embedded in a typically Russian atmosphere encompassing sometimes the Kievan Rus past and sometimes the Cossack past. His tales mostly drew on the native tradition of social satire.

Alexander F. Veltman (1800-1870) was a poet, writer and scholar of Swedish descent. He was born in St. Petersburg and began his career as a government official. Veltman's first novel *The Wanderer* containing description of a journey to Bessarabia was followed by a number of romantic and short stories which made him very popular. Historical themes as well as folklore found a place in many of his works.
comparing notes with his brother M.M. Dostoevsky on the amount of reading each had done in a letter dated August 9, 1838. Dostoevsky mentions that he had read, "...the whole of Hoffmann, some in Russian and some in German...... almost all of Balzac ...... Goethe's Faust and minor poems" as well as much of Victor Hugo. Citing Western advances in science in the eighteenth century as well as upheavals such as French Revolution as instrumental in enhancing mankind's conception of its own capabilities, Dostoevsky lauded the new humanism and social idealism found in the works of George Sand. It may be noted here that among the authors referred to, Honore de Balzac was widely read in Russia in the 1830s. Dostoevsky (who comments that "Balzac is great. His characters are the products of a universal mind") himself translated Balzac's Eugenie Grandet in 1833. This translated version was published in the magazines Repetuar and Pantheon. Journals such as Biblioteka Dlia Cheteniia published Balzac's works like Provintsialnii Byron in 1837, Neobyknovennaia Zhenshina in 1839, Modesta Minon in 1845 etc. Very often intellectual discussions centred around Homer, Shakespeare, Schiller and Hoffmann. Like his more famous brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky was interested in Schiller and translated his Don Carlos which appeared in Library for Reading in 1848. He paid some attention to Sir Walter Scott who was also very popular in Russia during the 1820s and whose works were often translated into Russian from French translations. Dostoevsky found Charlotte Bronte, author of Jane Eyre good reading when she was

5. Frank SLD, p8 (footnote) p24 (footnote)
6. Frank SLD, p29
published in *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1849. In fact Bronte was regarded at par with Dickens and Thackeray by the Russian reading public around this time.  

Along with his brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky at this stage in his life immersed himself in poetry, “dreaming only of poetry and poets”. The seriousness of this passion was reflected in Dostoevsky’s analysis of poetry at this relatively young age. He wrote in 1838, “a poet in a moment of inspiration perceives God; hence he accomplishes the mission of philosophy. Hence the poet’s ecstasy is a philosophical ecstasy .... Hence philosophy is also poetry, only a higher degree of it”.  

Readings in Western literature had a profound influence on the young Dostoevsky whose initial straying away from his scientific background was epitomised in his translation of Balzac. Both Balzac with his perceptible universality of outlook and Hoffman steeped in German romanticism retained their influence over Dostoevsky who entered into unending dialogue with Hoffman’s far from normal heroes. The quest for man’s true nature and for spiritualism in art compelled him to devour the writings of Goethe, Schiller, Balzac and Hugo and resulted in his discovery of the duality of Man’s inner self. Dostoevsky began his literary career (in October 1844, he finally took the plunge and put an end to his service as an engineer) with his novel *Poor Folk* which

---

7. Frank SLD, p40  
10. In his story *Der goldene Topf*, the German writer E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) had as his hero Anselmus, a young handsome talented man whose interest in the super-natural makes him a misfit in the society around him. Hoffman’s first novel *Die Elisiere des Teufels* was an important example of a psychological novel where split personalities and the doppelganger bring to the forefront the dark recesses of the human mind.
appeared in *Fatherland Notes*. In this novel the romantist in Dostoevsky with his passion for the exotic and the unknown yielded place to the naturalist who had discovered after Gogol that nothing was more truly fantastic than real life. Balzac's influence along with Gogolian naturalism personified in typical humdrum characters of everyday life in their aspirations and disappointments were to dominate Dostoevsky's early literary creations such as *Poor Folk, The Double, White Nights, The Landlady* and *Netochka Nezvanova, A Novel in Nine Letters, The Eternal Husband* and *An Honest Thief*. These stories appeared in the leading journals of the time such as *Petersburg Collection*, and *The Fatherland Notes*.

Like the typical Russian intellectual Dostoevsky in his young days was open to ideological influences. One perceives a sense of impatience and frustration in his early writings towards the typical sluggish Petersburg circle which "lapses into a kind of unpleasant state of limpness", after having discussed a few important questions and uttering "a few harsh truths" with verve. This disillusionment possibly compelled the young intellectual to join the most dynamic and action prone Petrashevsky circle only to be disillusioned once more through experiences of a totally different kind. Dostoevsky's involvement in the Petrashevsky Circle however enabled him to undertake the study of ideas rather seriously. Interest in the Idealism of Schiller was now intermixed with an attraction to French Utopian Socialism. The Christian art of Hugo, Sand and Balzac would be sustained by the systems of Saint Simon, Fourier and Proudhon as if they were in reality a continuation of Christianity.

Meetings organised by the Petrahevsky Circle every Friday spearheaded a drive towards adoption of socialist ideas and the achievement of democratic rights. It was during his association with Petrashevsky that Dostoevsky was introduced to the writings of Feuerbach. As a result metaphysics receded into the background and a new path to materialistic socialism via Hegelianism became apparent. Preoccupation with Christian utopianism and belief in the radiant personality of God was to give way to atheistic beliefs thereby imparting a duality of consciousness which Dostoevsky was to maintain throughout his life. In the context of revolution in the Western world in 1848, the Petrashevsky Circle was regarded with suspicion by Nicholas I which led to the arrest of some of its members. Dostoevsky who was accused of sedition for reading aloud Belinsky’s letter to Gogol at one of its meetings was taken prisoner and awarded a sentence of death.

The reprieve at the very last moment from sure execution had its impact on the writer’s mind and contributed to a much mellowed down world view in the early years of Dostoevsky’s career. “Life is everywhere, life in ourselves, not in what is outside us. There will be people near me, and to be a man among people and remain a man for ever, not to be down hearted nor to fall in whatever misfortunes might befall me - this is life, this is the new task of life .... The head which was creating living with the highest art of life, which had realised and grown used to the highest needs of the spirit, that head has already been cut off from my shoulders.....” 13 With the maturing of his mind Dostoevsky’s attitude to ways of resolving the problems of his motherland seemed to change while his theorising on literature assumed a sharp focus which it had hitherto lacked. After his return to St Petersburg on completion of his period of exile in Siberia,

Dostoevsky had sufficient hopes for the political future of Russia, in the context of the reforms of the 1860s, and envisaged interaction between the masses of freed serfs and the upper classes. This tendency towards a compromise with the establishment seems to have deepened in the 1870s which saw Dostoevsky pledging faith in the monarch and his leadership of Russian society. „... The common people are quick to catch on and they are grateful, they know who loves them. Only those who love them remain in the memory of the common people. The example of this rapprochement was given by the Monarch himself, who has virtually removed the last obstacles to it, and there is nothing higher or more sacred in his work during the thousand years of Russian history.” 14 In his letters, Dostoevsky speaks of “the tremendous regeneration which is taking place under the present great sovereign...”15 and of the Russian constitution which according to him “... is the mutual love of the Monarch for the people and of the people for the Monarch. This principle of the Russian state, the principle of love not strife (which I believe was first discovered by the Slavophils), is the greatest of all ideas, an idea on which much will be built. .....16 While here abroad, with regard to Russia, I have become a complete monarchist. If anyone has done anything in Russia, it is obviously the Czar alone ....... 17 God grant that our Alexander live happily for another forty years. He alone has done for Russia almost more than all his predecessors taken together......This is now the mainstay of the whole Russian movement, on it alone all regeneration is based ......”18

