CHAPTER - V

STRANGE THEORIES
With Dostoevsky it is very difficult to say where fiction takes over from real life. His novels explore the same depths of despair and hopelessness that Dostoevsky experienced in real life. All the major characters in his works are modelled after someone he knew, or represent some idea that occupied his mind and the Russian intelligensia, during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though he achieved instant fame with *Poor Folk*, his claim to greatness rests squarely on two novels that have stood the test of time, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Dostoevsky started *Crime and Punishment* in 1865, five years after finishing his decade of imprisonment and exile in Siberia. His personal life was in chaos following the death of his first wife, Katerina Marmeladova, whom he once called "a knight in female clothing", and his elder brother Mikhail. Though he laboured like a slave, he could not save their journal "Epokha" (Epoch) from bankruptcy. The demands of creditors and numerous relatives forced him to flee Russia. He obtained a loan from the literary fund and approached various editors for an advance against a novel he planned to write. The new novel was supposed
to be about drunkenness and would explore the full spectrum of havoc that the vice wrecked in society. He got the advance of three thousand rubles from a cut-throat publisher, F.T. Stellovsky, who got in return the right to publish a three-volume edition of Dostoevsky's works. In addition, Dostoevsky had to supply Stellovsky with a new work of about three hundred pages by 1st November 1866. If he failed to deliver the novel by the deadline, then Stellovsky would automatically have the right to publish all of Dostoevsky's works for nine years without paying him any money.

Before leaving Russia, Dostoevsky distributed most of the money to the most pressing creditors, the dependents of his brother and his step-son, Pasha. He stopped off in Weisbaden with the intention of replenishing his pocket by gambling. As luck would have it, he lost all he had. As he was not able to pay his rent, he was virtually imprisoned for two months while waiting for funds from Russia. His letters during this time show the humiliation and physical pain he suffered. He used to live on morning and evening tea for days together and would go out for a couple of hours every evening so as not to give an impression that he was not
eating at all. These, and similar experiences, give a touch of authenticity to the description of the poor student Raskolnikov.

It is against this miserable background that Crime and Punishment was conceived. Dostoevsky meant it to be a psychological study of crime. It was to be about a young student who is toying with half-baked ideas. He makes up his mind to kill an old money-lender who has no redeeming feature. He intends to use the money to save his sister from her lustful employer and finish his studies. He will then use his knowledge and learning to help the downtrodden masses. No one suspects the student of the crime. In the end, he is unable to cope with the emotions that the crime unleashes and confesses the crime. From these bits and fragments, Dostoevsky builds the masterpiece.

The general structure of the novel must be seen keeping Raskolnikov at the centre of the action. His dual personality is the controlling idea behind the murder and his punishment, Raskolnikov fluctuates between complete self-will and power and extreme meekness and self-submissiveness. Actions in the novel
which appear contradictory are a result of Raskolnikov's frustration between these two aspects of his personality. Dostoevsky created the characters of Svidrigaylov and Sonia to represent this dual personality reintegrating it into whole is accomplished by Sonia and Porfiry by bringing Raskolnikov back into the fold of humanity.

Why does Raskolnikov murder the money lender? The search for motives will make it easier for us to understand how complicated the seemingly simple crime is. The first reason for the murder is probably money. Raskolnikov is unable to pay his rent and his landlady has filed a complaint with the police. Due to his straitened circumstances, he is no longer a student. He has given up attending the university and spends his time lying in his box-like room. With the money, he can pursue his education and help his family. He can also save his sister from the clutches of the lecherous Svidrigoylov. But then, not everyone who is poor resorts to murder.

The poverty and mal-nourishment are compounded by the wretched condition in which he lives. His room is
like a box and the first comment that every visitor makes concerns the cramped or close confines of the room. It is "a tiny cupboard of a room about six paces in length" and has "a poverty stricken appearance. His mother attributes his illness to the poverty of his surroundings and living quarters. This is closely linked to the motif of fresh air. The doctor, Zoshmov, recommends fresh air to Raskolnikov as a cure for his illness and as a preventive against future attacks. Porfiry talks of fresh air and a storm clearing the air, when he talks to Raskolnikov. Often Raskolnikov leaves the room to escape the cramped quarters, which have cramped his soul and he needs space in which to expand. It may be suggested that the cramped quarters cramped his thinking so much that he was forced to commit the murder. Dostoevsky emphasizes this aspect of his living quarters because when he goes to prison, his living quarters are no longer than his room, yet he does not feel cramped in prison. The reason is that due to the confession and open countryside in Siberia, he has found ample fresh air.

Then there is the question of Raskolnikov's theory of the "extraordinary" man. In Raskolnikov's own words
... men are in general divided by a law of nature into two categories: an inferior one (ordinary), that is to say, the material whose only purpose is to reproduce its kind and the people proper that is to say, those who possess the gift or talent to say a new word in their particular environment. There are, of course, innumerable subdivisions, but the distinguishing features of both categories are well marked: the first category, that is to say, the masses, comprises all the people who, generally speaking, are by nature conservative, respectable and docile. In my opinion, it is their duty to be docile, for that is their vocation in life and there is nothing at all humiliating in it for them. The men belonging to the second category all transgress the law and are all destroyers, or are inclined to be destroyers, according to their different capabilities. The crimes of these people are, of course, relative and various; mostly, however, they demand, in proclamations of one kind or another, the destruction of the present in the name of a better future. But if for the sake of his idea such a man has to step over a corpse or wade through blood, he is in my opinion, absolutely entitled, in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, to permit himself to wade through blood, all depending, of course, on the nature and the scale of his idea ...1

It is interesting to note that in the course of expounding his theory, Raskolnikov's "extraordinary" man has moved from being a benevolent academician, like Newton or Kepler, to a benevolent tyrant like Napoleon. While the former category pursues knowledge, the latter pursues power. The ideas of the academician always

benefit humanity while a Napoleon, or a Stalin, causes untold suffering.

Raskolnikov's theory or the "extraordinary" man is based on similar ideas floating around Europe. A German philosopher, Hegel, had written about the general nature of a superman in many of his works. Though his ideas were never formulated into a single consistent thesis, his view may be garnered from various parts of his philosophy. In its broadest statement, the Hegelian superman exists for noble purposes. Accordingly if the ends are noble, then the means can be justified. If applied to Raskolnikov's crime, the theory works as under:

1. The old money lender is an evil person who is actually harming society by her vile and cynical grasp on the poor people who come to her for borrowing money against some security. According to Hegel, any harmful segment of society should be done away with so that the other segments may flourish. Therefore by murdering her, Raskolnikov will be removing a harmful 'thing' from society.
2. If the ends are noble, then the means can be justified. The old money lender has a lot of money which will be wasted on useless masses and requiem services after her death. With this money, Raskolnikov will be able to complete his education and then can devote himself to the service of humanity.

3. One small crime can be wiped out by thousands of good deeds. By distributing the ill-gotten wealth of the money lender among needy families, Raskolnikov will be saving hundreds of families from ruin and destitution.

In the novel, these ideas come to Raskolnikov when he overhears the conversation between a student and an army officer in a restaurant.

Dostoevsky probably first heard of the Nietzschean superman theory when he was in Germany. These ideas are not the result of Dostoevsky's study of published works but rather ideas that were in the air at the time of
writing the novel. The Nietzschean superman does not exist for the benefit of society. Instead, he exist for his own personal gratification. For the sake of studying the novel, it is not necessary to go into all of Nietzsche's reasoning behind his superman theories. It is sufficient to see how Svidrigaylov is the principal propounder of such ideas in the novel. Through a complex reasoning process, the Nietzschean superman and Svidrigaylov, come to the conclusion that God is dead. Hence Svidrigaylov can say that since there is no will or power beyond his own, he must completely assert his own will till it is free of all restraint against it. Consequently, he can rape a thirteen year old girl without feelings of remorse, or cause the death of a servant. It is this same idea which propels him to shamelessly pursue Raskolnikov's sister, Dunya. Apart from law and opinion of neighbours, the most powerful reason why man does not stray from the straight and narrow path is the fear of punishment in the after-life. But Svidrigaylov need not fear that because

We're always thinking of eternity as an idea that cannot be understood, something immense. But why must it be? What if, instead of all this, you suddenly find just a little room
there, something like a village bath-house, grimy and spiders in every corner and that's all eternity is. Sometimes, you know, I can't help feeling that that's probably what it is.2

Raskolnikov's theory contains elements of both the theories as well as certain ideas of his own. The main plank of his theory is that extraordinary men, those who are capable of giving something new to society, must not submit to the common law, as otherwise they would cease to be extraordinary. Raskolnikov constantly uses Napoleon as a point of reference and sanctions bloodshed in the name of conscience. We should however note that when he murders the money lender, Raskolnikov has not yet fused the elements of the theories into a consistent whole. Thus, when he tries to justify the murders to his sister Dunya, he gives the Hegelian concept in defence of his action.

