



Salvation is the Ultimate Destiny of Mankind in the Select Novels of Dostoevsky: A Thematic Study

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Abstract

Salvation has always been a central issue of humanity, raising fundamental questions such as the necessity of suffering and the means of redemption. This research paper examines the theme of salvation as the ultimate destiny of humanity in *Fyodor Dostoevsky's* novels *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The study adopts a standard research methodology, using textual analysis and thematic interpretation. Primary sources include *Dostoevsky's* novels, while secondary sources include scholarly criticism, theological discussions, and existentialist interpretations of his works. *Crime and Punishment* presents the transformation of *Raskolnikov*, who transforms from an atheist murderer into a penitent believer, and shows that remorse and confession are indispensable for salvation. *The Brothers Karamazov* depicts salvation through suffering and love, which is evident in the contrasting spiritual paths of *Ivan*, *Dmitri*, and *Alyosha*. *Notes from Underground*, on the other hand, offers a harsh critique of rationalism, where the *Underground Man* emerges as a tragic character, whose suffering is a protest against authoritarianism. This study argues that *Dostoevsky's* stories present salvation as an inevitable outcome of human suffering and moral struggle. Through the journeys of his protagonists, he presents a deeply *Christian* concept of salvation, which emphasizes the need for humility, faith, and repentance.

Keywords: *Dostoevsky, Salvation, Suffering, Redemption, Sin, Existentialism*

1.1 Introduction

This schooling examines the concept of salvation in the selected works of *Fyodor Dostoevsky* in depth. *Dostoevsky* is one of the few great literary figures who have presented the themes of salvation, atonement, and the human moral struggle with great breadth and depth. His writings are full of philosophical and theological questions, especially about free will, suffering, and the possibility of divine grace. For *Dostoevsky*, salvation is not just a religious issue but also an existential one, in which he highlights the psychological torment and struggle for redemption of his characters. His novels are complex moral and spiritual investigations, in which individuals are seen struggling with faith, reason, and the consequences of their actions.

Dostoevsky's own life was also marked by severe crises, including political exile, a near-death experience, and an eventual return to the *Russian Orthodox* faith. In his literature, the concept of salvation is not simple or equally attainable for all, but a personal experience, based on intense suffering, moral reckoning, and acceptance of divine grace.

In his works, salvation emerges as a dynamic and often painful process rather than a static religious concept. For *Dostoevsky*, salvation is deeply connected to suffering, free will, and atonement. His characters undergo intense psychological and moral crises, only after which they are capable of any spiritual renewal. He explores the depths of human hopelessness, highlighting the struggle between faith and doubt, sin and salvation. His works raise the question of whether salvation is a universal possibility or reserved only for those who undergo a profound inner revolution.

This tension is prominent in his three major novels: *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Each novel presents the concept of salvation from a unique perspective, showing how *Dostoevsky's* characters seek or reject salvation.

Notes from Underground Man in this novel, the *Underground Man* is the embodiment of existential despair, who rejects salvation and takes refuge in self-destructive solitude. The novel is a profound philosophical critique of rationalism and coercion, depicting a man who willfully refuses salvation and delights in suffering. His refusal to accept any of his own grace or atonement makes him one of *Dostoevsky's* most tragic characters, as he represents the extreme consequences of human alienation and existential hopelessness.

In contrast *Crime and Punishment*, salvation is presented as a practical conflict. The novel's protagonist, *Raskolnikov*, commits a murder and attempts to morally justify it, but ultimately his conscience torments him. His psychological turmoil, alienation, and ultimately his journey to salvation are the main focus of the novel. *Sonya Marmeladov*, a symbol of *Christian* sacrifice and unconditional love, plays a crucial role in his atonement. Unlike the *Underground Man*, who rejects salvation altogether, *Raskolnikov* undergoes a harrowing moral reckoning, which ultimately leads to his spiritual renewal. The novel shows that salvation requires not merely ideological acceptance but a deep, painful, and genuine spiritual revolution.