Harbouring a purposefully conservative attitude as he did towards the mode and the instrument of political transformation in his country, from the 1870s onwards, Dostoevsky's views on literature displayed a similar if somewhat more forceful traditionalism - quite out of keeping with the avant garde prescriptions of good literature made by the cultural trend setters of the period. Dostoevsky concerned himself with the literary leanings of the Contemporary which had taken on the responsibility of provoking critical appreciativeness among the Russian reading public through its publication of scintillating critical articles by talented literary buffs of the period. The emerging highly empiricist viewpoint of literature, which had initially taken its cue from Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, thus came to impose itself not only on the reading public, but on the sensibility of the writer as well. This occurred to such an extent that the literary artist had to deliberately detach himself from his creativity and actually decide on which of the two alternatives to follow. While this dilemma was resolved quite unconsciously by some writers, who adjusted themselves with ease to the new environment of utilitarian writing and to prospects of easy popularity both among readers and critics, others found this entire scenario much too overbearing for proper release of their talent. Notwithstanding early difficulties in establishing themselves as writers of value, these authors were able to counter populist manifestos regarding the scope and purpose of a literary creation and they turned to the idea of art for art's sake. Fyodor M. Dostoevsky was a case in point. Writing at the height of populist fervour within the country, when the Contemporary was to be joined by the Fatherland Notes in creating new cultural identities, Dostoevsky was to devote much of his energy on deliberating on the question of art itself. And throughout his theorisation on literature and literary ideology, he juxtaposed his arguments against the two prevailing categories of art

- art for art's sake and the utilitarian ethics in art which remained constant in his consciousness. Strangely enough in spite of being a man of the sixties and the seventies, Dostoevsky never once displayed any signs of a passion for Vissarion Belinsky's ideas. "I condemn Belinsky .... I still remember my youthful amazement when I read some of his purely aesthetic efforts (as for instance on "Dead Souls."). he treated Gogol's characters with incredible superficiality and lack of comprehension, and merely rejoiced insanely that Gogol had accused somebody ..."). Then again "... And have you observed the following peculiarity of our Russian criticism? Every outstanding critic (such as Belinsky, Grigoryev) first presented himself to the public under protection, so to speak, of some outstanding writer - and then devoted himself wholly to the interpretation of the writer, nor ever expressed his ideas save in the form of a commentary upon that writer's works. I mean to say that critics can only express their own ideas when they step forth arm in arm with some writer who attracts them. Thus Belinsky, when he passed our whole literature under review, and even when he wrote his articles on Pushkin, could only do so by leaning on Gogol to whom he had paid his honour and youth .... "20. Given this sort of evaluation of Belinsky's role as a literary critic, Dostoevsky characteristically had scant respect for literary criticism as it stood during his time as a separate influential cultural category moulding mass consciousness in Russia.

In fact Dostoevsky began his article "On the Question of Art" by expressing regret for the miserable state of Russian criticism in the sixties. While admitting that the better known journals were making attempts to alter this state of


affairs, Dostoevsky refused to acknowledge Belinsky's role in rejuvenating criticism. "It is impossible not to admit that our criticism.....has suffered from a sort of general apathy for a long time, with perhaps only one exception - Home Annals. That journal has gone so far as to declare without the slightest hesitation or remorse that Belinsky's entire brilliant activity was, it is true, brilliant, but - how shall we put it? - somewhat superficial (entre nous soit dit) and that the real, immense and salutary activity of Russian criticism began after Belinsky had left that journal ......" Dostoevsky placed greater value on Valerian Nikolaevich Maikov and Dudyshkin as critics insisting that it was the latter with his brilliant article on Fonvizin who really set the wheel of meaningful literary criticism rolling. Once this process was initiated, the two views on art began to make themselves perceptible in the pages of these journals, encompassing thereby the consciousness of both the creators of literature and the receptors of their talent.

It would perhaps not be out of context to point out here that the problem of the validity of art itself was acknowledged by intellectuals of all shades both liberal and conservative during this particular period of intense intellectual activity in Russia. To Dostoevsky therefore this was "one of the most important

22. Magarschack DOW "Mr - bov and the Question of Art" p 86, 87. Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18 . p 70, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob iskusstve".

23. Magarschack DOW p 87. "Mr - bov and the Question of Art" Dostoevsky, PSS,vol 18, p 70, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob iskusstve".

S. S. Dudyshkin (1820-1866) was a journalist and literary critic of limited importance. Even though he was initially an admirer of Belinsky and contributed to Fatherland Notes, he was later attracted to aesthetic criticism and even as collaborator of Fatherland Notes assumed an a - political stance.

V. N. Maikov (1823-1847) was a literary critic. In 1846, Maikov headed the literary section of Fatherland Notes after Belinsky. Though influenced by Feuerbach and the Utopian Socialist, Maikov even while defending realism in literature opposed the concept of subordinating literature to the needs of society.
literary questions today" 24, which induced him to devote an entire article on the intellectual parting of ways on the issue and his own perception of the position to be adopted. Dostoevsky clarified the stand of the votaries of "high art" by saying "Some declare and teach that art is an aim by itself and must find its justification in its wider context........ consequently there cannot be any question of the usefulness of art in the real meaning of the word. Creation is the fundamental principle of all art and it is an unbroken organic quality of human nature and has a right to exist and develop, if only for the reason that it is a necessary accessory of the human spirit......." 25 The utilitarians on their part "demanded of art direct and immediate usefulness" 26 denying the necessity of "high artistic value of any work" 27 From the very beginning of this discourse, Dostoevsky displayed his partiality to the advocates of pure artistic art. Analysing an article written by Dobroliubov in the Contemporary, Dostoevsky categorically stated that utilitarians like him were "quite satisfied with the absence of artistic qualities so long as the right things are discussed". He added disparagingly that "..... This last wish is of course praiseworthy but it would be more agreeable if the right things had been discussed well and not just anyhow." 28 And here Dostoevsky stated his preference for quality rather than contextuality in a piece of writing pointing out that the absence of aestheticism hampered not only the cause of high art alone but negated its impact on the reading public in terms prescribed

24. Magarschack DOW p 89, "Mr - bov and the Question of Art", Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18 p 72, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve".
25. Magarschack DOW, p 91 "Mr - bov and the Question of Art", Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18, p 74, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve".
26. Magarschack DOW p. 95 "Mr - bov and the Question of Art", Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18, p 76, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve".
27. Magarschack DOW p 99 "Mr - bov and the Question of Art", Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18, p 79, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve".
28. Magarschack DOW p 107, "Mr - bov and the Question of Art" Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18, p 84, "G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve".
by the votaries of cognitive writing as well. “The whole point is that, so far as the masses are concerned, art is the best, the most persuasive, the most incontestable and the most intelligible method of presenting in images the very cause about which you (the utilitarians) are so concerned, the most businesslike way if you like, you who are so keen on putting everything on a businesslike basis.”

Highlighting the need for “freedom of inspiration”, Dostoevsky emphasised the value of art itself, with its set standard and “an independent, inseparable organic life of its own.” Any kind of demand on art immediately constrained its expression and rendered it with an artificiality derogatory to creativity as a whole. In his own everyday work experience Dostoevsky had indeed chafed under artificial demands of a slightly different nature on him, such as the necessity to contribute his writing to journals on time which not only posed great mental pressure on him, but hampered his process of thought with regard to conceptualisation of a new piece of writing.