Why don't you look more closely? Why don't you see? I wanted to do good to people, and I should have done hundreds, thousands of good deeds to make up for this stupid thing, which as a matter of fact isn't such a stupid thing at all; for the idea wasn't so stupid as it seems now that it has failed... By this stupid act I merely wanted to put myself in a position of independence, to take the first step, to obtain the necessary means and afterwards everything would have been made good by the ... innumerable benefits.3

2 Ibid., p.305.
3 Ibid., p.530.
But when he tries to justify the murders to Sonia, he says that he killed the money lender because he wanted to be a Napoleon. To an experienced man like Porfiry, it is at once apparent that Raskolnikov's theory is not only half-baked but also dangerous. Being a practical man, he asks Raskolnikov as to how his extraordinary man will be identified. He sarcastically asks whether there will be some special signs at his birth, or he will wear a special uniform, or he will be branded in some way.

It is interesting to note that while the murder was supposed to be the first step in Raskolnikov's independence, what actually happens after the murder is committed is exactly the reverse. Raskolnikov's personality disintegrates and his life becomes nightmarish. The fluctuation between his desire to confess and end it all and the desire to outsmart Porfiry are the external manifestations of the struggle within him. By confessing his crime, Raskolnikov will once again be a member of the human society, while the desire not to confess him is cutting him away from humanity. This struggle starts much before the murder, even while he is still contemplating it. When he sees the drunk Marmeladov home, he leaves a few coins on the
window sill. That he does it instinctively at a time when he cannot afford to do so, shows that one part of his being wants to integrate itself with society. Immediately he regrets having left the money behind. This is a clear indication of his unsteady and divided personality. There is also the instance when he gives twenty copecks to a policeman to see an assaulted girl home, thereby saving her from the lecherous man following her. While this humanitarian gestures speaks for itself, a few lines later the reader is faced with an about-turn. Raskolnikov explains to the policeman, "Leave them alone! It's not your business! Let them be! Let him ... have his fun! What do you care?" Perhaps the most striking example of Raskolnikov rejecting humanity is when, after he has committed the murders, he throws the twenty copeck piece, given by a kind pedestrian, into the waters of the Neva.

The streets of St.Petersburg are Raskolnikov's contact with life. There is nothing exceptional about the teeming streets except the quality of life they contain. While walking to the old money lender's flat, with the hatchet hidden under his coat, Raskolnikov starts thinking how the city can be improved.
Then another thought suddenly struck him: Why was it, he wondered, that in all the large cities people seemed inclined to congregate, not by any means out of sheer necessity, just in those parts where there were neither gardens nor fountains, but dirt, bad smells and every kind of abominatin.4

The heat of summer, the crowds, the stench, the pubs full of drunks, prostitutes hanging around street corners and the overpowering poverty define the St. Petersburg of the novel. Raskolnikov knows that the old money lender's flat is exactly seven hundred and thirty steps from the gate of his house, while Marmeladov's house is two or three hundred paces from the tavern. It seems almost as if Dostoevsky has taken extra care to depict the squalour and dehumanising sordidness of the city. The external environment reflects the chaos in Raskolnikov's mind. This kind of description also served another purpose as pointed out by Donald Fanger:

These distances set up a unity of place that is not artificial. Here is the heart of Petersburg a neighbourhood that is also a microcosm. It's compactness facilitates and rationalises coincidence, as well as the swift accumulation of the action, just as its social nature underlines the irony of Marmeladov's reference to "This capital, magnificent and adorned with innumerable monuments."5

4 Ibid., p.92.

The city plays another important role in the lives of the principal characters of the novel. It is largely responsible for the families breaking up and as Fanger points out, it makes the ideal background for dramas of isolation.

By and large, Dostoevsky's families tend to be parodies of what is usually understood by that word. Marmeladov is the head of his family in an ironic sense only and Katerina Ivanovna shows her motherliness by goading her step-daughter into prostitution and in her madness at the end, making grotesque street performers of her children. Raskolnikov sponges on his mother and sister. It may be taken as a general rule that, when families do appear in Dostoevsky's fiction, they tend to be shown in process of dissolution.6

It is evident that Raskolnikov's crime does not have a single motive. His theory of the "extraordinary man", his fever, the city, poverty and his isolation; all contribute in some measure to the murder.

In the essay, "Crime and Punishment: The Psychological Problem, A.D. Nutall seeks to answer the question, "Why did Raskolnikov Kill the old money lender?" using a concept from psychology - Schizophrenia. Though the term is anachronistic in that it was coined after Dostoevsky wrote the novel, it nevertheless shows how Raskolnikov's mind works. Nutall says that Raskolnikov is like a person in a trance when he commits the murders. The trance is induced by

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6 Ibid., p.75.
... solitude, poor food and the monotonous, obsessive reiteration of certain sentences and words: "Everything is permitted", "exceptional man", "destruction of the present for the sake of the better", "Napoleon". And together with all this, comes the self-addressed imperative: "Dare."

In the case of post-hypnotic suggestion, the subject, after he comes out of his trance, will do what the hypnotist has told him to do while he was still in a trance. In Raskolnikov's case, this suggestion comes in the form of an overheard conversation which triggers a string of actions culminating in the murder.

As his article, about the "extraordinary" man shows, Raskolnikov is a systematic thinker whose thinking has brought him into strange territory. On the other hand, he is evidently sick, more a slave of his mental processes than their master. He is so cut off from reality that many a time he does not know what his words imply. A case in point is the conversation he has with his mother and sister:

'Yes—Yes, — all this is, of course, very annoying,' Raskolnikov murmured in reply, but with such an abstracted and almost indifferent air that Dunya could not help looking at himn with astonishment.

'Now, what else was it I wanted to say?' he went on, doing his best to remember. 'Oh, Yes. Please, mother, and you, Dunya, don't think that I didn't want to come and see you today and was just waiting for you to come first ...

7 Ibid., p.160.
I wanted to go to you as soon as I woke up, but I had to wait for my clothes. You see, I-I forgot to tell her - Natasya - to wash out the blood.

The heavy pauses suggest that the hesitation is because Raskolnikov is grappling with a difficult intellectual problem. He is not able to properly respond to the anxiety expressed by his mother, and when he carelessly lets fall the word "blood", he does not allay the fears of the listeners at once. This lack of "contextual awareness and disengagement" is indicative of Schizophrenia which Nutall describes as "the condition in which rational processes are oddly disengaged from the emotions or in which certain consecutive lines of thought are grotesquely disjointed from the normal human context." Thus we have a chain reaction: firstly, the mildly schizophrenic Raskolnikov endlessly reiterates to himself a given formula; secondly, this reiteration induces a self-hypnotic trance; and thirdly, the overheard conversation friggers off a series of actions ending in the twin murders.

Basically, Raskolnikov's plan is not sane. To begin with, he is not temperamentally suited to carry it out. This is what he admits when confessing the crime to Sonia. This would imply that someone else who is "exceptional" has the right to murder the money lender. The second reason is that the theory of the "extraordinary" man proposed by Raskolnikov is itself wrong. The reasoning in the article is correct, but the assumptions on which it is based are wrong. The quantification of human happiness and sorrow and the "use of this as a sufficient basis for all moral decisions is itself grotesque because it is inadequate to the real richness and complexity of moral experience."

Giving an example, Nutall says that a man may kill another without causing the victim any pain, while a mother may cause considerable pain to her beloved child in brushing his tangled hair. It would be absurd to suggest that the mother is morally worse than the killer. It is clear that the theory is wrong because it is divorced from life.

Summing up the psychological argument Nutall says:

The psychological answer is as follows: a particular theory of heroic action found in Raskolnikov a peculiarly unstable and suggestible subject. The reason why Raskolnikov, unlike all the other young men who thought the same thoughts and yet never broke a law, committed murder, is that a
original tendency to schizophrenia made him capable of the kind of obsession theory alone, nor his particular temperament alone would have resulted in the murder. It was the combination that proved fatal to Alyona Ivanovna.9

While this approach explains that Raskolnikov was the sort person who acted in a particular way in a given set of circumstances, it does not answer the basic question, "Why was Raskolnikov that kind of a person?" The reason has been eluding us inspite of various enquiries because Crime and Punishment is a piece of life itself. The reason can only be hinted at, never pinpointed. This is what makes Dostoevsky a complex writer.

We know that Dostoevsky intended to write a novel, The Drunkards, which would revolve around the problem of drunkenness in society, and its effect on the family. The newspapers and magazines in those days were full of articles exploring the connection between alcoholism and social evils like prostitution, unemployment, destitution and the destruction of the family. Dostoevsky was fully aware of this burning problem and articles on alcohol abuse appeared in his magazine, Vremya (Time) also. In Crime and Punishment, the issue

of drunkenness is centered around the story of the Marmeladov family. Marmeladov is not the only drunk that Raskolnikov meets. His fateful interviews with Svidrigaylov and Zametov take place in taverns. Razumikhin meets Raskolnikov's mother and sister in an intoxicated state. More than once, Raskolnikov himself is mistaken for a drunkard. Lest we dismiss drunkenness as a nineteenth century problem confined to Russia, let us remember that one of the first acts of Mikhail Gorbachev on coming to power in 1985 was to restrict the sale of Vodka. Like his predecessors, he also failed in curbing alcoholism. Nor is this a Russian problem alone. Prohibition was responsible for creating more millionaires in America than the discovery of oil! In our own country, city, town and village has hundreds of families reduced to utter poverty due to this reason alone.

