Introduction

Terror, terror, terror is the catchy phrase of the day. The moment we pick up the Newspapers early in the morning the word glares at us. If we turn on the TV it pierces our eyes and ears, go out for a pleasing morning breeze threat lurks at the corner, go for shopping the police warn us of pickpockets. The world seems to be surrounded by nothing else but crime and criminal activities. Of late, one can notice that people have indulged in large numbers in such activities for various reasons. This makes one to ponder over the question what makes them to indulge themselves in such activities? At the same time, if we observe, most of the time it is the youth, in the age group of 20-30, who are involved in such activities.

If we analyze the family background of such people, we can notice most of the time it is lack of emotional bonding or frustration that accounts for crime. At the same time the socio-economic background of that individual or political situation of any geographical region might influence them. Globalization and development in the field of Science and Technology might have also contributed in their own way for increase in crime. The repeated transmission of the same clippings; with grueling gory scenes and new innovative ideas to commit crime and ways to escape from the scene of crime, might instigate them to indulge in such activities, as the young mind is easily influenced by the mass media.

But when we analyze the world history it is evident that through the ages man has involved in criminal activities irrespective of geographical boundaries. Keeping this in mind we can say that crime is an integral part of any society of any time. Hence crime has emerged as a favorite subject of majority of the writers of the world.
In this regard, if we analyze the works of Fyodor Michailovich Dostoevsky of nineteenth century, we can notice that crime constitutes as one of the major themes of his literary works. In his fictional works Dostoevsky engages the readers in an irresistible debate on the concept of crime and punishment; and invites us to put forth our own notions of crime and punishment. The most important thing that can be noticed in his criminal characters is that they are at par with the scheming, highly educated criminals of the modern world.

The moral, political, intellectual and religious questions probed in the course of his tales of hatred and murder is the greatest questions of our own time, for they are common to mankind. In fact, we find many striking similarities between the fictional world of Dostoevsky and the modern world. In Crime and Punishment Dostoevsky asks “Who among us is not a criminal? Who among us has not attempted to impose his or her will on the natural order?” Even after 135 years these words sounds to be so real and new. At the same time, the greatness of Dostoevsky is that, he recognizes guilt and accepts his own and our share in it. The Christian doctrine of We are all responsible for all is his conclusion. As his works have relevance to the present generation or generations to come this study will enable the modern reader to have a better understanding of the real world of today through the prism of Dostoevsky’s keen insight.

Dostoevsky who had been imprisoned in Siberia for four years very well knew the value of freedom. Hence, he advocates freedom of all human beings without exception. He associated freedom of man with the nature of man. In the Siberian jail he saw the extremes; convicts in shackles, who are denied of freedom and the officials enjoying complete freedom over them. His experiences in his imprisonment provided
subject matter for his works. As a staunch follower of **orthodox Russian** society his main concern is the degeneration of **morality**. He never supported amoral characters, and condemned amorality. He seems to question, if in the name of poverty all girls indulge, like Sonia, in prostitution and start killing people like Rascolnikoff then where can we expect morality in life?

Dostoevsky saw in the crime reports of his time, symbolic meanings and signs of the hidden ills of the whole society. As **Dolinin A. S** says many of the burning issues of his time, discussed in **Russian** periodicals and newspapers of the 1860s and 1870s, are used by Dostoevsky in his novels. For **Bakhtin** “Dostoevsky is the creator of polyphonic novels. The plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses and the genuine polyphony of full valued voices are in fact characteristics of Dostoevsky’s novels.”\(^2\) However, later critics have recognized that the novelist sought to plumb the depths of the human psyche, in order to reveal the full range of human experience, from the basest desires to the most elevated **spiritual** yearnings.

As **V. V. Zenkovsky** writes, “Dostoevsky’s **religious** searching provided the foundation for his intellectual life and theoretical constructions. His was always a religious nature; throughout his life he was ‘tormented’, to use his own expression by the idea of **God**. In Dostoevsky, more than in anyone else, we see philosophic creativity **growing out of the womb** of the religious consciousness.”\(^3\) **Achala Moulik** writes, “Dostoevsky viewed man in a **Promethean** role – curious and rebellious who must suffer before he is redeemed. Man’s mind is a battlefield where the forces of **good** and **evil** are in eternal conflict. This duality fascinated Dostoevsky and his
creations ranging from the meek hero of Poor Folk to the majestic ones of The Brothers Karamazov – all share this characteristic."

In his works, Dostoevsky analyses the effect of criminal behavior, both on the perpetrator and on the people around him. He depicts the effects of environment on the criminal, and asserts as the society exists in the form of individuals; violence of a society also exists within an individual. He believes that man or society could not remove evil from within man by improving the environment alone. He strongly believes that alienation is the key to both the causes and the consequences of crime. In his works he rejects the notion that crime can be justified, and persuades the readers to reject it, too. He also establishes the fact that a character is ultimately responsible for his own behavior and for the consequences of that behavior. Above all, he illustrates the universal human struggle to understand God and Self.