Asserting that freedom of art was the only possible position which any artist could come to terms with, Dostoevsky however found it easy to strike an amicable mean between the aims and aspirations of the two critical approaches. In his view any conflict between the two at the fundamental level was absolutely redundant since art “...is not only always true to reality but it cannot possibly be untrue to reality..... Art which is not contemporary and which is not in line with modern requirements does not even exist.” The object of art should appear

29. Magarschack DOW p 123, “Mr - bov and the Question of Art” Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 18, p 93, “ G-N - Bov i vopros ob isskustve”.
bereft of any commitments and contextuality to enable the creator to mould it according to his own artistic sensibility. Dostoevsky writes, "...a poem in my view, makes its appearance like a virgin precious stone, a diamond, completely ready in the poet's soul, in all its essence; and that is the first act of the poet, as creator and maker, the first part of his creation. If you like it is not even he who is the creator, but life, the mighty essence of life, the God living and real, concentrating his power in the diversity of creation here and there, and often in the great heart and in the great poet, so that if the poet is not himself, the creator,...then at any rate his soul is that very same mine which begets diamonds and without which they cannot be found anywhere. Then follows the poet's second act, less profound and mysterious, but that in which the poet is concerned as artist- the business of cutting and polishing the diamond which he has obtained. Here the poet is almost a jeweller..."33

Having identified the purpose of art as being a quest for artistry and aestheticism in its purest sense which without any deliberate intention, brings into its orbit contemporary society which merely becomes a part of artistic expression, Dostoevsky set himself apart - some what along the line of Chekhov, later, - from the rest of the progressive intellectuals who were his contemporaries.

Yet in no sense was Dostoevsky ever isolated from his milieu interacting as he did with ideologues of the empiricist brand and producing works which were lauded by them as well. In fact Dostoevsky’s first novel "Poor Folk" was received with enthusiasm by Belinsky who immediately recognised in the newcomer to the literary world-a talent that promised to be enduring.34

Dostoevsky's conviction that true art had perforce to be a synchronisation of artistry and contextuality, imperceptibly found expression in his creative works so that die-hard populist critics like Dobroliubov were able to identify traces of social commitment in some of his early stories. Dostoevsky's selection of characters for many of his fictional works presented to the reader an overview of the differing layers of Russian society while at the same time emphasising the aspirations and disappointments of the comparatively less privileged members of the educated classes. This sense of deprivation, of an impossibility of reaching one's goal, whether in the sphere of love or in the fulfilment of one's wish - which one finds in stories such as *White Nights*, *A Faint Heart* or *An Honest Thief*, could well be interpreted as literature with a purpose in them - a purpose of depicting problems of establishing oneself in a society beleagured with injustice and despotism at every level. These early stories in one sense conformed quite easily with the typicalities of the evolutionary process of Russian literature as a whole in that they presented to the reader types whose characterisation immediately provoked an urge to find comparisons with other familiar types portrayed in the works of Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol. And it became rather elementary to identify the "outsider" in the heroes of the Dostoevskian tales and liken them to the superfluous man so prominent in the literature that preceded and followed. Interspersed within this theme, Dostoevsky introduced the "clerk" as the principal subject of this imaginative discourse, a subject which had been the favourite of the Natural School. To these two principal ingredients, Dostoevsky added a third element the psychological ramifications of insecurity and thus prepared a delectable broth that was relished both by critics of the populist shade and by those who stood against purposeful art as well. Thus the story *The Faint Heart* found credibility in the assessment of a particular group of critics as a work.

which had a message and thereby served a useful purpose. It had as its focus a young clerk who in Gogolian style was unable to withstand the pressures of work which to his delusion-ridden mind seemed to have been imposed upon him by his office superior who belonged to the upper echelons of society. The complexity of the relationship between the nobility, blessed with all the advantages in life and the middling group of unfortunates who are unable to identify themselves with either the higher or the lower classes emerges obliquely leaving just that much leeway for it to be interpreted as a socially relevant theme.

The Double similarly appreciated by certain critics of the utilitarian school, has been regarded by many as incorporating the concept of the dual personality. The complexities of the human mind brought to play in this brilliant story manifest themselves in the hero’s bid to project his personality and establish his positive role in society against the odds of his inner self which is his real self harbouring qualities not quite regarded as exemplary by society in general. Dostoevsky brilliantly explores the psychology of insanity investigates into the disease and traces its development. While taking up the Gogolian clerk as his principal theme. Dostoevsky uses his own technique to bring out the vacuum like existence, the facelessness the identitylessness, of the personality of men who had become cogs in the wheel of bureaucratic machinery. Through his portrayal of Golyadkin, Dostoevsky brought out the “underground man” seeking to isolate himself from society. According to Mochulsky “One can see in him the first caricature of the rationalised “universal man” whom Dostoevsky so despised.”

36. Dostoevsky, PSS, Vol I (1972), Premichania, p 489
37. Mochulsky, op cit, p50
While admitting that the novel was a failure, Dostoevsky regarded it to be specially significant as he had presented in it “a social type of the greatest import which I was the first to discover and to introduce [in literature]”\(^\text{38}\). Critics like Dobroliubov were quick to identify the hero Golyadkin (who at the same time is the anti-hero) as a socially oppressed type thereby indirectly stressing an inculcation of populist literary ideals by the author.\(^\text{39}\)

However it was *Poor Folk* which remained a favourite of the utilitarians who took up the hero’s utterings regarding the psychological leanings and mental frame of mind of the poor man as an evocation of the cult of poverty. Suitably impressed by this maturity from the pen of a twenty-two year old, Belinsky was to comment “you have touched upon the very essence of the matter by one stroke you have indicated the main thing. We publicists and critics, we merely deliberate; we try to explain this with words, but you, an artist with one trait, with one stroke, in an image you set forth the very gist, so that one can feel it with one’s own hand, so as to enable the least reasoning reader to grasp everything at once. This is the mystery of art. This is the truth of art. This is the artist’s service to truth. To you as an artist, truth is revealed and declared, it came to you as gift. treasure then your gift, be faithful to it, and you will become a great writer”\(^\text{40}\). Dostoevsky’s emphasis here of poverty as inner concept often quite removed from external condition however raised problems other than those posed by the political minded critic of the day. And it is this very angle which needs to be highlighted with regard to writers like Dostoevsky. From what could well be misconstrued as having a positive social message a deeper analysis revealing the author’s intention


\(^{39}\) Dostoevsky PSS vol 1, *Premichania* -pp 489 & 490

of explaining the typicality and justifiability of the compulsive obsequiousness of a nondescript clerk towards his superior against the broader matrix of human existence needs to be probed.

Whatever the uncertainty thrown up by the “nuances” gleaned by intellectuals eager to place Dostoevsky’s writings in a particular context, and however doubtful the interpretation of his partiality towards the treatment of the human psyche may have been - (e.g. “the pathological manifestation of volition is an outright hobby of the author of ‘the Possessed, the Idiot etc.” 41 regarding Dostoevsky’s advocacy of psychologically analysing the reason for a pregnant woman’s murder of her six-year-old step-daughter. Russian intellectuals like N.K. Mikhailovsky and Maxim Gorky found in Dostoevsky’s meticulous investigation into suffering and insanity a manifestation of a ‘sensual’ pleasure in suffering), 42 there can be no doubt that Dostoevsky was able present readers with depictions which provoked powerful sympathies and response.