Why does Marmeladov drink? His reason is not solace or respite or forgetting or companionship; but rather the desire to suffer. In his totally unorthodox interpretation of Dostoevsky, John Jones says that Marmeladov's reason for drinking "has the same free, metaphysical bearing on his being a drunkard that
Raskolnikov's wanting to dare has on his being a murderer." He quotes a fragment from The Drunkards, the theme of which later got merged into Crime and Punishment:

"The reason we drink is we are at a loose end." "Nonsense. We drink because we've got no morals." "Yes, and the reason we've got no morals is that for a long time (hundred and fifty years) we've been at a loose end." 10

Both Marmeladov and Raskolnikov are at a loose end, the former out of work and the latter out of the university. Being at a loose end, leads one to the vice of alcoholism and the other to the crime of murder. The mention of one hundred and fifty years is related to the social and political reforms initiated by Peter the Great in the Eighteenth century. Dostoevsky believed that these reforms had disrupted society because they were imposed from above. By bringing in Western values, which did not permeate to the grassroots level, the new ideas had created a chasm between the educated class and the common people. Through his devout religious faith and a fanatical nationalism, Dostoevsky, like other Slavophils, sought to restore the "natural soil-based unity of Russia." The Drunkards was not supposed to be

an attack on Petrine reforms but Dostoevsky used the underlying idea of being at a loose end, or out of touch with practical life, to highlight the moral corruption in contemporary society. Having nowhere to go, Marmeladov epitomises the directionless drift of the Russian people who had been forcibly weaned from their native culture.

The theme of prostitution is closely connected with that of drunkenness. The principal victim of Marmeladov's drinking is Sonia. She is forced to sell her body to keep the family from penury. Even in other incidental characters like the beautiful prostitute, Duklida; the young girl that Raskolnikov wants to save from the clutches of a lecherous man; and the girl who wants to end it all by jumping into the canal; we see the connection between the two evils which are with us even in these enlightened times. While the liquor seller exploits the drunkard's lack of will-power, the visitor to the brothel violates the privacy of another human being in the most vulgar manner. Far from diluting the intensity of the novel, Dostoevsky's genius intensifies the action by including these social issues.
One of the recurring motif's of the novel is suffering. In the character of Lizaveta, we see the crushed spirit of the ordinary Russian people. Her ever-pregnant condition is fitting commentary on the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Nothing exemplifies her docility than the scene in which Raskolnikov advances towards her, hatchet raised:

She was white as a sheet and did not seem to have the strength to cry out. As she saw him running out of the bed room, she trembled all over. Her whole body shaking like a leaf and her face twitching convulsively. She raised her hand a little, opened her mouth, but did not utter a cry. She began walking backwards, backing away from him slowly towards the corner of the room, without taking her eyes off him, but still without uttering a sound, although she had no breath left in her body to cry out. He rushed at her with the hatchet. Her lips were twisted pitifully, like those of little children who are beginning to be afraid of something and without taking their eyes off the object of their fright, are about to scream. And so simple, crushed and cowed was this unhappy Lizaveta that she did not even lift her hands to protect her face though that was the most natural and inevitable gesture at the moment ... All she did was to lift her free left hand a little, at some distance from her face and extended it slowly towards the hatchet as though pushing it away.11

The other great figure of suffering and redemption is Sonia. Goaded by her stepmother, she has made the extreme sacrifice, debasing herself in her own eyes. She is the passive redemptive figure whose chief

11 Ibid., p.557.
function is to draw Raskolnikov into the human fold again. In kissing her feet, Raskolnikov bows down 'to all' suffering humanity. His regeneration, which begins with his formal confession and kissing the earth, is complete when he:

... embraced here knees and wept. At first she was terribly frightened and her face was covered by a deathly pallor. She jumped to her feet and, trembling all over, looked at him. But at once and at the same moment she understood everything. Her eyes shone with intense happiness, she understood ... that the moment she had waited for so long had come at last.12

Dostoevsky's thesis is that suffering, great suffering, leads to salvation. It is only through suffering that man's sins can be expiated.

Malcolm Bradbury calls Dostoevsky "the inward novelist, the psychological visionary who wrote of modern suffering, anguish and in the later books, the need for faith and mysticism." He goes on to say that Crime and Punishment is indeed the first of the modern novels. A truer word was never spoken. With The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky scaled new heights in exploring

the human psyche, as we shall see in the subsequent pages.

In Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky explored two moral principles - the inviolability of human life and the nightmare of an order where the accepted norms are rejected. The graphic portrayal of Raskolnikov's agony after he commits the murders, is sufficient comment on Dostoevsky's views on these principles. In The Brothers Karamazov, he goes a step further and asks two questions which have troubled all thinking men - "Does God exist?" and, "Am I my brother's keeper?" To both questions Dostoevsky's sincerely felt answer is "Yes".

The central story of arricide is based on a true life event that Dostoevsky witnessed during his imprisonment in Siberia. In prison, he met a condemned man, Illyinsky, who like Dmitry Karamazov, in The Brothers Karamazov, was a retired lieutenant of a line regiment. How close the resemblance is between the fictional character and the true-life convict can be seen in this passage:

He was a gentleman by birth, had done his government service and was something in the nature of a prodigal son to his sixty-year-old
father. His conduct was thoroughly dissipative and he had run heavily into debt. His father remonstrated with him and tried to restrain him; but his father had a farm and a house and was suspected of having money and the son, greedy for his inheritance, killed him.13

The similarity does not end there. Like Dmitry Karamazov, the real life convict was innocent, but was found guilty on circumstantial evidence. Beginning with this, Dostoevsky constructed a human drama which not only explored the social conditions in contemporary Russia, but also continues to attract the attention of readers even today because of its exploration of the human psyche.

Before proceeding any further, it would be appropriate to sketch the bare outlines of the story. The father, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, is a landlord and a rogue in every sense of the word. His debauchery is legendary and in his old age, he is infatuated by Grushenka, a woman of loose morals. He has three children, Dmitry by his first wife and Ivan and Alyosha by his second wife. Unable to bear the pain, suffering and humiliation of being married to a monster like Fyodor, both the wives have mercifully died.

Finding the children in the way of his base enjoyments, Fyodor sends them off to various relatives. Of the three sons, Dmitry is a passionate man like his father. He too, is a sensualist; and is his father's rival for Grushenka's affections. He believes that he is owed an inheritance which his father is keeping from him. This tussle for wealth and woman is responsible for a large part of the action of the novel. The second brother, Ivan, is an intellectual. In the true Karamazov mould, he too is a passionate man. His revolt against the established role of religion forms the metaphysical centre of the book. The third brother, Alyosha is a student at the monastery. He is the favourite student of the elder, Zossima, who represents the quintessential Orthodox Christian faith. It is rumoured that the epileptic servant, Smerdyakov is Fyodor's bastard son, a result of the old lacher's liaison with a mad woman, Lizaveta.

Fyodor has kept aside three thousand rubles to seduce Grushenka. In the meantime, Dmitry has rashly spent fifteen hundred rubles for throwing party for Grushenka. This money has come from the three thousand rubles given to him by his fiancee, Katerina, to deliver
to some third person. Smerdyakov knows of the three thousand rubles that are hidden by Fyodor and he goes and tells Dmitry about this. Enraged, Dmitry rushes to his father's house, brass pestle in hand, and knocks down the old servant, Grigory. He is unable to see his father who has locked himself in and returns. Smerdyakov meanwhile acts as if he is having an epileptic fit and succeeds in fooling the old servant and his wife, Marfa. He sneaks out and murders Fyodor Karamazov. Dmitry is found guilty on Grigory's testimony and circumstantial evidence and exiled to Siberia.

Inspite of his deeply held convictions, Dostoevsky does not preach nor does he pass judgement. Antony Johae says that by allowing all shades of philosophical opinion equal status, Dostoevsky allows "each to realise himself, if there is anything in him to realise."

If, in The Brothers Karamazov, father Zossima gives utterance to his deeply held religious faith, so to Ivan Karamazov is allowed to sow seeds of doubt in the readers mind by evoking his own sense of universal void. The effect of Alexy Karamazov's sainthood is thwarted by Smerdyakov's evil presence. Grushenka's capacity for love and sacrifice (the embodiment of Russian woman) is contrasted
with Katerina's inability to feel deeply. One philosophical argument (embodied in character) is pitted against another. Liberalism (Muisov) versus Nihilism (Ivan); Christianity (Alyosha) versus Hedonism (Fyodor); authority (The Grand Inquisitor) versus freedom (Christ); reason (Rakitin) versus passion (Dmitry).\textsuperscript{14}

Other novelists make it easier for the readers. What we have here is life itself; from black to white, with all shades of grey in between. The principal characters are multi-dimensional, each combining the various concepts in different measures.

While Dmitry is at the centre of the human drama in the novel, the metaphysical centre is Ivan's rebellion against God. As a modern atheist, he is not unduly concerned by the question whether God exists. He is quite prepared to accept God's existence, but cannot accept the world God has created because its dominant feature is suffering. What disturbs him most is the meaninglessness of the suffering of the innocent children. He says that the suffering of the grow-ups can perhaps be justified because they have eaten the apple of experience, but in the case of children there is no

justification at all. The true life accounts he relates to Alyosha horrify even the modern reader. Particularly isckening are two incidents, one which involves a small girl and the other which involves a serf's child. In the first instance, the parents of a seven year old girl derive sensual pleasure from the child's agonised cries when they beat her mercilessly. In the second case, a general watches dogs tear a serf's child to pieces because the boy has injured his favourite dog. Even in our wildest dreams, we cannot think of anything more sadistic and revolting. No wonder, even Alyosha, the gentle pupil of Zossima, says that the only thing to be done with the General is to shoot him. It comes as a bit of a shock to know that such atrocities are being committed even today. This is the reason for Ivan's revolt, and it sets the stage for his poem, "The Grand Inquisitor."

