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Resonances of greek-latin classics in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky: a critical analysis

Ressonâncias de clássicos greco-latinos nas obras de Fyodor Dostoevsky: uma análise crítica

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ABSTRACT:

This research aims to probe the classical elements in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and to show the author's bent towards the classical authors and traditions. Dostoevsky is the giant literary figure of 19th-century Russian literature and he belongs not only to a particular time but to all times like many other great classic writers. The research is significant for exposing the author's affiliation towards the epic poetry of Homer and Hesiod and the dramas of the preeminent Athenian tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Dostoevsky also becomes classic based on his dealings with the themes dealt by the classics like love, fight for honour, real-life presentation, the conflict between vice and virtue and the struggle of his tragic heroes to reach their goal. The research proves that Dostoevsky is a classic among the classics because of having close resonance with the classics in the art of characterization, the portrayal of tragic heroes, theme building and by including some elements of tragedy. The qualitative research is designed on the descriptive-analytic method by using the approach of Classicism presented by Mark Twain.

KEYWORDS: classicism, tragic heroes, tragedy, resonance, characterization, classical traditions.

RESUMO:

O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar os elementos clássicos nas obras de Fyodor Dostoiévski e mostrar a inclinação do autor para os autores e tradições clássicas. Dostoiévski é uma grande figura da literatura russa do século 19 e pertence não apenas a uma época particular, mas também a todas as épocas, como muitos outros grandes escritores clássicos. A pesquisa é significativa porque expõe a afiliação do autor à poesia épica de Homero e Hesíodo e aos dramas dos proeminentes trágicos atenienses, Ésquilo, Sófocles e Eurípides. Além disso, Dostoiévski também se torna clássico com base em sua abordagem dos temas tratados pelos clássicos como amor, luta pela honra, apresentação da vida real, conflito entre o vício e a virtude e a luta de seus heróis trágicos para alcançar seu objetivo. A pesquisa prova que Dostoiévski é um clássico entre os clássicos por ter estreita ressonância com os clássicos na arte da caracterização, na representação de heróis trágicos, na construção do tema e na inclusão de alguns elementos da tragédia. A pesquisa qualitativa é desenvolvida no método analítico descritivo, utilizando a abordagem do Classicismo apresentada por Mark Twain.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: classicismo, heróis trágicos, tragédia, ressonância, caracterização, tradições clássicas.

INTRODUCTION

Literature in different languages is being written and presented for more than two thousand years. No doubt every period has its different sort of ways and structure to present literature but the relationship between

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different periods cannot be excluded from the pages of comparison. Citizens of the first rank in ancient Rome were called classics and their works regarding art were also called classics. Then those classical works turned into a model to be followed for the upcoming generations. In Europe, the term classics was coined with the works produced by Greek and Latin literature almost in the 18th century. Classicism is a movement having its foundation upon 'the imitation of Antiquity', and on 'the assumption of a set of values' endorsed towards the ancients. Further, an idea developed in the 20th century and artists of the day came to be known as classics because of presenting their art in a classical style and it was all claimed because of having similarity with the characteristics of classics in real. Being classic means containing certain characteristics or features prescribed by the ancient classics and these features are always concerned with the ideal state in its content and form (What is Classicism, 2020). Further, literature of the ancient Greeks has shown powerful influence upon European and other pieces of literature of the world. The literature portrayed by the Greeks classics in the genre of epic, tragedy and poetry is still considered a yardstick to measure the quality of literature. Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was a child in Russian literature that had got an inclusive literary education. He was the author who had not only presented the social traditions and values of his own time but also exposed some historical and influential pieces of literature. He may be called a classic among the classics or pupil of the great classics like Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides with the sound reason of having similarities or based on the traditions set by the classics. It seems that classical Greek literature was the part and parcel of his literary education. Though Dostoevsky has not made many plain references to the ancient times, he contains and also incorporates the elements of classical literature in his works. So this research will prove a vital document in favour of the statement that Fyodor Dostoevsky is a classic. The research provides evidence regarding his close resemblance with the classics in the art of characterization, theme building and including some elements of tragedy. Further, the portrayal of his independent heroes and following some other traditions of classics also make him classic. The research brings forth examples from different works of Dostoevsky but it mainly focuses upon two novels named 'The Brothers Karamazov' (1980) and Crime and Punishment (1972) to prove the viewpoint.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The study is qualitative and descriptive. It is based on Mark Twain's approach to classics. Mark Twain (1900-2013) has described it in Great Speeches edited by Bob Blaisdell. In his speeches, Mark Twain defines classics and gives some qualities of classical literature. According to this viewpoint, an author having the qualities or following the style and characteristics as described by the Greek or Latin classical authors may be called a classic in the general definition. The work of an author must contain the standards of the first rank or the highest quality. The term Classic may be taken as a model of excellence or as a work of enduring cultural relevance and value. Classicism is in fact "[...] the imitation of the style and aesthetic principles of ancient Greek and Roman classical art and literature; in modern times" (Adam, Ahmed, & Elamin, 2018, p. 35).