*Crime and Punishment*, the novel Dostoevsky wrote for *The Russian Messenger* explores the notion of a ‘utilitarian morality’ where crime may be committed for the cause of practical usefulness. Probing intensely into the psychological process of crime as it unfolded in the murder committed by Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky demonstrates according to his biographer, that “economic principle does not lead to universal prosperity, but rather to mutual annihilation” - Mochulsky goes on to say “Thus Raskolnikov’s story completes Dostoevsky’s struggle with the generation of the sixties”. 43 As Chernyshevsky

43. K. Mochulsky, op cit, p 275
and his followers dreamt of bringing happiness to mankind, Raskolnikov intended to do the same - with the difference that he felt impelled to resort to crime in order to achieve his aim. Instead what he actually achieved was to carry through his practical egoism to its logical conclusion. Dostoevsky here is inspired to transmit into his hero Raskolnikov Stirner's philosophy of injunctions about one's social behaviour emanating from oneself. Raskolnikov fails to carry out this idea to its logical end. His conscience does not forbid him to commit the crime of homicide. However, he is unable to overcome his consciousness of Good and Evil in the ultimate analysis. He gives himself up to those very upkeepers of social law whom he despised as "lice". Here Dostoevsky falls back on his early belief in ethical norms and Christian values in Russian society.

Dostoevsky's quest for Christian art progressed a step further with his composition of The Idiot which the Russian Messenger printed in parts all through 1868 and early 1869. Here Dostoevsky aimed to portray a "wholly beautiful individual" in the personality of Prince Myshkin who struggles against "dark forces" only to be engulfed by them in the end. Holding as his ideal the elevated humanism of Don Quixote, Dostoevsky imparts a sort of innocent naiveity to Prince Myshkin whose efforts at discovering goodness all around him often ends in failure. Interspersed within this theme of a search for goodness lies his intense admiration for beauty as well as disillusionment with human society with its striving for power and money. Mochulsky points out that in The Idiot Dostoevsky asserts his faith in the true Russian spirit as he makes his Prince Myshkin "return to Russia in order to discover the soil, to reunite himself with the people, to return the sources of living life". The Russian people ultimately help him discover the

44. A. Walicki, A History of Russian Thought, op cit, p316.
45. K. Mochulsky, op cit, pp367,368.
essence of religious feeling. The true image of Christ in Myshkin’s new consciousness should be used to counter atheistic forces which in Dostoevsky’s analysis was infiltrating into Russia from the West. Here Dostoevsky sought to reinforce Slavophile faith in Orthodox Russian religion. The innate nationalism of Dostoevsky’s ideas emerges ‘quite clearly in Prince Myshkin’s tirade against Russian liberalism and against Westernism, Dostoevsky’s search for Christian art culminated in a total conversion to Russian Christianism. Examination into narrative techniques of *The Idiot* reveal that Dostoevsky deliberately led the reader through a kaleidoscope of impressions, often merging the narrator’s voice with that of his own, and often having him discern an element of unacceptability in many of the narrator’s arguments. By clever manipulation however Dostoevsky absorbs the reader’s attention to the last till the latter becomes a part of the Dostoevskian world portrayed in the novel. As such Dostoevsky’s ideas of abiding faith in Russian orthodoxy and the spirit of the Russian people all become a part of the reader’s consciousness as he revels in this typically Dostoevskian experience.

Philosophical strivings within Dostoevsky perhaps reached a highpoint in the *Brothers Karamazov,* which he completed in 1880. Here the problem of faith juxtaposed with that of evil centred on the great debate about the existence of


God. Here too Dostoevsky presented the reader with a beautiful individual (reminiscent of Prince Myshkin) in the personality of Alyosha Karamazov steeped in faith in the religion of Christ. In this novel Dostoevsky debated the question of faith through the characters of Alyosha, Ivan and Dmitry who in their totality represented an "organically collective personality" Alyosha's assertion of faith is offset by Ivan's cynicism towards it and Dmitry's indifference and lustful passions. In the mental attitudes of the three brothers is epitomised the polemics of faith versus disbelief. While the Legend of Grand Inquisitor desisted from total surrender to Christianity because of the great suffering still experienced by mankind, the Elder Zossima tilted the balance of the novel towards faith.

*Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* which Dostoevsky wrote earlier in 1863 reflected the writer's negative impression of West European capitalism. The bourgeois individualism of the Western world bred isolation which projected man into a relationship of conflict with nature and fellow humans. In Dostoevsky's view Russia possessed solutions to the problems of isolation posed by capitalism in Orthodoxy and Russian folk traditions with their inherent tendency towards preserving the authentic fraternal community. Slavophile ideals of Russianness were thus acknowledged by Dostoevsky who in the ultimate analysis perhaps subscribed to the Belinskian concept of a national literature, through his creative writings.

Apart from his creative works, which saw succesful stories like *A Novel in Nine Letters* (1847) *A Christmas Party* and a *Wedding* (1848) *Notes from the Underground* (1864), *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877), *Notes from the House of the Dead* (1860-62) and *The Insulted and Injured* (1861) Dostoevsky involved himself in journalistic activities. Along with his brother Mikhail he founded a literary journal *Vremia* (1861-63) and a second one in 1864 called *Epoch*. Apart from editing these journals, Dostoevsky published some of his
major works in them. Later in 1871 after his return from Europe Dostoevsky became the editor of Grazhdanin (The Citizen) owned by Prince Meshchersky. Many of his observations of Russian life and his theories about literature appeared in the pages of these journals.

The recent concern with the poetics of Dostoevsky reveals important aspects of the ideas of the author concerning prose formation. Bakhtin for example finds in Dostoevsky, the unusual capacity of observing everything from a multidimensional point of view. Every simple event or thought was perceived to have a number of ramifications which the author carefully took into account, pausing at the moment when this multiplicity divulged itself, only to project this multi-leveledness at a given unit of time. It was this particular characteristic of Dostoevsky which according to Bakhtin enabled him to create a new genre in the art of writing - the polyphonic novel. Dostoevsky's artistic world was thus not a monolithic structure, but constituted what can be termed as "dialogic opposition".

It is in this Bakhtinian concept of the dialogic novel that one can discern elements of an unusual detachment in the consciousness of the author as he tries to portray a given character or even a given situation in all its multifaceted dimensions leaving the reader guessing as to what exactly constitutes the authorial voice. And it is here that an element of objectivity underlines the authorial discourse placing Dostoevsky's artistic activity at par with his downright rejection of a cognitive approach in the practice of his art.


49. Ibid, p 42
Dostoevsky's objectivity as an artist is further manifested in the projection of the hero, who represents an "autonomous discourse, a pure voice"\(^{50}\) a consciousness not subsumed within that of the author's, but an independent entity, baring its all before the reader. And it is through this process of self introspection and self clarification that the Dostoyevskian hero, according to Bakhtin arrives at the "truth" which is really the "truth of the hero's own consciousness"\(^{51}\). It is only then that the authorial discourse is juxtaposed on the hero's self revelation in order to present to the reader "a new integral view on the person."\(^{52}\) Often major characters like Raskolnikov, Sonya, Myshkin, Ivan and Dmitri Karamazov remain in Bakhtin's view very much aware of their "own unfinalizability" a consciousness which expresses itself through crime, heroism or ideology.\(^{53}\) This analysis of Dostoevsky's technique supports my impression that major authors of this period worked intensely towards a focus in their composition that was devoid of oblique motivations of didacticism.