The Brothers Karamazov presents the concept of salvation in its most complex and developed form. The novel is a philosophical and theological dialogue on faith, doubt, and moral responsibility. Its three main characters *Alyosha*, *Ivan*, and *Dimitri* represent different ideas of salvation. *Alyosha* embodies a life of faith, humility, and sacrifice, while *Ivan* is plagued by doubt and rational rebellion, questioning divine justice. *Dimitri*, tormented by his desires and sins, goes through pain and sacrifice in his quest for salvation. The novel conveys the message that salvation is not just a personal journey but also a collective process, one that is connected to love, forgiveness, and acceptance of divine grace.

Dostoevsky's writings are not limited to religious matters but also encompass existential and philosophical issues. He was influenced by *Russian Orthodoxy*, existentialism, and his own personal experiences. His works establish an intellectual dialogue with thinkers such as *Nietzsche*, *Kant*, and *Schopenhauer*. He does not provide readers with easy answers but confronts them with fundamental human questions:

What does salvation really mean?

Is salvation possible without suffering?

Is salvation a divine gift or must it be earned through personal struggle?

These questions continue to resonate in *Dostoevsky's* literature, making his work as relevant today as it was in his time.

This research aims to accomplish these objectives:

1. To study the sinful nature of the protagonist in *Crime and Punishment* and his journey to salvation. It analyzes *Raskolnikov's* psychological struggle after the murder. It also examines how sin, confession, and suffering lead to his salvation.

2. To study the theme of salvation through human suffering in *The Brothers Karamazov*. It investigates how suffering serves as a means of gaining spiritual insight. It analyzes how *Orthodox Christianity* plays a role in *Dostoevsky's* portrayal of salvation.

3. To study *The Underground Man* as a contradictory savior in *Notes from the Underground*.

It analyzes his rejection of rational and idealistic ideals. It tries to understand his character as a stubborn hero and a symbol of existentialist resistance.

The study adopts a standard research methodology, using textual analysis and thematic interpretation. Primary sources include *Dostoevsky's* novels, while secondary sources include scholarly criticism, theological discussions, and existentialist interpretations of his works.

1.2 The Underground Man's Rejection of Rationalism and Utopian Ideals:

Dostoevsky's Underground Man explicitly rejected the rationalist and utopian philosophies of his time, especially those associated with the principles of nineteenth-century *Russian* intellectual thought and the *Western European Enlightenment*. The *Underground Man's* speeches target the notion that humans can be understood and controlled solely through logic and scientific principles.

The most famous critique of the *Underground Man* is in *Nikolai Chernyshevsky's* book "*What Is to Be Done?*" (1863), which advocates a rational and utilitarian approach to human development. The *Underground Man* mocks the belief that reason can never be wrong, when he says, "*I am not at all convinced, a gentleman, that man's desire for self-preservation arises solely from reason. Perhaps he desires something that is directly contrary to his best interest*" (*Dostoevsky*, 24). This statement challenges the basic assumptions of rational philosophy, which claims that man will always choose ways that are for his own good. The *Underground Man*, in contrast, points out the illogical and self-destructive tendencies of human nature, a theme later explored by existentialist thinkers such as *Jean-Paul Sartre* and *Albert Camus*.

Furthermore, the *Underground Man* rejects the idea that society can be perfected through reason and progress, as posited by utopian thinkers *Charles Faure* and *John Stuart Mill*. He mocks the concept of the *Crystal Palace*, a metaphor for an ideal, rational society. He states, "*And do you know what interests me most? That even if the Crystal Palace is built; one can suddenly choose to act against it! That is, just to show that one is not a piano key!*" (*Dostoevsky*, 35).

The *Underground Man's* denial of this utopian society reveals his insistence on free will, even at the cost of suffering and chaos. He represents *Dostoevsky's* view that man is not a mechanical being but a complex personality, driven by emotions, contradictions, and the desire for autonomy. As *Mikhail Bakhtin* notes, "*Dostoevsky's characters often represent the inner contradictions of human nature, rejecting any simple or forced theory of human development*" (*Bakhtin*, 37).