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

When the works of Dostoevsky are observed closely based on their presentation and depiction, many characteristics of classical literature may be observed and it is mostly because of his bent towards the classics. He becomes classic when he deals with universal themes. His themes deal with all the periods, all the societies and all the cultures. The themes of his works describe love, forgiveness, conflict between vice and virtue and heroic struggle to reach their goal. Mostly the hero of a classic work overcomes some great hurdle during the journey on the way to his destination. In the same way, the heroes of Dostoevsky are also adventure heroes and something may happen to them in this adventure plot at any time. He seems to be using all traits of classical

adventurous plots used by the Greeks but in a distinctive way. Bakhtin (1984, p. 102) in this regard quotes Grossman who believes that there is not only a single trait “[...] of the old novel of adventure that Dostoevsky failed to use”. The heroes of Dostoevsky face acute problems in life and in combating these problems they combat with the real men in surroundings. He becomes an extraordinary figure like the classical heroes after getting out of the extraordinary situation.

As the term classicism in literature commonly refers to the approbation, limitations and its relationship with the works of Greek classics, so having a relationship or resemblance with the Greek classics would make the author somehow a classic. This viewpoint would be a sound thesis to prove Dostoevsky a classic. Though he is the kind of author who has ever created the world of reality and a unique school of literature through his writings as a follower, he has owed little by his forbears and has also set a tradition for those who love to pursue him. His urge to portray his protagonists embracing the characteristics of Greek tragic heroes proves him a classic. Every protagonist in his novels, either a meek and layman of *An honest thief* (1950) or the majestic and gigantic characters of *The Brothers Karamazov* (1980), are tragic heroes suffering from some error of judgment. Kim (2013, p. 3) believes that Dostoevsky not only follows but goes “[...] beyond the classical tradition of writing [...]” and it is their “[...] heights of perfection, unity of subject matter and artistic devices, which target clarity and completeness [...]” that attracts him greatly during the early period of his fiction. It seems that the author himself becomes passive like Greek authors and his characters speak on the front. They are very close to the life of the day and have their ideology towards the issues of life. Because of such an independent attitude of the heroes of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin calls these characters ‘polemized’. He further believes that “The character is treated as ideologically authoritative and independent” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 5). They are brave and powerful enough to influence any reader of the time. They are not only responsible for their actions but also try to impose their ideology upon the minds of the readers.

Dostoevsky may be enlisted among the classics because of having a greater influence of Greek classics in his writings. He loves to use direct or indirect references from Greeks. Particularly Homeric elements become more apparent in his literary works at large and provide some foundation to his writings. The heroes of Homer (750 BCE) suffer from internal and external, personal and social conflicts. These conflicts compel them to fight gigantic wars for years. This sort of conflicts may also be observed in the personalities of the heroes portrayed by Dostoevsky. *An honest thief* (1950), by Dostoevsky, describes the tragedy of its protagonist Yemelyan. He suffers from personal and social conflicts and is finally trapped like the characters of Homer by the evil forces. He also plays in the hands of fortune and chance like Odysseus and keeps on fighting until the end. But it is also obvious that Dostoevsky also loves to deviate from the principles of tragedy and presents things with the perception of his society like many classical authors.