Problings into Dostoevsky's philosophical preoccupations reveal the plurality of his mindset regarding human society and history. Here Dostoevsky was utopian in his attitudes and believed in the transcendent purpose of history. On the other hand his sense of irony found a curtailment of human freedom in attempts to foist a uniform pattern on the complex "multiplicity of chaotic reality".\(^{54}\)

Dostoevsky asserted that the need of the hour in Russian society was the spread of education and the narrowing of the gap between the masses and the

---

50. Ibid, p 53
51. Ibid, p 55
52. Ibid, p 58
53. Ibid, p 59
54. Aileen Kelly, "Irony and Utopia in Herzen and Dostoevsky", op. cit., p 140
educated upper classes so that literature, infused with high artistic quality alone would be appreciated by all sections of Russia’s society. Like many intelligentsia of his time, Dostoevsky was acutely conscious of the role of literature as a force to be used for steering society towards a more hopeful situation. And a basic precondition to the achievement of that state was a determined but sympathetic attempt by the educated classes to narrow down the abyss that separated the higher classes (ie. the class having the privilege of education) from the lower illiterate classes through the dissemination of knowledge and education “Education is already considered a matter of the first importance in our society. Everything makes place for it, all the class privileges disappear in it. Our whole future, our whole independence, our strength, all depend on the quickest possible development of education, it is the only conscious step forward and, what is most important, it is a peaceful step, a step of agreement, a step toward true strength”. 55

Along with the spread of education, the subject of the kind of literature to be presented to the masses assumed utmost significance in Dostoevsky’s world view. Never for a moment did Dostoevsky underestimate the mental faculties of the uneducated classes, nor did he harbour any illusions about the need to patronise the under privileged in society with simplistic literature which would only moralise and teach. In fact Dostoevsky devotes much effort at examining the kind of reading material which was normally considered to be “right” for the masses. He mentions Mr. Grigorovich, Mr. Pogodin and Mr. Pogossky as writers

of books for the people.56 "About the other "popular" books, one can say that there are dozens of them but one can hardly say a good word for any of them."57 Expressing equal dissatisfaction with Mr. Shcherbin’s “The Reader” which was basically “a project of a book for the common people”,58 Dostoevsky found abhorrent the attitude that ‘the common people are stupid, therefore they must be taught.59 His personal prescription for affording real enlightenment to the masses, was to infuse in them an interest for the written word and thereby a love for reading “....since a good book greatly develops the desire for reading, it is necessary to provide the common people with most entertaining and pleasant reading matter,.....only after the common people get a taste for reading should an attempt be made to teach and educate them. And though in the first ‘readers’, published for the common people, no one can prevent me from choosing articles that would be of the greatest usefulness for them, I would all the same put the entertainment value of these books above everything else, for it is necessary first of all to achieve one thing - the spread of a desire for reading among the peasants and only afterwards to set about educating them"60.

Dostoevsky was undoubtedly a litterateur who was partial to high art: “....it is the nature of good literature to purify taste and reason, and that is why I pin my hopes on it,” he wrote, on one occasion, and again, later, “....finally as a

57 Magarschack DOW p 161, "Five Articles from Time - Article IV Pedantry and Literacy" Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 19, p 21.
58 Magarschack DOW p 161, "Five Articles from Time - Article IV Pedantry and Literacy" Dostoevsky, PSS, vol 19, p 21.
59 Magarschack DOW p 166, "Five Articles from Time - Article IV Pedantry and Literacy" Dostoevsky - PSS, vol 19, p 25.
60 Magarschack DOW p 194, "Five Articles from Time - Article IV Pedantry and Literacy", Dostoevsky - PSS, vol 19, p. 45.
result of the pleasure (most of all pleasure) my books will provide, the desire for reading will gradually spread among the common people...."\(^{61}\) He was also a major advocate of imagination and fantasy as an important ingredient of good literature, and can by no means be identified as a typical product of the epoch of the sixties. Even when he acknowledged the importance of realism in art he emphasised a writer's ability to "make the improbable look real i.e. to create illusion through precision of detail". \(^{62}\) Had he been an integral part of the radical literary circle of his times, he would perhaps never have gained the stature that he did during his life time and achieved that very quality of universality in his own works that he had so lauded as the genius of Pushkin. The mastermind of the sixties, who wrote "it is useless to prescribe to art its aims and preferences" \(^{63}\) certainly stood apart as a class by himself.

2. L.N. Tolstoy

In this respect, the political activists who dominated the 1860s, and who were supported by a particular breed of intellectuals, were unable to leave any indelible impression on the cultural views of either the ordinary masses, who were highly suspicious of the town bred and often supercilious revolutionary, or on the educated elite who often had a distinct role to play in the sphere of art. Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, certainly a towering figure of this period was never very comfortably adjusted to revolutionary ideas at all. In the midst of gripping revolutionary fervour in 1905, Tolstoy was to write that revolutionaries after all could never be sure that what they were trying to achieve, and the mode of action

through which they were working towards their goal, was in every sense correct.

"How do you know that what you wish to alter should be altered in the way that seems to you to be good? ....And how do you know that what you are doing will produce the results you expect, for you cannot but be aware that the results attained are generally contrary to those aimed at - especially in affairs relating to the life of a whole nation?"^64 ....

While denying the revolutionaries the validity of their work, Tolstoy was however acutely conscious of the reasons (and in this case genuine ones) for the rise of the revolutionary mentality at the turn of the century. That the forward looking intelligentsia of the towns - the self-appointed path-finders to a better egalitarian Russian society were constantly being heckled by the autocracy through widespread and indiscriminate use of the weapons of exile and arbitrary imprisonment was a fact conceded by the writers of the age. The exploitation of the poor was the other more glaring injustice which Tolstoy was bitterly conscious of: "....the fundamental evil from which the Russian people suffer in common with the people of Europe and America is that the majority of the people are deprived of the indubitable and natural right of every man to have the use of a portion of the land in which he was born"^65. Tolstoy’s concern with the innate anomalies of Russian society, its exploitation of the rich by the poor, and the restrictions on the mental freedom of the educated class was reflective of his affinity to the other intellectuals of his time - all of whom felt a certain responsibility for the prevailing conditions. But where Tolstoy could perhaps be


set apart was in his rather unique working out of a remedy which would mitigate the evils that plagued the Russia of his time.

By the final decades of the nineteenth century the typical young pleasure loving aristocrat with an extraordinary mind (the Tolstoy of the 1850s and 60s) had gradually yielded place to Tolstoy the savant and grand old man of Russian literature totally immersed in metaphysical probings. The beginnings of this transformation could perhaps be discerned quite early when Tolstoy left the University of Kazan which he had entered in 1844 to study Oriental languages and later on Law. Though it was ostensibly on grounds of "ill-health and domestic circumstances" that Tolstoy dropped out of the ambit of formal education, it was really his sense of dissatisfaction with prevalent modes of teaching and the narrowness of the intellectual horizon to which students were compelled to restrict themselves that made him take such a decision. The young Tolstoy embarked on the task of self-education and familiarised himself with a wide range of literature including Rousseau's *Confessions* and *Emile*, Dickens' *David Copperfield* as well as *The Sermon on the Mount* from St Mathews' Gospel.66

After a brief sojourn in the country which he spent mostly in Yasnaya Polyana - the estate where he was born, Tolstoy joined the army as a cadet in 1852. His first military attachment stationed him in the Cossack village of Starogladovskaya in the Northern Caucasus and involved him in encounters with the fiery Chechen tribe. The fact that Tolstoy did not find life in the Caucasus too satisfying comes out quite clearly in his diary. He writes in 1853 ... “service in the

Caucasus has brought me nothing except difficulties, idleness and bad acquaintances. I must finish with it as early as possible." However inspite of a sense of leading an aimless existence, this period was interspersed with significant literary output. *Childhood* his first story was published in *Sovremennik* in 1852 followed by *Boyhood* and a number of tales like *The Raid* which had army life as their principal theme. Moreover work on *A Landlords' Diary, The Cossacks* and *Youth* was simultaneously started at about this time. Tolstoy's experiences as an army officer were utilised in many of his stories. His sketch *The Wood Felling* for example was based on an incident which took place in 1853, when the young Tolstoy nearly met his death when a shell fell near his feet. Material for *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* was taken from Tolstoy's real life experience of being nearly captured by some Chechen horsemen. His story *The Cossacks* describes the primitive and almost ideal life of these tribes while participation in the siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War provided the backdrop to *Sevastopol Sketches*.