The Underground Man's suffering is a central element in his critique of philosophies that attempt to limit human behavior to scientific principles. Dostoevsky presents suffering not as a tragic consequence of human existence but as an integral part of consciousness and individuality. Contrary to determinism, the *Underground Man* delights in his suffering and uses it as an argument for his freedom. As he notes, “Suffering is the only root of consciousness” (Dostoevsky, 52). This view contradicts the prevailing utilitarianism of his time, which holds that the ultimate goal of society should be to maximize happiness and minimize suffering. By deliberately embracing his suffering, the *Underground Man* rejects the forced assumption that humans are always seeking happiness and self-interest.

Furthermore, the *Underground Man's* suffering is a harsh critique of the dehumanizing effects of modernity and rationalist ideology. He is alienated from society, unable to form meaningful relationships with others, and constantly trapped in a cycle of self-loathing and regret. His psychological torment demonstrates that rationalist systems fail to meet the deep and existential needs of human existence. As Frank writes in his book *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time*, states that “Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* reflects the existential conflict between human freedom and the oppressive structures of rational thought” (Frank, 98).

The Underground Man occupies a unique position, as he is both a victim of society's failings and a keen observer of its shortcomings. His inability to integrate into society makes him a tragic character, but his insight into social decline elevates him to the rank of an unwilling prophet.

Notes from the Underground, the underground man repeatedly engages in self-destructive behavior, which leads him to further social isolation. His relationships with other characters, such as Lisa, reveal his deep bitterness and self-destructive tendencies. In a poignant dialogue with Lisa, a prostitute whom he simultaneously pities and hates, he says, “I could not bear her kindness; she humiliated me. I did not want anyone to love me” (Dostoevsky 79). This moment perfectly reveals the inner conflict of the underground man, he longs for human connection but deliberately destroys every opportunity. Despite being a victim of modern alienation, he ruthlessly analyzes the causes of his suffering. As Camus says in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, “Rebellion gives value to life. By spreading suffering and despair, the underground man paradoxically affirms his own existence” (Camus 54).

The Underground Man does not achieve salvation in the traditional sense at the end of *Notes from Underground Man*. He does not become part of a story where the character has a chance to find peace, enlightenment, or a final conclusion. Rather, he remains trapped in his own self-destruction, over thinking, and inaction.

His final act the decision to stop writing is either a sign of exhaustion or an admission that his philosophy has no logical conclusion. If there is any salvation for him, it may lie in his ruthless self-awareness. He has come to fully understand the futility of his life, his contradictions, and the futility of human endeavor. However, this awareness does not lead him to any change or peace, but rather pushes him further into isolation. Therefore, instead of salvation, he is destined to accept the endless torment of self-conscious torment.

1.3 Raskolnikov's Crime as a Manifestation of Nihilism:

Nihilism, the negation of moral and religious principles, forms the basis for Raskolnikov's justification for murder. Inspired by Utilitarianism and revolutionary ideas, he formulates a theory, “that some individuals, extraordinary people are above moral laws and have the right to commit crimes for the greater good” (Dostoevsky 259). His internal dialogue reflects his belief that there is a clear division between ordinary and extraordinary individuals. He states, “I believe that if it had been necessary to sacrifice one, a dozen, or a hundred people in order to bring the discoveries of Kepler and Newton to light, Newton would have had every right, nay, his duty, to remove these ten or a hundred people” (Dostoevsky 259).

This logic shows the influence of nihilism and echoes the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Scholars such as Joseph Frank believe that, “Raskolnikov's ideas reflect the revolutionary ideas that were spreading in nineteenth-century Russia” (Frank 131). Similarly, Richard Peace has noted, “that Raskolnikov's internal justifications correspond to the rise of utilitarian justifications for violence in intellectual circles of the time” (Peace 78).