Bakhtin (1984) believes that heroes depicted by Dostoevsky are self-conscious. This art of depiction makes him different from all other Russian classics like Gogol. Among the classics, only Racine (1639-1699) has got some depth in the form of hero construction as to Dostoevsky. Though the heroes of Racine are more objective, the heroes of Dostoevsky are more conscious, dominant and perform an infinite function. Even then the heroes of both the classicists are equally precise. The protagonists presented by Dostoevsky are not discovered like the classical heroes. Every hero of the novel is quite logical, contains his order and always has a dominant representation like the classics. There is great freedom for the protagonist for making his own decisions and this freedom is the cause of developing his inner logic and independence. The protagonists of Dostoevsky are not only filled with action and objectivity but they are more ideologists as well. They have their ideology like the underground man. In their monologues, they present the philosophy of life in an impressive way. The example of the first monologue by Raskolnikov may be presented as evidence.

The classical genre of Menippean satire has its deep roots in Menippus of Gadara (3rd century B.C.). The characteristics of this classical form have been followed by many authors and, through Europeans, it got its link with the Russian classical literature. According to Bakhtin, the characteristics of the ancient Greek literary genre have also been ‘renewed’, in the fiction produced by Dostoevsky. In this regard, two works,

Bobok (1873) and The Dream of a Ridiculous Man (1877), follow the strict Greek style of Menippean in a true sense. Some other works by Dostoevsky also present the classical characteristics utterly and again the example of Notes from underground (1961) is a very appropriate one. The foremost characteristic is the tone and style of the narrator, the underground man. He is not like all other characters but out of the routine and distinctive character. He loves to keep on despising himself. By following the style of Menippea, he not only conceals himself but also conceals his final thoughts or conclusive words. In the novel, one of his friends narrates “Your style is changing [...] it is choppy: you chop and chop [...] then you begin chopping and chopping again” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 138). Further like a typical Menippea, the plot of the novel begins on a polemic with the appearance of a Semyon Ardalionovich, who accuses the narrator of a drunkard. The underground man also seems to be polemicizing in the story when the editors do not agree with printing his work only because his people are unable to understand the humour created by him. Finally, the plot is unfolded; he resentfully polemicizes with the corpses. This kind of “[...] dialogized and equivocal verbal style and tone” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 138) describe the plot belonging to the classic Menippean. Having such features in the works of Dostoevsky makes him a classical writer of his time.

The protagonists presented by Dostoevsky in his fiction love to follow the code of honour which make them gigantic in stature and contain a large number of similarities with the Homeric code. The fight and murders by the intellectual Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment are all because of meeting the social standards to get honour and respect in the society. It is all a fight for seeking the desired identity. The Greek warriors like Ulysses by Homer also follows the same ideology. They keep on fighting battles for many years for their glory or the honour of their people. “[...] they launch fearless battles in search of kleos (renown, glory)” (Dezotti, 2020, p. 3). So showing strength and fighting for the cause of identity or glory bring Raskolnikov and Ulysses close to one another.

Krag (1976) quotes the scholars like Hellenist and Ivanov who believe that in the novel Crime and Punishment: “Raskolnikov is related to ancient mythic ideas and Greek tragedy” (Krag, 1976, p. 128). Though Krag later himself opposes the viewpoint of such scholars. He calls it the misperception and misunderstanding of the particular work by different scholars. He argues that the novel Crime and Punishment ends happily after the series of sufferings of the hero. Raskolnikov, when moves towards the ending, realizes what he has done and begins to repent. His realization and further repentance upon his doings shift the momentum towards the happy ending of the novel and the particular work that ends with a happy ending cannot be considered a tragedy according to the definition given by the Greeks (Krag, 1976).

The objections raised by Krag (1976) against the novel Crime and Punishment being a tragedy have already been levelled and answered by Cox (1969) many years earlier when introducing a new kind of tragedy, the Christian one. It is the kind of tragedy that unites the development of tragedy with a catastrophic ending and the renewal of its protagonist. In this way, the novel Crime and Punishment contains Biblical references along with all the characteristics of a Greek tragedy (Cox, 1969). So, these characteristics bring Dostoevsky closer to the Greek classics.