This remarkable period of creativity was accompanied by a constant struggle to exercise restraint in his normally (at this period of time) dissolute lifestyle and resulted in self introspection and high-thinking. He set himself the following goal "to be industrious reasonable and modest, to be active always in pursuing spiritual aims to consider all my actions from the point of view that those that are good and are directed to spiritual aims, and to be modest so that the pleasure of being satisfied with onself should not change into the pleasure of exciting praise or surprise in others".  

By 1857 Tolstoy had made reputation for himself as a writer and visited Europe for the first time. By this time he had become even more conversant with Western literature. Where English authors were concerned Dickens and Thackeray

were among the first in Tolstoy's list of priorities. He read Thackeray's novel *The Newcomes* in the *Contemporary* in 1856 and made notes from it. The *Contemporary* also published essays by Isaac Disraeli in 1853, which were highly appreciated by Tolstoy. An avid reader of Shakespeare, whose *Midsummer Night's Dream* was being translated by Russians like A.A. Grigorev, Tolstoy was a regular reader of journals like *The Athenaeum* and *Revue des Deux Mondes*.68 Readings in Western literature and philosophy, resulted in an active dialogue with the West. Tolstoy himself admitted to the influence of Rousseau, Stendhal, Josef de Maistre and Schopenhauer on him. Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise*, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and Gogol's *Dead Souls*. Rousseau's doctrine of natural law convinced Tolstoy that inner harmony in man could be achieved if his basic spiritual and material needs were fulfilled. Spiritual values, external to man had to be adjusted with man's consciousness in order to achieve this harmony. Tolstoy regarded Schopenhauer as "The most brilliant of men" and wrote to his friend Fet that he had been experiencing "constant raptures over Schopenhauer" and had "found a whole series of spiritual delights in his work." 69

In his early writings Tolstoy displayed a remarkable variety of literary styles. His interest in the psyche found a place in *Childhood* in which the childlike observations of the main character were interpolated with impressions of the child grown up. *Childhood* along with *Boyhood* and *Youth* displayed a blend of autobiographical elements with lyrical portrayals of childlike impressions and their subsequent maturity which accompanied the growth of the conscious

mind. The tales of military life contained in them many features of the natural school of writing of the 1840s which Tolstoy expressed admiration for. Thematic preoccupation of the later years were to emerge in a number of early stories. *Three Deaths* (1859) was one such early work which explored human emotions in connection with mortality while *The Cossacks* (1863) probed the question of the relationship between the individual and the collective. The position of the individual vis-a-vis social and historical groups, the comfortable placing of individual sensibility in a social and historical background of diversity occupied the attention of the writer in this story.

The life of a litterateur did not satisfy Tolstoy totally compelling him to intermittently fall back on purposeful social activity. During his stay at Yasnaya Polyana in 1857, after his return from Europe. Tolstoy turned his attention to farming and to the reform of his estate. His interest soon began to be focussed on the problem of education, consequent to which he set up a school for peasant children at Yasnaya Polyana. In fact his second visit to Europe in 1860 was undertaken with the precise aim of studying the system of education prevalent in the West.

In 1863, Tolstoy began work on *War and Peace*. The epic proportions of the novel which has as its central theme Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 turned out to be almost a sociological study of contemporary Russia. An evocation of life itself with its multifaceted variety, the novel explores questions of peace and war, reason and intuition, the individual and the group. The psychological questions raised by changes in the mindset of Andrei Bolkonsky and Pierre Bezukhov are communicated to the reader who is confronted with a multiplicity of possible attitudes towards life. Tolstoy's philosophy of history was
expounded in *War and Peace.* In his evaluation of history Tolstoy was a believer in natural law and its unexorable progress which influenced human society. Schopenhauer's conception of the powerless human will striving to establish itself vis-a-vis pre-determined rigid universal laws influenced Tolstoy greatly. This predetermined movement of history according to Tolstoy was a process that was incomprehensible to the human mind. While certain great men were believed to be invested with heroic virtues and were regarded as being responsible for historical change, they were nothing more than mere mortals who were unaware of their own insignificance in the 'cosmic flow' of life's reality. Like Napoleon in *War and Peace*, all great men were cogs in the wheel of history. Causal chains which did exist remained ever incomprehensible to man.

The question of individualism, the intuitive striving for freedom by the individual as against reaction in commonality with others, was another issue investigated in great depth in *Anna Karenina*. Anna Karenina's love affair with Vronsky brings her individualism to the fore which however is unable to ultimately establish itself in conditions of unusual social stress. Interaction with society loses all meaning for Anna who is ultimately forced to take her own life in the face of irreconcilable tension between her ideals of freedom and societal norms. The group overcomes the individual in the last resort.

Hauser's point that it is in the concept of the self and the world that both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy veer away from Western novelistic forms is well taken.


Both writers were anti-individualistic in their orientation. In Tolstoy's case it was not through detachment from society, but through self-denial and a spirit of brotherhood that man could attain happiness. One may however query Hauser's contention that the intrinsic Russianness of Tolstoy's novels can be found merely in its epic character and the "undramatic and unemphatic quality of form". 71

It was while writing *Anna Karenina* that Tolstoy became increasingly concerned with questions regarding the nature and meaning of the universe and its inhabitants. His *Confession* (1882) details the spiritual crisis experienced by the writer and points to his new convictions. The net result of this deliberation on religion was a resort to a kind of Christian anarchism on the part of Tolstoy that led him to deny immortality and reject the authority of the church. His altered views made him change his way of life and lead an austere existence till his death in 1910.

This preoccupation with religion on the part of Tolstoy was in a sense an off-shoot of the religious crisis that Russia had been undergoing in the later decades of the nineteenth century. 72 The general disillusionment with the Orthodox church primarily resulted from the rigidity of the state church manned by ignorant official clergymen who failed to satisfy the religious aspirations of the people. In consequence Russian society became filled with an increasing number of non-conformists, a radical intelligentsia with a particular aesthetic attitude and an aristocracy which was apathetic towards religion. The established church was

unable to stem the skepticism and religious uncertainty which found its way into Russia and was in little position to provide spiritual leadership. In an effort to seek answers to their religious and moral problems, many believed that these could be found is a new religious and ethical teaching. This quest for salvation was epitomised in one respect by Tolstoy's search for truth outside the bounds of the established religious order. And it was natural that in correspondence with these kind of ideas, that Tolstoy would maintain an atypical world view about matters of immediate import such as the functioning of the autocracy and the course to be adopted by the opposition.