Furthermore, his conversation with Porfiry Petrovich exposes the contradictions in his ideology. He states, “Crime? What is crime? A mere violation of the law? But I believe that not every crime requires a criminal” (Dostoevsky 341). This statement highlights Raskolnikov's self-deception, as he struggles to reconcile his ideological beliefs with the psychological burden of his actions.

After the murder, Raskolnikov suffers from intense psychological torture. His scattered thoughts, delusions, and fears highlight his inner turmoil. The famous passage, where he imagines Alyona's laughter, serves as a bitter reminder of his sense of guilt. He says, “He was shivering with fever, and it seemed to him as if there were two different people inside him, fighting each other” (Dostoevsky 317).

Raskolnikov's torture is consistent with the ideas of existentialism advanced by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Camus argues in his book “*The Myth of Sisyphus* that those who reject conventional morality ultimately face an existential void” (Camus 110). Similarly, Raskolnikov oscillates between confession and denial, embodying the existential conflict between freedom and accountability.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, “the polyphonic style of Dostoevsky's novel shows that Raskolnikov's psyche is influenced by several conflicting voices—his own, those of social norms, and those of divine morality” (Bakhtin 84). This psychological complexity deepens his moral dilemma, transforming him into a deeply contradictory figure rather than a mere criminal.

His delusions and feverish dreams further accentuate his sense of guilt. In a particularly terrifying dream, he sees a weak mare dying. “He lay delirious in a fever, terrible visions haunted him... He saw a thin mare, blood flowing from her mouth, being mercilessly beaten by drunken men” (Dostoevsky 92).

Experts such as Robert Louis Jackson say that, “this dream symbolizes Raskolnikov's broken conscience and foreshadows his inevitable need for spiritual purification” (Jackson 67).

Here is its Urdu translation:

1.4 Salvation through suffering and confession:

Dostoevsky presents suffering as a path to salvation, which is deeply rooted in *Christian* theology. *Raskolnikov's* interactions with *Sonya Marmeladov*, which are symbols of Christian humility and self-sacrifice, serve as a moral stimulus for his confession. *Sonya* encourages him to embrace suffering as a means of spiritual renewal. “Go at once, this very moment, stand at the crossroads, first kiss the earth you have defiled and then bow to the whole world, in all four directions, and say aloud: ‘I have killed!’” (Dostoevsky 412)

Sonya's plea reflects *Christian* concepts of repentance and atonement, which are consistent with the ideas of theologians. As Dostoevsky says, “Suffering as a means of salvation is further reinforced in *Raskolnikov's* dream of a plague, where he imagines a world plunged into moral chaos a reflection of his own inner turmoil” (Dostoevsky 498). He further explains “Everywhere people were accepting new ideas without criticism, and chaos was spreading, because no one agreed on what was good and what was evil, what was legal and what was illegal” (Dostoevsky 498)

Raskolnikov's path to salvation is ultimately completed with his conversion in *Siberia*. Initially, he refuses to accept the moral burden of his crime, but *Sonya's* unwavering devotion becomes the source of his revival. The decisive turning point comes when he finally recognizes the power of love and repentance. “He did not know that a new life would not come to him just like that, but would have to be paid for, and that too with great sacrifices” (Dostoevsky 521). This passage marks the beginning of his spiritual awakening. *The New Testament* that *Sonya* gives him plays a significant role in his transformation. As *Rowan Williams* observes, “Dostoevsky uses biblical symbols to highlight *Raskolnikov's* transition from despair to faith” (Williams 172).

At the end of the novel, *Raskolnikov's* moment of grace is described by a dream-like feeling. “Logic had been replaced by life, and something entirely different was organizing itself in his consciousness” (Dostoevsky 527). This reflects his complete journey from intellectual arrogance to humble acceptance of divine mercy. Scholars such as *George Pattison* argue that, “this is analogous to the *Christian* view of salvation, where salvation is achieved through suffering and faith, which is consistent with Dostoevsky's own spiritual beliefs” (Pattison 152).