Sophocles (496-406BCE) is another literary figure among the Greek classics whose influence upon the fiction of Dostoevsky pushes him closer to the classics. The claim of Nooter (2013) in this regard is significant. The depiction of the tragic hero Ajax by Sophocles persuades some of the heroes of Dostoevsky to become a resolute and dominant figure like him. The protagonists of Dostoevsky are only those characters “[...] with whom argument has not yet ended, this tendency towards unending argument is found in all of Sophocles’ heroes” (Nooter, 2013, p. 75). The dominant figures love to lead the action and bring it towards the final destination after facing all the ups and downs during the core. Ajax is not satisfied with the world around him. He suffers from anxiety and in a complex state of mind, he tries to kill the generals Agamemnon and Menelaus and finally, he reaches the verge of taking his own life. He attempts to commit suicide even. It is not happening because of the role of fate but he perceives psychologically this sort of act as legal. Raskolnikov, the hero of Crime and Punishment (1972), also possesses the attitude of a classical hero like Ajax. He comes with

sound family background and believes in morality and goodness in his early days but his economic conditions and poor family become his tragic flaw. He not only tries but kills a couple of characters and considers this sort of murder legal in the circumstances. It is also not happening because of fate but his psychological state turns him to be complex and a murderer. Another protagonist by Dostoevsky in his novel *Notes from the underground* (1864) is preoccupied like Ajax about what the other people think about him. He listens to every word being said about him. In the end, he also becomes a psychologically complex character by considering himself the man with final words and decision. He tries at every cost to retain for his final word. In this way, the complex personalities, self-dependency and complex ideas bring all three heroes closer to one another. In the world of Ajax, the hero fights against the world and his people for his ideas that bring murder, insanity and suicides. In the case of Dostoevsky, the hero stands against the viewpoint of his people that brings madness and murders.

Sometimes Dostoevsky also looks closer to Shakespeare in the art of characterization and this art makes him classic like Shakespeare (1564-1616). The hero of *Crime and punishment* (1872) seems closer to the classical hero Hamlet (Shakespeare, 1889) in his settings and looks. They both are young and college students. They both face tragedy because of dealing with their family issues and both the protagonists do not enjoy good relationships with their mothers. They both are highly intelligent, philosophical and keep on thinking in making decisions despite performing actions. It seems that Dostoevsky had read Hamlet before developing the character of Raskolnikov. Both the heroes even fall in love with the young and virtuous women like Hamlet with Ophelia and Raskolnikov with Sonia. Madness has an important role in their stories and they both have to face the villains (like Hamlet suffers because of his uncle Claudius and Raskolnikov has to counter with Svidrigailov). The character of Raskolnikov becomes classic like Hamlet because of its settings as well. They both smell and face the rotten world full of corruption. Raskolnikov accompanies the loyal friendship of Razhumikin as Hamlet is having Horatio with him. In the end, they both commit murders and become murderers in their situations (Hamlet/Raskolnikov, 2020).

Ivanov (1952) brings Dostoevsky into the line of classics by bringing into light some traits of classical tragedy portrayed by him after the classical tragedian Aeschylus (524-455 BCE). He is of the view that novels of Dostoevsky do follow the pattern and structure of the classical tragedy like it is “comprised of a prologue, a parados, episodes, stasima, and an exodus” and further also claims that though the Russian classic deviates after not following the strict rules of tragedy described by Aristotle. He does not include chorus and also depicts the violence rather than describing it but still the links in this regard are apparent. He strengthens his viewpoint that the structure of his novels also brings about catharsis for his readers and audience, one of the basic intention of classical tragedy according to Aristotle. In this way, he believes that Aeschylus is one of the most representatives of Greek tragedians and Dostoevsky is the one who shares the major note of communality over individuality. Kliger (2011) also joins hands with Ivanov by presenting some similarities between Orestes, the hero of *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, and Raskolnikov, the protagonist of *Crime & Punishment* by Dostoevsky. Both the leading characters may be observed as a reflection to each other in “[...] their descents into isolated madness before emerging to embrace humanity again by admitting their crimes and facing trial” (Kliger, 2011, p. 75). They both are resolute and steadfast in their personalities.