The poem is set in the fearsome era of the Spanish Inquisition whose hallmark was religious persecution. After fifteen hundred years Christ has returned to Earth. He strolls around the town of Serville performing miracles. The people cheer Him with great acclaim. On the steps of the cathedral, He brings back to life a
girl of seven. The Grand Inquisitor sees this and orders that Christ be arrested and thrown into prison. When night falls, the Grand Inquisitor visits Christ and reprimands Him for hindering the work of the Catholic Church. He threatens to have Christ burnt at the stake the following day.

The Grand Inquisitor says that Christ is fundamentally wrong in believing that man is strong, and that He desires the freedom to choose between good and evil. In rejecting the three temptations in the wilderness, Christ has placed a very heavy burden on man. The terrible and wise spirit offered Christ, the ability to turn stones into loaves of bread, which He rejected. The second temptation was the power to perform miracles, while the third temptation power over men. Christ rejected the three temptations because He wanted men to follow him out of their free will. The Grand Inquisitor contends that if Christ really loved all men then He would not have placed such a heavy burden on man.

The Grand Inquisitor says that the Catholic Church has had to step in and improve Christ's teaching because
of Christ's poor knowledge of human nature. He says that the Church has accepted the temptations offered by the devil and made miracle, mystery, and authority the corner stones future world empire. By giving man security, by giving him a figure to worship, and by deciding things for him, the Church has acted in the interest of the meek and suffering masses. In return, man has offered his freedom to the Church. The Grand Inquisitor says that:

.... all will be happy and will no longer rise in rebellion nor exterminate one another, as they do everywhere under Your freedom. Oh, we will convince them that only then will they become free when they have resigned their freedom to us and have submitted to us. And what do Your think? Shall we be right or shall we be lying? They will themselves be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Your freedom brought them. Freedom, a free mind and science will lead them into such a jungle and bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries that some of them, the recalcitrant and the fierce will destroy themselves, others, recalcitrant but weak will destroy one another and the rest, weak and unhappy, will come crawling to us and cry aloud: 'Yes, You were right, you alone possessed his mystery, and we came back to you—save us from ourselves!"

The picture that The Grand Inquisitor paints of the supremacy of the Church is terrifying. Man will be

15 The Brothers Karamazov, p.303.
reduced to a quivering jelly, dependent on the Church in every aspect of life. He will be a mere puppet, passing from womanly tears mirth from the slightest nod from the Church. He will work like a slave and play childish games in his free time, because that is what the Church will want him to do. The Church will be so powerful that, according to the measure of obedience, it will allow or forbid people to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children. The future is as nightmarish as envisaged by George Orwell in *1984*, the only difference being that the Church has replaced the communist Party. The price that the Grand Inquisitor, and other administrators of the Church, will pay will be that they alone shall be unhappy because they guard the mystery.

As Alyosha rightly points out, the Grand Inquisitor in Ivan's poem is an atheist. His only secret is that while he does not believe in Christ, he is all too willing to use His Church to fulfill his lust for power. The Grand Inquisitor, and his creator, Ivan; are the spokesman of atheistic socialism which has always blamed the Christian faith for not having made the people happy, for not giving them peace and food.
Dostoevsky's antichrist possesses a dangerous charm in his concern for the weaker members of society. Dostoevsky deflates the eloquent oration of The Grand Inquisitor by a simple gesture. Robert Belknap, in his perceptive essay, *The Rhetoric of an Ideological Novel*, pinpoints this gesture:

Christ says nothing, but kisses the Grand Inquisitor. The kiss is obviously a blessing; it burns in the Inquisitor's heart as holy things do in this novel. And if Christ can bless the Grand Inquisitor, who has imprisoned him, concealed His word and killed hundreds of His followers, then obviously none of the lesser sinners are cut off from Christ's salvation. The Grand Inquisitor is unable to sacrifice his immortal soul, because Christ still can pardon him, and he has no reason to do so because mankind need not be damned. ... in a single kiss, the most absolute and appealing, part of The Grand Inquisitor's exploit becomes an empty, unnecessary gesture. He has simply miscalculated the dimensions of God's mercy.

In order to give a fitting reply to the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky chose Father Zossima whose figure is diametrically opposed to that of the Grand Inquisitor. Father Zossima offers a rhetorical answer to the problem of children's suffering and cites the story of Job to counteract Ivan's arguments. Father

Zossima's chief ideas are: (1) Life is joyful, and this Earth is a veritable paradise, (2) Each man is responsible for the actions of all other men, "everyone is really responsible for everyone and everything." In the context of the novel, this idea links Ivan to his father's murder.

If Smerdyakov and not Dmitry murdered father, I'd be as guilty as he, for I put him up to it. Whether I put him up to it or not, I don't know yet. But if he killed him and not Dmitry, then, of course, I am a murderer, too.1

Thus an intellectual concept is applied to a practical event. But then, the idea that we are responsible for others poses other problems as we shall see.

Perhaps the most well known story, which teaches a man to love his neighbour as he would love himself, is the parable of the good Samaritan in the New Testament. When we ask the question, why should we love neighbours, one of the answers is that, since we are responsible of others we should care for them and love them. In the Bible, the parable is told by Jesus to a teacher of law. A traveller, going from Jerusalem to Jericho, is set

17 The Brothers Karamazov, p.725.
upon by robbers. They beat him senseless, rob him, and leave him by the roadside. A priest and a Levite who pass that way see the injured man, but move on. A Samaritan sees the bleeding man and takes him to an inn and takes care of him. Since he has to continue his journey, he gives the inn-keeper two silver coins and tells him to take care of the injured man. He promises to stop by on his way back and pay the inn-keeper whatever else he spends on the man. The moral of the story is very clear and does not need elaboration.

If we replace the injured traveller in the parable with a drunkard who has fallen down due to overindulgence, then the Samaritan would have to take the drunkard home, wait till he becomes sober and then see the drunkard home. But knowing the drunkard's tendency to repeat the act, it would not be enough to only help him to recover. The present day Samaritan would have to counsel the drunkard and advise him to live soberly. If the drunkard still persists, then the Samaritan could probably use force to prevent the man from drinking. He would probably be right in doing this and may pat himself on the back for a job well done.
But the drunkard is a grown up person, perhaps educated. Being of average intelligence, he knows that if he drinks heavily, he will not be able to control himself. He knows from his own experience and observation of other drunkards, that there is a distinct possibility that he will fall down and hurt himself. If inspite of this knowledge, he continues to drink then is the Samaritan entitled to prevent him from getting drunk? Is the Samaritan not interfering with the man's free will? Is the Samaritan's job done by helping after the person has got intoxicated?

Let us take the scenario further. The Samaritan is also a very powerful person. He has the power to close down all distilleries and breweries. This would immediately throw hundreds of people out of jobs. Down the line, shops setting liquor would close. The result would be that thousands of families would face ruin because the bread-winners would be without a job. More importantly, the Government would lose millions of rupees in revenue from the closure of the trade. Such a action would mean that the government would not have sufficient funds for development programmes, thus increasing the poverty in the country. And all this
Does it mean that the ideas taught by Father Zossima are not relevant today? Are those teachings best confined to Bible classes? Why is it so difficult to appreciate the beauty of the Book of Job? The truth is that we have become moral pygmies. In our excessive selfishness, we have forgotten what it is to suffer for the sake of others. Gandhiji did not condemn those who were perpetuating atrocities in the name of religion. He chose to suffer for everybody because he felt that he was responsible for everyone and everything. It is a tribute to this moral giant that, when whole armies were ineffective in stemming the violence, by fasting he compelled the killers to throw down their weapons. By his adherence to this principle, he was able to calm the whole populace and force it to think sanely.

Job is perhaps the preeminent example of innocent suffering. It is difficult for the modern reader to grasp the depth of feeling because of the sceptical environment he has grown up in. Towards the end of the novel, Dmitry has a heart-rending dream. While riding in his carriage, he suddenly comes upon a woman and her child. They are victims of a fire and wandering away from their village. When Dmitry asks the coachman the
reason for the child's tears, the coachman says that the child is crying because their house has burnt down. While this is a good "empirical-rationalist" answer that says what has happened, it does not say why it has happened. Dmitry's question really is, "Why was the world made in such a way that houses must burn down and the innocent must suffer?" This is the question Job asks at the height of his suffering, and as Eugene Goodheart says, "a question that must be asked again and again in every age. Indeed, the test of the integrity of an age is its capacity to ask the question and seek the answer."

To a superficial reader, the Grand Inquisitor's logic is more appealing than the sublime teaching of Father Zossima because the very thought of rebelling against a given order, specially a religious order, has an attraction for us all. A romantic halo has been created around the rebel. In our own country, we have seen the smuggler become the hero in movies, because he rebels against a society which is unjust. In Hollywood

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the boss of the Mafia has been glorified to ludicrous extremes. Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* is a novel charting the fortunes of an Italian family in America. The head of the family becomes the son, of the head of one of the five groups that control all illegal activities in New York. The book has a cult following, and when it was made into a movie, it broke all previous record. The idea of rebellion appeals to people and the movies are but an indication of public taste.