Tolstoy was convinced that religion was fundamental to the existence of “rational” man and that “equality of man”73 was an essential aspect, an integral part so to say of that religion....... However the essence of this religion had been eroded by man’s utter selfishness and by the political authority’s utilisation of it as a tool to be used to maintain its own privileges and to subjugate the masses. In the case of Russia, the state used the authority of the church to perpetrate all kindsof injustices in the name of law and order. A horrified Tolstoy wrote. “You restore peace and order! By what means do you restore them? By destroying the last vestige of faith and morality in men - you, representatives of a Christian authority, leaders and teachers approved and encouraged by the servants of the Church! By committing the greatest crimes: lies, perfidy, torture of all sorts, and this last and most terrible of crimes, the one most abhorrent to every human heart that is not utterly depraved - not just a single murder, but murders innumerable, which you think to justify by stupid references to such and such such statutes written by yourselves in those stupid and lying book of yours which you blasphemously call

The net result of this kind of imposition by the autocracy was the stupefication of the masses who found themselves unable to realise the essence of religion which is ultimately a "relation, accordant with reason and knowledge which man establishes with the infinite life surrounding him, and it is such as binds his life to that infinity and guides his conduct." Having been denied this guidance, and along with it the implementation of any concept of "equality of men" leading to what Tolstoy called "a great iniquity" in Russian society, all of which were due to the machinations of the autocracy, the field lay clear for revolutionaries to try and restore what they felt were the correct order of things. And it is here that Tolstoy - even while conceding that the onus of blame was on the authoritarian regime in Russia; expressed his reservations about the revolutionary process that he felt had unfortunately subsumed itself within the maladies which had already afflicted his motherland. To Tolstoy's mind, the revolutionaries suffered from a similar kind of delusion that plagued the authorities. They too misconstrued their role in society, believing themselves to be arbiters of a sort who would be able to rearrange things in a way so as to suit the needs of a maximum number of people. In order to do this, resorting to violence and even murder would be justified as this would, after all, benefit a maximum number of people. To Tolstoy steeped in new ideas of religion and morality, this outlook was anathema and an indicator of the moral poverty of society. His answer to the revolutionary zeal was "to obey the highest law common to all mankind - the law of love to one's neighbour...."

75. Leo Tolstoy, Selected Essays, op. cit., p 54, "What is Religion", Tolstoy, PSS, vol 35 "Shto takoe religija." p 163
76. Tolstoy ICS, p 198, "What is to be Done" Tolstoy PSS, vol36, p 369 "Shto zhe delat?"
Only if men regarded all human-beings as brothers and pledged never to injure or sacrifice human lives under any circumstances, coercion, injustice and all evil would be minimized and the existence of all mankind would be redeemed. “The highest human blessedness is attainable by man when he acknowledges his sonship to God and the brotherhood of all mankind”\textsuperscript{77}. This was Tolstoy’s reading of the entire situation, his answer to the problems created by the autocracy whereby men were denied of the natural right to possess the land on which they were born.\textsuperscript{78} On the other hand Tolstoy had very little support for the revolutionary ideas and adoption of violent means to rearrange the existing order. Tolstoy’s own words best describe his convictions regarding resolution of the crisis confronting Russian society. “The religious movement now due among the Russian people consists in cancelling the great sin that has for so long tormented and divided people, not only in Russia but in the whole world. That sin cannot be undone by political reforms or socialist systems planned for the future, or by a revolution now. Still less can it be undone by philanthropic contributions, or government organisations for the purchase and distribution of land among the peasants. Such palliative measures only divert attention from the essence of the problems and thus hinder its solution. No artificial sacrifices are necessary nor concern about the people - what is needed is simply that all who are committing this sin or taking part in it should be conscious of it, and desire to be free from it.”\textsuperscript{79} The new ideal attitude of mankind would be to recognise that land did not belong only to the privileged classes - and that it was honourable to relinquish


\textsuperscript{78} Tolstoy ICS, p 175 “A Great Iniquity” Tolstoy PSS, Vol. 36, p 207, “\textit{Veliki Grekh}”.

\textsuperscript{79} Tolstoy ICS, p 184, “A Great Iniquity”, Tolstoy PSS, Vol. 36, p 184, “\textit{Veliki Grekh}”.
hold over it. A spontaneous withdrawal of illegal holdings (illegal from the point
of view of the human conscience) would provide a lasting remedy and preempt
any unpleasantness or violence either on the part of the aristocracy or on that of
the revolutionaries.

With such political religious and social viewpoints, it is clear that Tolstoy
was unable to accommodate any revolutionary orientation in his intellectual
thought process. And interestingly enough it is possible to trace a similar apathy
on the part of Tolstoy to another kind of revolutionary zeal which resorted to
dictating terms to creativity in a bid to forcibly influence the mentality of the
society from which radical activists wished to eliminate injustice and evil: Since
Tolstoy lived and wrote during the period of great intellectual turmoil (to which
he himself contributed a great deal) and since literature was his primary creative
concern it was natural for him to have been confronted with the dominant school
of literary criticism imposed by intellectuals who had been providing inspiration
to the populist revolutionaries of the 1860s. Tolstoy had little in common with
revolutionaries like Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Pisarev who fostered an
utilitarian view of art and concerned themselves with literature because of its role
in the dissemination of radical ideas among the people. However the appreciative
comment in his diary regarding Belinsky's writings on Pushkin, 80 testifies to his
openness to the literary traditions that were making themselves felt in the Russian
world of creative writing making it somewhat easier to understand the stages by
which Tolstoy finally adopted the position that he did on the question of art and
writing.

In his comments on art and literature in the early years of his intellectual activity one finds Tolstoy stressing morality - as an indispensable requisite of creative writing. "I was astonished that we should have lost the conception of the one aim of literature - morality - to such a degree...it would really not be a bad thing in every literary work (as in fables) to write a moral, stating its aim" 81. Mere aestheticism devoid of any moral value seemed unacceptable to Tolstoy. What Tolstoy expected from writers was possession of sufficient talent. Authors, according to him should first ensure that their subject had enough moral significance, then proceed to faithfully pledge their commitment to what they described and avoid perverting "natural" values. "The pleasantest books are those in which the author seems as it were to try and hide his opinion - yet remains true to whatever is shown."82 It emerges clearly that Tolstoy's later preoccupation with morality in every sphere of human activity had been formulated very early in life and that most of his ideas as a mature thinker had developed from certain conceptions that he cherished from the very beginning of his career. His thoughts on religion for example had their beginnings in his mental make-up around 1855 when is spite of doubts, hesitancy and incomprehension about the nature of God ["I do not understand the necessity for God's existence, but I believe in this and pray for help to understand Him." 83 he was ultimately able to discover true religion. He was to write: "There are laws governing all things, laws you don't understand but you feel this curb everywhere - everywhere He exists". 84

Secondly, where literature and the appraisal of the value of literature in society is concerned, Tolstoy's stress on morality might be misconstrued as a position akin to that of the theoritician advocating populist strategies of didactism

83. Private Diary of Leo Tolstoy, p 15, Entry of 8th July 1853, Tolstoy, PSS, vol 46, p 167
in art and literature. However a perusal of his own conception of Art which was formulated in his mature years finds Tolstoy immersed in a world of his own sharply distinguishing art from non-art\textsuperscript{85} and rejecting totally any theory which reduced literature to a tool for intellectual brainwashing. In fact he reached such conclusions regarding the nature of true art that the Belinskian formulations about art, which assumed greater importance in terms of the influence that it wielded over a section of literary society, seemed rather bland by contrast. Tolstoy defined "artistic creation [as] such mental activity as brings dimly perceived feelings (or thoughts) to such a degree of clearness that these feelings (or thoughts) are transmitted to other people."\textsuperscript{86} Equating creation with art, Tolstoy felt that when an inner experience of the artist is comprehended fully by the artist himself after compulsive effort, his task is to convey this new 'vision' to others and make it acceptable to them.\textsuperscript{...} The basic condition of the production of such works is that the artist should be conscious of something new and important.\textsuperscript{...} In order that the new things he sees may be important ones, the artist must be a morally enlightened man, and he must not live a selfish life but must share the common life of humanity.\textsuperscript{87} True art and the role of the artist had connotations to Tolstoy which were very different from the implications which art had for revolutionaries, in spite of the fact that he lived and worked in a period of populist dominance. His literary activity with its emphasis on the moral movement overcame the intellectual barriers posed by the critical tradition of the sixties with ease - with much greater ease perhaps than his similar rejection of revolutionary activity which he sought to convert to reality through recourse to a particular way of life.