Dostoevsky is not acclaimed as a classic only based on depicting his characters but Kliger (2011) goes beyond by describing his resemblance in theme and subject matter with the classical authors. He somehow differs from Ivanov (1952) that Dostoevsky is more influenced by Euripides rather than Aeschylus. He strengthens his arguments on the reputation of Euripides as an author who loves to deviate from the traditional structure of tragedy. Kliger also brings forth different tragic motifs which Dostoevsky utilizes apparently and objectively in most of his fiction like “[...] spilt blood and trial, suffering and redemption, sacrifice and recompense” (Kliger, 2011, p. 78). Further, he also ranks *Crime and Punishment* among all other his works as the best example in this regard by presenting more resemblance of Raskolnikov with the

character of Hamlet by Shakespeare. He wants to stand both the characters parallel to one another based on their inability to act when they both have to face the scenario of revenge.

The making up of the heroes of Dostoevsky is distinct from all other heroes of his time and is also much closer to the classics. They are different not only from the portrayal of protagonists in the Russian novels but also from the western traditions. The protagonists of Dostoevsky are metaphysically gleaned, pared down to the core of what it regards to be human beings. Bakhtin (1984, p. 6) claims in this regard, "Dostoevsky, like Goethe's Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves, but free people". The protagonists of Dostoevsky tend to stand with their creator and even have the power to rebel against him when they confront in case of ideology. They are the figures who stand on the verge of drastic choice: they are close to God along with others but they also stand against Him when they are alone. Ivanov (1952) believes "Around whom revolve not only the social order that rejects them but also the whole world that they reject" (Ivanov, 1952, p. 402). They keep the whole plot or story revolving around them and this trait brings them closer to the classics like Macbeth and Ulysses.

Along with containing different similarities with the classics, Dostoevsky is equally modern and this element makes him unique among the classics of the day. The characters of Dostoevsky are more classics in their traits but they are also members of this modern society. Ivanov (1919-2003) further claims them equally classics and modern as well. They meet the present-day standard through personal and social instability and as an individual cannot help feeling "[...] spun about by a fateful storm, like a leaf torn from a tree" (Ivanov, 1919-2003, p. 165). In this way, a new and changed vision of the modern world starts to appear, "[...] a new feeling of divine presence, divine fullness, and universal animation [...] which I am not afraid to call mythological in a new sense" (Ivanov, 1919-2003, p. 165). So this new vision or returning towards mythology asserts the unity of the whole human race and Dostoevsky is the early forerunner of this vision. According to Ivanov, his tendency towards the portrayal of age-old issues like the dripping of blood unites him with the very first and great classical tragedian, Aeschylus. This trait of classical unity comes forward as a submission towards the public trial of Areopagus by Orestes and the confession of Raskolnikov among his people.

Ivanov (1919-2003) also believes, based on this mix up of classical and modern approaches, that we have reached the doorstep of uniting two genres. Two eras, two conceptions of the individuals navigate a single account. It is now turning out to be a Trans-modern hybrid form, named novel-tragedy. In this way, Dostoevsky is going to culminate the history of the novel in tragedy by reuniting with the classics. Though Dostoevsky does not follow the pattern of classics as it is, it might happen as the tragic drama came on the scene by separating the hero of a drama from the chorus. It brings forth the portrayal of "[...] the suffering fate of the hero condemned to die" (Ivanov, 1919-2003, p. 102). In this way, he holds his foot on modernism while standing on the rock of classicism.