In the novel, however, it is clear that Dostoevsky is firmly on the side of Father Zossima because of the way in which he parodies Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor, through the characters of Kolya Krasotkin and Rakitin. Kolya is the thirteen-year-old boy who strikes terror in the hearts of his mother, his teachers, and his classmates. He quotes Voltaire without understanding, and his intelligence is a school boy's smartness at best. Like Ivan, he believes that Alyosha can be cured of mysticism by contact with reality. His ideas about God are travesty of Ivan's ideas:

'On the contrary, I have nothing against God. Of course, God is only a hypothesis but - and I admit that He is necessary for - for order -
for world order and so on, and, if there were no God He'd have to be invented,' Kolya added, beginning to blush.

',... one can love humanity even without believing in God - don't you think so? Voltaire did not believe in God but he loved mankind, didn't he? .... I am a socialist, Karmazov, I'm an incorrigible socialist.... You must admit that Christianity, for instance, has been useful only to the rich and powerful to keep the lower classes in slavery!'

',... I'm not against Christ. He was a very humane person, and if he were alive today, he would most certainly have joined the revolutionaries and would perhaps, play a conspicuous part. I'm quite sure of that.19.

Robert Belknap says that while the talk about "hypotheses, the order of things, the necessity of God, and the possibility of love without God.... plainly reminds the reader of Ivan; the talk about socialism, the sins of Christianity, and Christ's need to join the revolutionists, recalls the Grand Inquisitor." The conceit and embarrassed self-consciousness of Kolya obliquely parody Ivan's doctrines. By making Kolya mouth many of Belinsky's ideas, Dostoevsky was having a dig at his old adversary also. 20

19 The Brothers Karamazov, pp.648-650.

20 Modern Critical Views: Fyodor Dostoevsky, p.149.
What ultimately ties Kolya to Ivan is the incident about the goose. At first reading, it appears to be a simple incident of boyish cruelty. But a second reading drives home the point that Kolya is as guilty as the peasant who has moved the cart wheel over the neck of the goose; Just as Ivan is Smerdyakov's partner in the murder of his father, or as Smerdyakov is guilty of feeding the dog, Zhuchka, a piece of bread with a pin stuck in it. The idea of shared guilt binds the three together and in ridiculing Kolya, Dostoevsky ridicules Ivan's ideas too.

Once again, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, we see the family in the process of disillusion. Fyodor Karamazov is the worst husband a woman can have. In no way is he fit to be the father of a child. Instead of being the helmsman of the family, he is a womaniser and a buffoon who farms out his children among relatives so that he can indulge his carnal desires. Naturally, the three sons too have no respect or affection for the father. Infact, Dmitry physically beats him and would not mind killing him. Ivan, as we have seen, is the silent partner in his father's murder. Though Alyosha does not hate him outright, one cannot say that he loves and
respects him. The Snegiryov household is another example of what is not a family. While the young son is dying of consumption, the daughter is an invalid. The mother is mentally imbalanced and the father is a pathetic clown. Ilyusha learns despicable tricks from Smerdyakov because there is neither parental control nor guidance at home. The characters are all individuals; though living under a single roof, they are isolated beings. Perhaps, Dostoevsky is suggesting that the breakdown of the family leads to irresponsible behaviour, and ultimately to crime.

What troubles many modern readers about Dostoevsky is the happy ending of his novels. Living in a highly sceptical society, they are not able to reconcile the "disparity between the extreme formal and philosophical complexity of the narrative..... and the simple harmony of the final outcome." How does one resolve this inconsistency? Antony Johae says that:

Dostoevsky calls upon us for a great leap of faith, without which the miracle of spiritual regeneration (the happy ending) is impossible. If we are not prepared to take the leap, the conflict in our hearts continues unabated, our souls remain in jeopardy, and we are unable to accept the possibility of an enduring
happiness. If we do take the leap, the ideal becomes reachable precisely because of our faith..... Sceptics must become believers; the faithless, faithful; the God-deniers, 'God-bearers.21

This is indeed a difficult task because the cynical environment around us is not conducive to such a leap. But the effort will be repaid many times over because it will enhance our appreciation of Dostoevsky and increase our awareness of the tremendous potential that life holds for each of us.

CHAPTER - VI

BRAVE NEW WORLDS
If there is one distinctive feature of the present age, it is the rapidity with which things around us change. While change has been an ever present phenomenon, it was not noticeable in the past because the rate of change was negligible. Today things change so fast that one finds it difficult to keep track of the new inventions and discoveries in any single field like say medicine or computer technology. A few decades ago, computers were huge machines, occupying a great deal of space and costing vast amounts of money. Today the lap-top computer can be placed inside an executive's briefcase, it is affordable, and is more powerful than its huge ancestors.

In *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler explains how almost as much has happened in the last few decades, as in the last fifty thousand years. If the last fifty thousand years of man's life on earth were divided in lifetimes were spent in caves. It has been possible to communicate from one lifetime to another only in the last seventy lifetimes because of the discovery of writing, and it is only during the last six lifetimes that mankind has seen a printed word. We have been able to measure time
accurately only during the last four lifetimes and only in the last two have we used an electric motor. The "overwhelming majority of goods that we use in daily life today have been developed within the present, the 800th, lifetime."¹

During this 800th lifetime, man's relationship to the resources has reversed itself as is evident in the field of economic development. The original basis of civilization was agriculture. During this single lifetime, it's lost its domination in nation after nation. In most developed economies, less than fifteen percent of the population is engaged in agriculture. During this single lifetime, it's lost its domination in nation after nation. In most developed economies, less than fifteen percent of the population is engaged in agriculture. Toffler has pointed out that in 1956, more than fifty percent of the non-farm labour was engaged not in blue-collar jobs, but in white-collar jobs like retail trade, administration, communications, research, education, and other service categories. "By any means, this is a tremendous shift in economic and social terms.

Within a few decades, ten thousand years of agriculture and two centuries of industrialism have been replaced by the new age, "super-industrialism."

This acceleration in the different fields of activity is best understood by an account of the progress in transportation. Since 6000 B.C., the fastest mode of transport available to man over large distances was the camel caravan with an average speed of about eight miles per hour. How difficult it was to exceed this speed limit can be seen from the fact that the stage coach which began operating in England, in 1784, averaged only ten miles per hour, while the first locomotive, in 1825, could manage a top speed of only thirteen miles per hour. The lightning changes that followed are best described by Alvin Toffler:

It was probably not until the 1880's that man, with the help of a more advanced steam locomotive, managed to reach a speed of one hundred mph (mile per hour). It took the human race millions of years to attain that record.

It took only fifty-eight years, however, to quadruple that limit, so that by 1938 airborne man was cracking the 400-mph line. It took a mere twenty-years flick of time to the limit again. And by 1960's, rocket planes approached speeds of 4000mph, and men in space
capsules were circling the earth at 18,000 mph. Plotted on a graph, the line representing progress in the past generation would leap vertically off the page.2

This accelerative trend is seen in other areas also, like the amount of energy generated and consumed, altitudes reached, minerals mined or distances travelled, the 800th lifetime has more than exceeded what happened before it.

It is this kind of environment which is ripe for the growth of science fiction and consequently science fiction flourished only in highly industrialised societies. Today American science fiction is at the forefront because of America's Superpower status, technological advancement, and economic strength. Even in highly industrialised societies, science fiction is influenced by the different national traditions. Patrick Parrinder has highlighted the salient features of the science fiction of the four predominantly industrialised societies:

...Russian science fiction is seen to have been conditioned by its response to (and, at times, criticism of) the official utopianism

of the Soviet state; British science fiction owes its repeated visions of catastrophe to the long national history of industrial and imperial decline; German science fiction is replete with visions of the triumph of a master race; and American science fiction derives both the optimism and the ruthlessness of its approach from the frontier experience and the economic subjugation of the West.

Science fiction, however, can be described as a homogeneous, international literature only to the extent that one is prepared to accept the conventional American view of it—as reflected, for example, in an anthology title like The Best From the Rest of the World...3

Though science fiction is a form of fantasy, its backgrounds are derived from those similar to ours, or those which can be approximated by logical extension of our background. Thus it will be seen that science fiction "maintains a respect for fact or presumptive fact, (while) fantasy makes a point of flouting these."

In New Maps of hell: A Survey of Science Fiction, Kingsley Amis, quotes Fredrick Brown in attempting to distinguish the two modes. Brown has reworked the Midas story and this is how it reads in its science fiction setting.

Mr. Midas, who runs a Greek restaurant in the Bronx, happens to save the life of an extraterrestrial from a far planet who is living in New York anonymously as an observer for the Galactic Federation, to which Earth for obvious reasons is not yet ready to be admitted .... The extraterrestrial, who is a master of sciences far beyond ours, makes a machine which alters the molecular vibrations of Mr. Midas's body so his touch has a transmuting effect on other objects.

Amis says that it is not possible to turn a fantasy story into a science fiction story "merely by inserting a few lines of pseudo-scientific platter" because "in practise the arbitrary and whimsical development of nearly every story of fantasy soon puts it beyond recovery by any talk of Galactic Federations or molecular vibrations."