The existential perspective highlights *Raskolnikov's* philosophical dilemma, while the *Christian* theological perspective illuminates his path to salvation. Dostoevsky's work is consistent with *Kierkegaard's* ideas, which describe the relationship between faith and despair. According to *Søren Kierkegaard*, “true faith arises when man faces despair and surrenders to the divine will” (Kierkegaard 92). *Raskolnikov's* confession corresponds to this existential leap of faith which marks his journey from atheism to spiritual salvation.

Dostoevsky's concept of *Christian* existentialism differs from *atheistic* existentialism, especially the philosophy of *Nietzsche*. *Nietzsche's* superman (*Übermensch*) transcends morality, while *Dostoevsky* warns of the dangers of egotism and moral relativism. As *Rowan Williams* notes, “*Crime and Punishment* ultimately affirms the need for divine morality over human pride” (Williams 167).

1.5 Salvation through Human Suffering in The Brothers Karamazov:

Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* is a philosophical work that explores the relationship between faith, doubt, and salvation through suffering. The novel depicts the spiritual struggles of the *Karamazov* brothers: *Ivan*, *Dmitri*, and *Alyosha*. Who are entangled in questions of morality, suffering, and salvation? The central theme of the novel is *theodicy* that is, proving *God's* goodness despite the presence of suffering. Through the characters' experiences, *Dostoevsky* presents the idea that salvation lies not in avoiding suffering but in embracing it, as this is the path to faith and atonement. The novel's attachment to *Orthodox Christianity and Existentialism* lends further depth to its theme.

The Brothers Karamazov presents three different philosophical and spiritual perspectives.

Ivan is an intellectual anti-religious character who questions *God's* justice over the presence of suffering in the world.

Dmitri is an emotional and uncontrollable personality, for whom suffering becomes a means of moral purification.

Alyosha is the youngest and most virtuous brother, the embodiment of *Christian* love and salvation.

Ivan's conflict is particularly evident in his famous chapters *Rebellion* and *The Grand Inquisition*, where he raises the question of *theodicy*. He says, “I completely reject this higher harmony. If it stands on the tears of an innocent child, then I have no need of it” (Dostoevsky 245). *Ivan* adds, “It is not *God* I do not believe in, *Alyosha*, but I respectfully return his ticket to the world” (Dostoevsky 246). Here *Ivan* seems to suffer from *existential despair*, because he cannot see the harmony between suffering and *God's* justice. *Malcolm V. Jones* writes, “*Ivan's* rebellion is not a denial of morality but a protest against a world that breaks morality itself” (Jones 112).

Dmitri takes a different path. He suffers because of his unbridled desires, but accepts this suffering as moral purification. After his trial and sentence, he says “I accept punishment because I need to suffer” (Dostoevsky 789). *Vladimir Lossky* says about this “When suffering is accepted with humility, it becomes a means of a relationship with *God*” (Lossky 209).

Alyosha, who is the spiritual center of the story, emerges as a symbol of *Christian* love and humility. When his spiritual teacher *Father Zosima* dies, he is overwhelmed with grief but eventually finds refuge in faith. He says, “This is the beginning of my new

life, a life that will be based on practical love” (Dostoevsky 369). Raven Williams writes, “Alyosha's faith is not a simple belief but an act that acknowledges the brokenness of the world and molds it into love” (Williams 134).

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky shows that there is a close connection between suffering and faith. Father Zosima says, “The world stands on the foundation of suffering. Without it, happiness cannot be realized” (Dostoevsky 205). This point is also consistent with the ideas of Nikolai Berdyaev “Dostoevsky does not justify suffering, but shows how it saves the human soul” (Berdyaev 178).

The novel sees a conflict between *Ivan's* atheistic doubts and *Alyosha's* acceptance of faith. Dostoevsky's position is that true faith is born of suffering. He writes in *Diary of Writers* “Suffering is the very root of consciousness” (Dostoevsky 98).

Alyosha is the spiritual guide of the story who finds salvation through love and humility. He sacrifices for others and shares their suffering.