\textsuperscript{85} Tolstoy ICS, p 129 "On Art", Tolstoy, PSS, vol 30 (1951), pp 213-216, "Ob Isskustve".

\textsuperscript{86} Tolstoy ICS, p 132 "On Art", Tolstoy PSS, Vol 30, p 213, "Ob Isskustve".

\textsuperscript{87} Tolstoy ICS, p 133 "On Art", Tolstoy PSS, Vol 30, p 213, "Ob Isskustve".
It was precisely this non conformism of Tolstoy, this aberration so to say in the typical outlook of a member of the Russian nobility, which induced Tolstoy to lead a simple peasant existence in the later years of his life that has been eulogised by intellectuals of the radical line. Tolstoy has been hailed as the conscience of the Russian nobility while his works have been regarded as prescribing a positive national aspiration. The ideal of Platon Karatayev has been constantly referred to as an episode imperceptibly fomenting a revolution in the mental make up of Russian society and bringing to the fore peasant consciousness which had hitherto been totally suppressed. This sort of appraisal of Tolstoy's life and works was perhaps reinforced by the writer's active efforts at social reform especially in the sphere of education. Deeply concerned with the situation of the common man, Tolstoy was unable to accept the numerical disproportion of educated and illiterate people within Russia. He felt that "as far as Russia's progress in education is concerned, it seems to me that however useful telegraphs, roads, steamers, carbines, literature, theatres, Academies of art etc.are, they are all premature and wasted until such time as it can be seen from the calender, that 1% of the total population of Russia, including all so called students are receiving instruction." Starting a school for peasant children at Yasnaya Polyana and temporarily relegating his literary activity to the background was part of his attempt to put his ideas into practice. He also published the educational journal "Yasnaya Polyana" which brought out articles written by him and his teachers and students. Tolstoy's letters to various people written around this time reveal how immensely important his journal which reflected his increasingly passionate interest in educational theory, was to him. It is noteworthy

88. *Tolstoy's Letters* Vol I. 1828 - 1879, op. cit., p 226 Note on N.N. Strakhov. Linals in Studies in European Realism, op. cit., (p138) points out that Lenin regarded Tolstoy as the poetic mirror of peasant revolution in Russia and as such one of the greatest realists in Russian literature.

that Tolstoy was well aware of a certain expansion in the reading public inspite of the limited growth of education. In order to work within the wider spectrum of the literate population Tolstoy along with his associate V. Chertkov and the publisher I. D Sytin setup the firm Posrednik (Intermediary) which began publishing high quality literature at very cheap prices for dissemination among the ordinary masses.

Notwithstanding efforts to discern tendencies of radicalism and ideological preaching between the lines of Tolstoy's phenomenally successful literary works - efforts which were quite adequately suited to the mood and temper of the times when the revolutionary zeal was reflected in works of art - a perusal of the intricacies of Tolstoyan philosophy and their connection to his literary writings reveal a position which cannot be said to have adhered to the critical tradition of the sixties. In the first place Tolstoy from his very young years revealed tendencies towards non-conformism in almost all his ideas regarding different questions about Russian society. In fact one can draw a straight line from the ideas of the young Tolstoy and their evolution to the religious and social non conformism of his mature years. Where religion was concerned Tolstoy as early as 1855 spoke of "the religion of Christ, but purged of dogmas and mysticism - a practical religion, not promising future bliss but giving bliss on earth ...."90 In the sphere of education Tolstoy's argument was that "A child or man can learn when he has an appetite for what he studies. Without appetite, instruction is an evil - a terrible evil causing people to become mentally crippled"91 He strongly disapproved of examinations as tending to arbitrariness on the part of examiners and deception on the part of pupils. His pledge in his young days to do "the duty I

90. Private Diary of Leo Tolstoy, op. cit., p 114, Entry of 2-5 March 1855, Tolstoy, PSS, vol 47, p 37
owe to my serfs and fellow countrymen" speaks of an individual placed apart from the other members of his class. Harbouring such individualistic perceptions as he did it is logical to expect that he could never be constrained by any ideological prescription-radical or otherwise - in what was after all his true vocation, i.e. literature. However intense the attempt of the radical intelligentsia may have been to find tendencies of "social purpose" in his work, Tolstoy was too much of a conservative (as his later anti-revolutionary convictions were to emphasize) and too much of a non-conformist to succumb to any intellectual dictatorship. The fact that Tolstoy ceased to publish in the *Contemporary* after it exhibited a radical bias politically, when Chernyshevsky became one of its editors, is adequate proof of this. Tolstoy's friendship with Druzhinin, an advocate of art for art's sake and a close associate of the *Contemporary*, till it was taken over by the radical school, along with his relationship with Botkin and Annenkov, helped to develop the ideas on art and aesthetics that Tolstoy was to propound later. Comments like "This story is so excellent because its effect was unintentional in Tolstoy's "An Afterword to Chekhov's story *Darling*" and "The sordid stream of politics is seeking to engulf everything and it is out to destroy art or at least to sully it....." speak of aestheticism as the true vocation in art and literature. Therefore his comment that the one aim in literature is morality,

92. *Tolstoy's Letters*, vol 1, op. cit., p.30 Note on Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov
93. Alexander Druzhinin (1824-1864) was writer, translator and critic. He was closely associated with the *Contemporary* which he later left due to his belief in art for art's sake in favour of *Reader's Library*. Druzhinin had a great influence on Tolstoy's idea of aesthetics.

Vasily Botkin (1811-1869) wrote articles and reviews in Note of the Fatherland and in The *Contemporary*. When Chernyshevsky's influence on The *Contemporary* became dominant, Botkin detached himself from the journal as he professed faith in art for art's sake.

P.V. Annenkov (1813-1887) was a writer and critic who published Notes on Russian Literature, 1848 in the *Contemporary* and wrote A Remarkable Decade between 1838-48. Annenkov was one of the earliest critics to recognize Tolstoy's literary talent. He was an advocate of art for art's sake.

94. Tolstoy ICS, p 191, "An Afterword to Chekhov's story 'Darling'
can only be interpreted as a philosophical concept more akin to aestheticism than the petty preaching on social questions so lauded by the school of literary intellectuals of the sixties.

I would therefore conclude this chapter by saying that the phenomenal contribution made by Belinsky in formulating certain conceptions of art in the forties had evoked two kinds of reactions in the decades to follow. One led by Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov was to accept those conclusions which appealed more to revolutionary activists with only limited aims in art. The other trend was reinforced by intellectuals like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy who had as their ideal "high art" in the practice of their creativity and contributed to social change through their emphasis on more eclectic theory and practice, as for instance in the case of Tolstoy on education of the common people.