Having come so far we should now define science fiction. This is easier said than done because no two science fiction writers have agreed on a common definition. The differences in the definitions occur because each writer defines science fiction in such a way as to highlight his area of specialisation. Let us consider three definitions from well known practitioners of the craft, beginning with Kingsley Amis:

Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin.5

In this fairly straightforward definition, the emphasis is on the word "innovation." This gives freedom to the science fiction writer because he can choose from an inexhaustible source. The mention of "pseudo-science" and "pseudotechnology" in the definition means that a writer need not know science in any detail.

The definition of science fiction by Brian Aldiss, United Kingdom's best known science fiction writer, appears "slightly pretentious" because science fiction is generally thought to be light reading.

Science is the search for a definition of mankind and is status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode.6

5 Ibid., p.11.

According to Aldiss, in the light of the above definition, the most tried and true way of showing man's statue is to see how he reacts when confronted by a crisis. The crisis could be of his making (discovery of atomic power, and this power), or sciences (a new disease), or a natural one (the Sun dying out). When man faces the crises with extra-ordinary power, and this power is based on science or pseudo-science, then we have a work of science fiction. The greater power the protagonist enjoys over the ordinary, the closer will the work be to hard-core science fiction, and vice versa.

Asimov, on the other hand, defines science fiction thus:

(It) is that branch of literature that deals with human responses to changes in the level of science and technology.

The "change in the level of science and technology" can be either "advances or retrogressions". Thus taking any

single aspect of scientific or technological change, the science fiction writer can choose from a very wide spectrum. For example, the use of robots for doing dangerous or repetitive jobs is gaining acceptance in society now. Taking his cue from this development, the science fiction writer can write a novel or a story about robots which are specifically designed to kill men, or about robots which take care of all mundane and dangerous work, thereby leaving man free for other pursuits. Closer attention to Asimov's definition will reveal that the accent is on "human response". Given such a definition, the science fiction writer needs to only fleetingly glance at the science and technology aspects of the story, while concentrating on the human angle. We shall see this precise trend in the works of Asimov which are studied in detail in the following pages.

The likely question which any student of science fiction will ask is, "What are the subjects with which science fiction deals"? From the foregoing, it is evident that a science fiction writer takes a given situation and logically advances it further by imaginatively applying science and technology. A few
examples will suffice to show that almost any subject is suitable raw material for a science fiction story.

1. Energy:
Fossil fuels, coal and oil, made the Industrial Revolution possible. Everyone knows that both of these will not last forever. Governments have already started using atomic energy as a power source. In many countries, especially America, solar energy is also being tapped. To a science fiction writer this knowledge can be the kernel of a story or a novel, where the group of persons who control future energy supplies uses it as a tool for blackmail or power or wealth. The development of permanent energy sources can be a fit subject for a writer.

2. Population Explosion:
Whether it be food or minerals, energy or water, the earth has a limited quantity of these resources. If the population continues to grow at the present rate, it is inevitable that there will be widespread famine and
irreparable environmental damage. Therefore population control is at the forefront of government plans, especially in underdeveloped and heavily populated countries like China, India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. The scientific methods employed to control population; humane or cruel, exploitative or beneficial, can be the hub around which a science fiction story revolves.

3. Space Travel:
When the earth is drained of oil and coal and the population has increased to unsustainable levels, man will be forced to migrate from the earth to other planets. The hazards of space travel, including encounters with other intelligent life and monsters from outer space, have been staple food for science-fiction-hungry writers.

4. Space settlements:
Once human beings take to space, it is a matter of time before a full-fledged space colony is established. Since no other planet
or galaxy has an atmosphere in which man can survive, it would be necessary to create enormous artificial structures which will be able to support millions of people. What would such a large group of people not need? Beginning with agriculture, an entire civilization will have to be created in hostile conditions. People who are already enjoying the benefits of these new cultures would like to keep new comers out - a logical extension of the immigration policies of advanced countries.

5. Robots:
Throughout history, man has used animals or other human beings to do exhausting manual work. Today machines have replaced muscle in a wide range of activities. Infact, in developed countries, robots are being increasingly used in dangerous jobs. If these can be developed with an approach to human versatality and human appearance, then they can make full use of technological tools made for human beings. If they are intelligent in
addition and incapable of revolt, then they can be man's friends as well as servants.

What is a robot? In 1920, Karel Capek, a Czech playwright published a play, R.U.R. The initials stand for Rossum's Industrial Robots. In Czech, the word "robota" means "one who is engaged in involuntary servitude" or a slave. In the play, the artificial human beings created in the industrial plant are called robots. Ironically, in today's terminology, they would be "androids". Robots are mechanical devices, built largely of metal, with the appearance of a human being. The robot is thus a machine with the appearance of a human being. In the stories and novels that we will study in detail, these robots are equipped with "positronic brains" which enable them to speak and respond to human commands.

Before taking up any story about robots by Asimov, it is necessary to recapitulate the Three Laws of Robotics which have been referred to in the first chapter. They are:
First Law: A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

Second Law: A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

Third Law: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Asimov has made these Laws the basis of all stories and novels concerned with robots. The reason for this is quite simple. Being machines, robots are seen as dangerous and undesirable. If they are intelligent also, then there is the additional antagonism because they can replace human beings in practically every field of activity, thereby rendering them jobless. By building the Three Laws deeply in the robot's brain,

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Asimov achieved three things. Firstly, the human characters in the novels would not have to fear robots. Secondly, the robots are one notch below human beings, however intelligent they may be. Thirdly, the robots can be servants, friends, protectors, or companions depending on the needs of the plot.

The action in the short story *Runaround* takes place on the planet Mercury in the year 2015. The principal characters are two humans, Gregory Powell and Mike Donovan, and a robot, Speedy. The story is about the second expedition to Mercury, ten years after the first one. The aim of the expedition is to "report on the advisability of reopening the Sunside Mining Station". When Speedy does not return after five hours, the excitable Donovan reports the fact to Powell, whose favourite platitude is that nothing can be gained from excitement.

This is a crisis. On tracking Speedy, they find that the robot is circling the selenium pool. But why is selenium so important?

It worked itself as simply as a syllogism. The photo-cell banks that alone stood between the full power of Mercury's monstrous sun and
themselves were shot to hell. The only thing that could save them was selenium the only thing that could get the selenium was Speedy. If Speedy didn't come back, no selenium. No selenium, no photo-cell banks. No photo-banks—well, death by slow broiling is one of the most unpleasant ways of being done in.\[9\]

The first thing to be noticed about the paragraph quoted above is the racy languages of the thriller. The tone is half-humourous. A grave situation is presented without resorting to heavy language or symbolism. This is true of the other works of Asimov also, and is one of the reasons for his immense popularity.

The plan which Powell and Donovan think up is to take a couple of robots from the earlier expeditions and track down Speedy. The earlier model robots move only when a human being sits on them. They have humped backs so that the riders can sit comfortably, and the shoulders have hollows in which the rider can place his thighs. This was done so as to assure people that the robots could not move around on their own and were completely at the back and call of human beings. They find Speedy circling the selenium pool and call out to it. Instead of promptly obeying an order, Speedy talks

gibberish. What has happened is that following Donovan's order, Speedy has gone to collect elenium in obedience to the Second Law of Robotics which says that, a robot must obey orders given to it unless the orders are harmful to other human beings. Unfortunately, carbon monoxide, which is harmful to robots, is issuing forth from the Selenium pool. So the Third Law comes into play. According to it, a robot must not endanger itself so long as it is not contrary to the First and Second Laws. The potential set up by the Second Law following Donovan's order, is balanced by the counter-potential set up by the Third Law. This is responsible for Speedy's erratic behaviour.

The impasse is broken when Powell puts himself in mortal danger by going into the roasting heat to Mercury's Sun. The robot that he has been riding comes to save him, but he orders it away. It is of no use because the First Law is so strong that it compels the old robot to go to Powell's help. He moves away from his prospective saviour and calls out to Speedy for help.

He called a last time, desperately: "Speedy! I'm dying, damn you! Where are you? Speedy, I need you".
He was still stumbling backward in a blind effort to get away from the giant robot he didn't want when he felt steel fingers on his arms, and a worried, apologetic voice of metallic timbre in his ears. "Holy smoke, boss, what are you doing here? And what am I doing - I'm so confused -" "Never mind", murmured Powell weakly. "Get me to the shadow of the cliff - and hurry!"10

In all the short stories about robots, Asimov uses the tension between the Three Laws to create a seemingly deadlocked situation, which is resolved at the very last moment by the application of these same Laws.

One of the likely subjects for science fiction writers is World Government. To any rational individual, it will be clear that as long as the nations of the world spend most of their time and energy in quarreling with words and weapons, a concerted offensive against the problems that threaten human survival is not possible. One way of overcoming this problem is to have a World Government which will indentify the problematic areas, and channelise human efforts with a view to overcoming them. Due to the complex geographical, nationalistic and cultural issues at stake, the World Government will have to be a federal

10 Ibid., p.58.
one, with regional and local autonomy safeguarded and with cultural diversity promoted. Perhaps such ideas lead to the formation of the United Nations Organisations was a similar one.

In the short story, The Evitable Conflict, Asimov has used the idea of a World Government with one very important difference; The decisions on all matters are made, not by human beings, but by Machines. It is an ideal world.