In a key scene, he helps the sick and persecuted child *Alyosha*. He comforts him by saying, “We must never forget that only through love and kindness can we save ourselves and others” (Dostoevsky 508). According to Paul J. Cantino “Alyosha's faith is not passive but active; he accepts the suffering of others and transforms it into an act of salvation” (Cantino 67).

Dostoevsky's Russian Orthodox religious affiliation is included in the basic concepts of his novel. According to Orthodox teachings, salvation is achieved through humility, repentance, and love. Father Zosima follows the same principles, which exhorts to accept suffering through love.

At the same time, existentialist ideas are also visible in the novel, especially in the ideas of *Ivan*. His denial of God is connected to the thoughts of philosophers such as Nietzsche and Sartre. However, while Camus and Sartre accept a life without meaning, Dostoevsky offers faith and love as alternatives to despair.

Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* reflects *Ivan's* doubts, where he argues that man must create his own purpose in a meaningless universe. But according to Dostoevsky, *Alyosha's* love and faith provide a way of salvation against suffering.

This article highlights the philosophical and religious aspects of *The Brothers Karamazov*, and explains Dostoevsky's belief that salvation comes from embracing suffering and embracing love.

Findings:

This study concludes that Dostoevsky's novels collectively present salvation as the ultimate destination of mankind, achieved through suffering, self-awareness, and faith. The main findings are as follows:

1. *Raskolnikov's* journey shows that salvation requires confession of sin, sincere repentance, and enduring suffering. His transformation is consistent with Dostoevsky's belief that moral salvation is possible through faith and humility.
2. *The Brothers Karamazov* highlights the notion that human suffering, especially when endured with faith, leads to spiritual salvation. *Alyosha* stands out as an ideal Christian figure, while *Ivan's* rebellion against suffering reflects existential doubts.
3. The suffering of the *Underground Man* is self-evident, making him a contradictory figure. Although he rejects salvation, his social criticism exposes the flaws of rationalism, showing that salvation lies in a spiritual quest rather than an ideological one.

Conclusion:

Dostoevsky's novels address the theme of salvation in a profound and multifaceted way, highlighting the existential and religious dilemmas of human existence. Through the *Underground Man*, *Raskolnikov*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, he presents different perspectives on the possibility of salvation. Some characters reject it, while others find salvation through suffering, faith, and love. By reflecting on Dostoevsky's works, we can better understand the complexities of the human soul, the burden of free will, and the eternal conflict between sin and grace. This article will examine these themes in detail, demonstrating that Dostoevsky's reflections on salvation are a profound and enduring aspect of his literary legacy.

Although the *Underground Man* is not a traditional savior, his role in *Notes from Underground* is that of an existentialist leader who exposes societal flaws. His rejection of rationalism and utopian ideals, his acceptance of suffering as a critique of coercive ideals, and his simultaneous victimhood and observation, all illustrate the human condition. Through his suffering and rebellion, he forces readers to confront unpleasant truths about free will, alienation, and the limits of rational thought. In this sense, the

salvation of the *underground* man lies not in any social reform but in its ability to reveal the tragic and complex nature of human existence.

Raskolnikov's journey in *Crime and Punishment* is a classic example of the conflict between nihilism and salvation. His crime, which was based on an extremist ideology, causes deep psychological anguish, which ultimately leads to his confession of guilt and the need to accept his suffering. Through existentialism and the Christian religious perspective, *Dostoevsky* creates a narrative that reveals the possibility of salvation through faith and moral accountability. *Raskolnikov's* salvation illustrates *Dostoevsky's* belief in the transformative power of suffering, which makes *Crime and Punishment* a timeless meditation on sin and atonement.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Dostoevsky* presents suffering as an integral part of human experience, one that can lead to faith and salvation. Through *Ivan's* skepticism, *Dmitri's* arduous journey of self-discovery, and *Alyosha's* manifestation of Christian love, the novel highlights the transformative power of suffering. *Dostoevsky's* deep connection to *Orthodox Christianity* and existentialism further enriches the novel's philosophical and religious aspects, making it a profound and moving meditation on faith, suffering, and salvation.

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