In this study the socio-political background of the nineteenth century is highlighted with the new trends of the literature of his time. The role of crime and criminal psychology is identified in his novels. Here, special emphasize is given to the similarities found in his fictional characters and modern real characters. The main idea is to identify the crime, criminal psychology and to understand the modern society in a better way. Special attention is given to the criminal world of Dostoevsky as it gives a better understanding of crime and criminal attitude of human beings. The punishment referred to is not that of the legal or judicial, but that of the internal guilt. This work also enable us to have a better understanding of the intricacies involved in crime, criminals and society, not only of Dostoevsky, but as well as of modern world. It deals with the nature of crime and criminals in the socio – political and historical context and their relevance to the present society.
In this context I feel that it is necessary to know, and to get acquainted with the available literature on Dostoevsky. The voluminous literature on Dostoevsky published in Russia, the West, and India reveal certain particulars about the attitude of critics towards his fiction. Most of the scholars are of the opinion that Crime and Punishment is the most prominent feature of his works. An unbiased approach towards Dostoevsky the thinker has a great scope for unraveling him. The very uniqueness of his literary style makes it very difficult to find what Dostoevsky the thinker says. Hence, I take the route of crime and punishment associated with his characters to bring out his relevance to the modern world.

Many literary scholars of the West who are interested in Dostoevsky concentrated on the aesthetic aspects of his fictions. Joseph Frank in his works, Dostoevsky the Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849 and Dostoevsky the Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859, gives a factual material, enormous biographical data, memoirs, letters pertaining to Dostoevsky and his fiction. He also gives a balanced and compact critical assessment of Dostoevsky’s works in a chronological order, and a compact account of the socio-political scenario of Dostoevsky’s time, and his involvement in it.

An English translation of Sigmund Freud’s essay Dostoevsky and Parricide published in 1929, in the journal The Realist, republished in the International Journal of Psycho-analysis in 1945, speaks of Dostoevsky as an innovator of psycho-analytical novels. A number of statements which Freud made in this article are frequently quoted. There are also many other famous critics who have worked on Dostoevsky like M. M. Bakhtin who says in his Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics that Dostoevsky is a polyphonic writer.
In India, Dostoevsky is one of the most widely read foreign writers and major works of his are translated into many regional languages. G M Panikar in Malyalam, Hari Legalayam, Dr. Baby Varghese, Kalpana Sahni, Mansi Sachdeva, Achala Moulik, and my Guide Dr. T K Gajanan can be mentioned here. Apart from these critical works many of his novels are said to be made into motion pictures in Hollywood. In India ‘Saawariya’ in Hindi and ‘Yelu Suttina Kote’ in Kannada is based on ‘The White Nights’ and ‘The Crime and Punishment’ respectively. Though Dostoevsky’s works have been studied before by many scholars, I have not come across any detailed study on the relevance of his concept of crime and punishment till date. Hence, I would like to investigate on ‘THE RELEVANCE OF DOSTOEVSKIAN CONCEPT OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN THE MODERN WORLD.’

The present study is divided into:

1. Socio-political background of F. M. Dostoevsky
2. Concept of crime and punishment
3. Crimes in the fictional world of Dostoevsky
4. Psychological analysis of crime and punishment in Dostoevsky
5. Relevance of Dostoevskian concept of crime and punishment to the modern world.

Chapter I: Socio-Political background of F. M. Dostoevsky

This chapter gives a brief picture of the socio-political atmosphere that prevailed during nineteenth century, and its influence on the Russian literature in general and on Dostoevsky in particular. It gives a brief biographical study of
Dostoevsky’s early life, influence of his parents, and his childhood in Moscow. It explains his association with Belinsky, Palm-Durov, and the Patrashevsky circle in St. Petersburg, and his consequent imprisonment. It describes his life in Siberia, the influence of The Bible, and his transformation into an Orthodox Christian.

Chapter II: The Concept of Crime and Punishment

This chapter deals with the concept of crime and punishment in general. It defines the meaning and changing forms of crime and punishment through the ages. It gives a brief history of crime and punishment, starting from mythical age to the pre-historic period to the modern age.

Chapter III: Crimes in the fictional world of Dostoevsky

It brings out a detailed study of various forms crimes in the fictional world of Dostoevsky which is broadly divided into three categories namely physical, moral, and intellectual crimes. It also describes the reason, motivations, and causes of crimes. This chapter gives a detailed study of the influence of Western ideas and establishes the facts that crime in Dostoevsky is not necessarily physical but it is an ideological intoxication.

Chapter IV: Psychological analyses of crime and punishment in Dostoevsky

This chapter provides an answer to the questions raised in the previous chapter. It discusses the punishment imposed by Dostoevsky on his criminal characters. This chapter is not only a study of punishment, but also analyses the effect of crime on the criminal mind. It brings out the psychological effect of crime and punishment on the offender. It provides proof how his characters suffer from spiritual
bankruptcy and establishes the fact that a doubter in god cannot but be a criminal and that a transgressor has to pay for his salvation through suffering as punishment.

Chapter V: The Relevance of Dostoevskian concept of crime and punishment to the modern world

This chapter establishes Dostoevsky as a prophet and a great thinker. It provides proof that he is not just a chronicler of the exact physical surroundings, but also a writer of about subjects of modern concern. It brings out the similarities between the nineteenth century fictional world of Dostoevsky and the modern world. It makes a study of the instances of crime in the recent past and the views of the twentieth century philosophers and thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi and S. Radhakrishnan. It establishes the fact how the works of Dostoevsky have wider recognition today than ever before in history, and proves how Dostoevsky is much relevant to-day, in an age, when people think cloaking ill-will and insincerity, beneath a thin veil of self-righteousness.