And the Machines are nothing but the vastest conglomeration of calculating circuits ever invented. They are still robots withing the meaning of the First Law, and so our Earth-wide economy is in accord with the best interests of Man. The population of Earth knows that there will be no unemployment, no overproduction or shortages. Waste and famine are words in history books. And so the question of ownership of the means of production becomes obsolescent. Whoever owned them .... a man, a group, a nation, or all mankind, they could be utilised only as the Machines diverted. Not because men were forced to but because it was the wisest course and men knew it.11

Now these Machines are not ordinary machines. They are a gigantic extrapolations which no single human being or group of human beings can understand. A team of mathematicians work several years to calculate the parameters of a positronic brain. Using this brain, they make further calculations, to create a still more complicated brain. When this step is repeated ten times, a Machine is the result. So long as the Machines work properly, humanity can rest assured that no problems will arise.

The fine balance achieved by the Machines is evidently disturbed because the Mexican Canal is two months beyond schedule; the Hydroponics plant at Tientsin has been laying off men; the Mercury mines at Almaden are producing than it should. These four anomalies are occurring in the four regions of Earth. The Coordinator, Stephen Byerley, thinks that since the members of the Society of Humanity are responsible for the trouble, he will have the Society outlawed. He wants to go further and remove all known and suspected Society members from all responsible positions. At this point, the "Robopsychologist", Susan Calvin, steps in. She tells the Coordinator that he cannot do what he is
proposing because there is no problem. Being robots, the Machines follow the First Law. Since they work not for any individual but for all humanity, the First Law is modified slightly: "No Machine may harm humanity; or, through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm". The Machine is so arranging matters that even if the members of the society disobey its orders; the deviation that will be caused by the disobedience is already taken into account. In addition, the Machine by nudging the economic forces in the desired direction, is making sure that members of the society are removed from sensitive positons without suffering any harm. Thus Vrasayana and Villafranca are removed from their positions and placed in other jobs. Consolidated Cinnabar is forced to sell the mercury mines to people who are likely to obey the Machine, and the Directors of World Steel are losing their grip on the industry. The Machine is doing all this quietly because if it were to become known that the Machine was the true master and was manipulating human beings they would become unhappy and their pride would be hurt. This would be contrary to the First Law.

Increasingly, one sees a solid conservative faith in technology in Asimov's works. Robots and computers
are seen as man's protectors and friends. He has single-handedly destroyed the Hollywood myth of robots being metallic monsters out to destroy humanity. He is not alone in believing and advocating that intelligent Machines will be "human-friendly". Let us see what Arthur. C. Clarke, the father of the communications satellite and one of the best-known science fiction writers, has to say on the subject:

The popular idea, fostered by comic strips and the cheaper forms of science fiction, that intelligent Machines must be malevolent entities hostile to man, is so absurd that it is hardly worth wasting energy to refute it, I am almost tempted to argue that only unintelligent Machines can be malevolent.... Those who picture Machines as active enemies are merely projecting their own aggressive instincts, inherited from the jungle, into a world where such things do not exist. The higher the intelligence, the greater the degree of co-operativeness. 12

In The Caves Of Steel, the first robot novel, Asimov creates a New York City thousands of years in the future. It does not resemble the New York City of the present; even the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building are conspicuously absent. It is a City of

twenty million humans and only three centuries old, though its predecessor had existed for three thousand years.

The present day cities cannot support huge populations, as is evident from the state of Calcutta or Bombay to even a visitor. The scenario Asimov presents is difficult for us to imaging because it is outside the realm of reality. The future City is based on the concept of efficiency through bigness. There are no kitchens or bathrooms in the apartments of the City because they mean wastage of precious space. Instead, there are community shower rooms, also called "personals" - for obvious reasons and efficient diners. Food, as we know it, is no more available. The population feeds on yeast and hydroponically grown food. The only mode of transport available is the expressway in combination with local ways and the "strips". Each City is a semi-autonomous unit geared to maximum utilisation of scarce resources.

The whole structure is enclosed, and the City is a cave of steel. At the centre is the enormous complex of administrative offices. Towards the outskirts are "the
factories, the hydroponic plants, the yeast-culture vats, the power plants". The land between the Cities is used for agriculture, grazing and mining. Though old fashioned and inefficient compared to modern industry, agriculture and grazing are practised because natural products are in great demand and; beef, pork and grain are luxury items and can be used for export. But the physical work on the farms, ranches and mines is done by crude robots under the supervision of man.

Though the scenario seems far-fetched, it is plausible given the direction society is taking in advanced countries. People who visit Tokyo invariably comment on the compactness of hotel rooms and flats. A flat of one thousand square feet is a luxury only the very well-to-do can afford. Knowing that they can never own a decent house, most Japanese spend all their money travel or buying expensive cars and gadgets.

But man is never content with what he has. He either dreams of a future which will be free of botheration; or nostalgically harks back to a past which appears golden compared to the troubled present. In The Caves Of Steel, we have the Medievalists who feel
strongly that the ills of the city are due to man breaking away from his past. They are particularly against the introduction of robots in the cities because they are seen as job-stealers. Julius Enderby, the Commissioner of Police is a medievalist. He goes to extreme lengths, like weaning spectacles and having "windows" in the office.

He stood up, turned away and walked to the wall behind his desk. He touched an inconspicuous contact switch and a section of the wall grew transparent. Baley blinked at the unexpected insurge of grayish light. The commissioner simled. "I had this arranged specially last year, Lije. I don't think I've showed it to you before ...... In the old days, al rooms had things like this. They are called "windows". Baley squirmed a bit. ... There was something indecent about the exposure of the privacy of a room to the outside world ...... With mild shock, Baley realised that it was raining ...... Against his will, Baley had to admit to himself that it was impressive. In his forty-two years he had rarely seen rain, or any of the phenomena of nature, for that matter. He said, "It always seems a waste for all that water to come down on the city. It should restrict itself to the reservoirs".13

The Commissioner has called plain-clothes man, Elijah Baley rating C-5, to his office to appraise him.

of a murder. A 'Spacer', Dr. Sarton, has been murdered at Spacetown, which is located just outside New York City. The Spacers are naturally anxious to have the murderer brought to book. They have agreed to let the police department of the City probe the murder on one condition. The department is to use one of their members on the investigating team. The department's man in-charge of the investigation is Elijah Baley, while the spacers have sent R.Daneel Olivaw as their representative. The initial 'R' stands for robot. The Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson team of the future is formed, Elijah Baley and R.Daneel Olivaw.

Thousands of years ago, before the development of cities, Earth men had colonised thirty Outer Worlds. They had beaten a hostile environment and developed the colonised planets. In due course, the Outer Worlds proposed; and their inhabitants went and occupied twenty new worlds. Initially, the Outer Worlds were under the domination of Earth. With the passage of time, the tables were turned and Earth the mother planet, was at the mercy of the Outer Worlds. The Spacers, inhabitants of the Outer Worlds, had once sent soldiers in gleaming cruisers into Washington, New York
and Moscow to collect what they claimed was their. Since then, Earthmen knew better than to cross swords with the spacers. The Spacers have come to Earth with a specific project in mind. The government of Earth is in no position to deny the Spacers anything because they can overwhelm Earth anytime they want to.

The murder of Dr. Sarton has to be solved soon, as otherwise the Spacers can use this as an excuse to levy indemnity charges on Earth. Politically, it would be suicide for the Earth government to pay; not paying could result in a humiliating defeat. The only way out for Earth is to find the murderer defeat. The only way out for Earth is to find the murderer and hand him over to the Spacers. That is easier said than done because the Spacers have already conducted their own investigation without any result. They have only one suspect, Julius Enderby — Commissioner of Police, because he was deprived of his blaster as soon as he entered spacetown as per the norms.

Elijah Baley is disturbed that he has to work with a robot. As if this were not enough, he is expected to let Daneel stay in his house. It is well known that
Earth people dislike robots because of the new government policy of replacing men with robots in all jobs. The persons who lose their jobs, or are declassified, have to live on the outskirts of the City, near the factories and yeast plants. They become social outcasts. Baley's father was a physicist in charge of an atomic plant. Due to an accident which resulted in fatal casualties, Baley Sr. was declassified. Unable to bear the shock, Elijah's mother died. His father too died shortly afterwards, and Baley spent his childhood in the section orphanage with his sister.

Against this background, he meets R. Daneel Olivaw at Spacetown. Though a robot, Daneel is almost human to look at. Only on very close examination, can one tell that he is a robot. Elijah Baley is also deceived, and when Daneel tells him that he is a robot, Baley is furious with himself. When they are returning to Baley's apartment, a disturbing incident occurs at a shoe store. A lady customer does not want to be waited on by the robot clerks and makes a scene. Within minutes, hundreds of people gather and the tension is palpable. The mod wants a destroy the robots. Baley
is apprehensive of the situation and wants to call reinforcements. But Daneel controls the crowd by threatening to shoot the trouble makers with his blaster. The crowd disperses, and the only damage done is to Baley's ego.

In the course of investigation, Baley wants to visit Spacetown. There he makes a complete fool of himself by alleging that Dr. Sarton is alive. He says that what the Commissioner saw was not the body of Dr. Sarton, but a robot. Dr. Sarton is pretending to be R. Daneel Olivaw. He arrives at this wrong conclusion due to haste and a desire to show himself superior to the Spacers. His doubt is set to rest when Daneel reveals his metallic insides. Baley is no further in his investigation than when he had started. It is then that he learns why the Spacers have come to Earth.

Dr. Fastolfe begins by explaining to Baley why the Spacers avoid contact with Earthmen. When his ancestors colonised Outer Worlds, they found themselves on planets which did not have any Terrestrial bacteria and viruses. Their own diseases were conquered by the latest microbiological techniques which they had brought
with them. Gradually a stage was reached when one by one the Outer Worlds became disease free and to keep them that way Earthmen were kept out by rigorous immigration requirements. Due to the sterile environments the Spacers did not develop immune systems in their bodies. In such a situation, even a cold or fever could prove fatal to them.

On the one hand, the Spacer's lives on the Outer Worlds are "too long to risk and too comfortable to upset", while on the other, Earth is surely headed for disaster due to the city culture and the growth in population. Face with the imminent destruction of the human race, the Spacers have thought of a plan to get the Earth people out of the Cities and into space.

"In trying to introduce robots on Earth, we're doing our best to upset the balance of your City economy". "That's your way of helping?" Baley's lips quivered. "You mean you're creating a growing group of displaced and declassified men on purpose". "Not out of cruelty or callousness, believe me. A group of displaced men .... are what we need to serve as a nucleus for colonisation. Your ancient America was discovered by ships fitted out with men from the prisons ..... The new colonies will be built by humans who have the City background plus the beginnings of a C/Fe (carbon plus iron or human plus robot) culture
"As it stands now, Earth's own structure must go rocketing down in the near future, the Outer Worlds will slowly degenerate and decay in a come - what further future, but the new colonies will be a new and healthy strain, combining the best of both cultures. By their reaction upon the older worlds, including Earth, we ourselves may gain new life".14

Though the plan is good in theory, it is not able to succeed because of the intense opposition on Earth to the introduction of robots. One group of Earthmen who have shown this antagonism is the Medievalists. It appears that, inspite of the noble aim, Dr. Fastolfe's mission will not succeed.

Baley gets expert opinion from a roboticist about how the murder could have been committed. While a human being is capable of murdering another human being, the particular circumstances rule out such a possibility in this case. Firstly, no human can carry a weapon into spacetown because it is taken away from him at the entrance. There is one way by which a blaster can be taken into Spacetown. If a human were to cross over from the City to Spacetown through the open fields, he could evade the security guards at the entrance. But

14 The Caves Of Steel, pp.98-99.
this is impossible because no human will dare to walk through the open fields because of the fear of open spaces. A robot, on the other hand, can cross the open spaces. A robot, on the other hand, can cross the open fields with a blaster but it cannot kill a human being because of the First Law imprinted in its positronic brain.

In the end, Baley proves that the murderer is none other than Julius Enderby, the Commissioner of Police, who is a staunch Medievalist. He has already expressed himself against the introduction of robots in the Cities. Dr. Sarton, has been consulting Enderby on the C/Fe (human/robot) combination Dr. Fastolfe has explained to Baley. It is not Enderby's intention to kill Dr. Sargon. He has planned to destroy R. Daneel, Spacetown's humanoid robot. Enderby has ordered the departmental robot, R. Sammy. In the excitement, he drops his spectacles at the precise moment that the door is opened. He mistakes the figure to be R.Daneel and blasts Dr. Sarton. The Spacers and Baley make a deal with Enderby whereby they agree to hush up the murder if Enderby agrees to use his influence to manoeuvre the medievalists in the direction of colonisation of outer space.
In *The Naked Sun*, we see the Spacers on one of their own worlds, Solaria. Baley has been invited by the Solaraiyan government to investigate the murder of Dr. Delmarre, the only fetal engineer on Solaria. The Earth government wants Baley to observe the situation on Solaria and report about the weakness of the Spacers. The sociologists on Earth, have come to the conclusion that the Galactic situation is unstable. The fifty Outer Worlds are under-populated, robotised, economically and militarily powerful, and the people live long, healthy lives. On the other hand, the Earth people are short lived, the Cities are over-crowded, and economically in a decline. Given the antagonism between the Spacers and the Earthman, the sociologists predict rebellions against Spacers which will be totally crushed. The vicious cycle of "revolt, suppression, revolt, suppression" will wipe out all human life on Earth within a century. The sociologists do not have any information about the Spacers which can be used to Earth's advantage. No Earthman is allowed to enter any of the Spacer Worlds because of the Spacer's dread of disease. Whatever information the socialists have is given by the Spacers themselves, and consequently they know only their strong points. Baley's trip will
provide the socialologists with information which they desperately lack.

Of the fifty Outer Worlds, Aurora is the most powerful. It has insisted that Baley be in-charge of the investigation, and that his partner be an Auroran. Baley's partner will be R. Daneel Olivaw, the robot who has already worked with him in solving the murder of Dr. Sarton in *The Caves Of Steel*. The Aurorans have paired Daneel with Baley because if the Solarians see a human of the Outer Worlds associating with Baley, it will raise his status in their eyes. Since Daneel is almost human, he can successfully carry out the subterfuge. The ulterior motive of the Aurorans however is to study Solarian society which is far ahead of them in the knowledge and application of Robotics.

Solaria has only twenty thousand human beings on it. For each human being, on an average, it has ten thousand robots. They are so many and so specialised, that the Solarians have managed to avoid all physical contact with other humans. Instead of seeing one another, they "view" each others trimensional images - the contact being established by a specific robot. The
obsession with hygiene has become a fetish and humans touch each other only by assignment for the purpose of maintaining a steady population level. When the woman has conceived, the foetus is removed from her womb a month after the conception and tended by fetal engineers. They allow only those foetuses to mature which are perfectly healthy. From that stage on, the infants are cared for only by robots. No one knows who his or her parents are. All the needs of the child are fulfilled by different sets of specialists supervising specialised robots.

In such a society, the only thing that gives people a sense of security is the knowledge that because of the Three laws of Robotics, the robots will never harm them and will always obey them. How could a murder occur when people don't even see each other, leave alone touch one another? With hundreds of robots around at any time, how could the murderer escape? What was the motive for the murder? What weapon was used? These are questions that Baley must find answers to, if he is going to solve the murder. Though the fatal blow has been struck by the victim's wife, Gladia Delmarre, the actual murderer is Dr. Leebig, the robotist. He has
manipulated Gladia as he would manipulate a robot. On his orders, a robot has handed over one of its detachable limbs when Gladia is having a heated argument with her husband with the detachable limb which has killed him. Since Dr. Leebig is the first person to attend the scene of the murder, he removes all clues and carefully and erases all record of the incident from the robot's positronic brain.

Why has Dr. Leebig planned the murder? He and Dr. Delmarre are paranoid about human contact, and is working to eliminate it in his field. While Dr. Delmarre is working towards a future where marriage will not be necessary because of ectogenesis, Dr. Leebig is planning to make spaceships with positronic brains. If he succeeds, then these spaceships can be used to destroy spaceships from other planets, even if the conventional spaceships too. This is far-fetched, we should remember that the horror and misery of the Second World War can be traced back to one man, Hitler. At the other end of the spectrum, one man was responsible for the British leaving India without bloodshed, Mahatma Gandhi. Again, it was he alone who could
quench the fires of hatred by undertaking a fast-to-death as a way of repenting the barbaric cruelty of his fellow-countrymen.

Baley's report about the weakness of the Spacers is brief. The experts thought that the strength of the Spacers are, their low population, their longevity, and robots. Baley says that these have now become their weaknesses. By giving up human contact, by living in splendid isolation, the Spacers have reduced life to an easy gambol where there are no intellectual challenges. The robots have contributed to the mental stagnation by taking over all the work from the Spacers. Their long lives have made the Spacers complacent and selfish. They shun change. Earthmen are at the other extreme. They don't want to leave the Cities, but burrow deeper, thus retreating further and further from the Galaxy. Baley suggests that the way out of the stagnation is a new wave of colonisation of outer space.

Whether it is The Naked Sun or The Caves Of Steel, the most glaring issue is the selfishness of the Spacers who are better off than the Earthmen. They want to exclude their less fortunate fellow humans from the good
life they are living. Taken a step further, this attitude results in selfishness at individual levels, as we have seen in the case of Dr. Leebig. This drawing away from others makes existence sterile. The Solarian's obsession with cleanliness is also a negation of life. They deny the very life processes which make society possible and consequently they are decaying. Though science fiction is 'fun' reading, I wonder whether Asimov isn't criticising the "exclusiveness" of Western society.

It is common knowledge that Europe's population is declining. In America, people don't want to have children because they are "bothersome". With the coming of industrialism, the joint family has given way to the nuclear family. People want to further "streamline" the family by avoiding children. An anthropologist, Margret Mead, says that in future, parenthood would probably be limited to a small number of families, whose principal function would be childrearing. This would leave the rest of the population "free to function - for the first time in history - as individuals". as Alvin Toffler says, future newspapers may well carry advertisements aimed at young married couples:

It sounds humorous, but the tragedy is that society is moving in that direction. From there to the "fetal-engineers" of The Naked Sun is not far away. The images of sterility in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land are becoming reality! If science fiction is seen as an "inescapable projection of the hopes and fears about the direction in which society (is) moving"; the future will demand greater effort from us just to stay human.