The fiction presented by Dostoevsky is not only acclaimed classics based on his characters' portrayal only but its depiction of events and narrative techniques also push him towards the closer line of classics. Ivanov (1919-2003) claims that Raskolnikov kills the old lady in his neighbours to test his idealistic self-sufficiency and becomes certain on the ground that 'He could not be self-sufficient'. At this moment, his experience of love with Sonya becomes "[...] an experience of mystical realism" (Ivanov, 1919-2003, p. 431). It is the love and person of Sonya that brings him to revivify his soul and it describes the vision of classics or "[...] the visions of the early pure days" (Ivanov, 1919-2003, p. 431). Another trait shared by Dostoevsky with Classics is the redemption of a hero and this trait may be observed strongly in the personality of Raskolnikov. At the end of the novel, his confession is not only the redemption of an individual but is a prophecy for the coming redemption of the whole of humanity.

The Brothers Karamazov (1980), by Dostoevsky, is all embraced with traits of classics and is a strong argument in proving the author a classic. This novel consists of three parts and in the very first part the hero gets indulged in the sin, the second part brings sufferings of the hero because of the evil and then redemption in the third part would bind together the whole action. Griffiths and Rabinowitz (2011, p. 118) put forward

their claim that “[...] the sinner as an Everyman and, by placing *The Brothers Karamazov* in the tradition of Dante’s epic”. The novel holds explicit references to the classical models to almost only one strand: “The continuing preoccupation of Alyosha’s boys with the founders of Troy” (Griffiths & Rabinowitz, 2011, p. 119). Further, the names of different characters have also great significance to the point of punning. There is a class fellow of Kolya named Dardanelov and this name may remind the reader about the Greek character named Dardanus (along with Tros and Ilus) who remained among the different generations of Trojan founders. It seems that different characters in the plot are also confused about their own identity and these names have been taken from the classics knowingly by Dostoevsky. For instance, ‘Dmitri’ could not find the story behind having an etymological connection of his name to ‘Demeter’ who is the character of a myth that he narrates to Alyosha in “The Confession of an Ardent Heart” (*The Brothers Karamazov*) (Dostoevsky, 1980, p. 731). Further, Dmitri is the character having a greater influence on the German classical author Schiller (1759- 1805) and he often misunderstands his ideas. He also shows his interest in Greek literature and moans about the ode to Ceres (the Greek Demeter). This whole interest in classics, resemblance in names and incidents and their relationship with the classics show the tendency of Dostoevsky towards the classics and he also wants to be a part of this epic cycle.

Dostoevsky becomes more classical in tradition when *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky, 1980) moves towards its ending. Griffiths and Rabinowitz (2011) believe strongly that the masterpiece ends with a double note; it is because of a type of monumental structures. While observing the tradition of an epic, there comes a resolving situation between the opposition or between the fathers and their children. This concept seems to be derived by Homer when the reunion of a family resolves the plot. Now, this tradition may also be observed in the plot of a modern novel. In the very last chapter, Alyosha has been shown with the boys. This union is not only based on sentiments but it is like an exceptional act that turns the novel with having a privileged plot. Alyosha accepts liability for the death of Ilyusha and presents its meanings in a ceremonial remembrance. It is not happening only by chance that the ritual of memory presents the words of admires and blames but such scenes also contain Homeric background. This sort of ritual presents the earlier traditions of heroic verse. Now the description of the founders of Troy and the name of Dardanelov (derived from Dardanus) become self-explanatory. Rabinowitz concludes his discussion that the novel has been taken by Dostoevsky “[...] beyond itself, back to the prototype of heroic poetry from which it ultimately derives” (Griffiths & Rabinowitz, 2011, p. 138). As the novel reaches its final scenes, its relationships with the classics become more apparent. The individual characters combine and try to become a family. They all are ready to take their responsibilities as fathers and sons willingly. This sort of family building echoes exactly the last note of the *Iliad* (Buckley, 1891), by Homer. It is the time when Priam and Achilles recognize and accept each other to make a family. They both are also ready to perform their roles in the system of a family. Both Achilles and Alyosha resemble one another when they come from the ‘enemy camp’ and confess the harm they have been responsible to their fathers. Another thing that combines Ilyusha and Hector is that they both meet their ends combating for the honour of their fathers. Rabinowitz concludes his discussion that “As Achilles finally bids Priam put an end to grieving, so to Snegiryov does Alyosha offer the equivalent Christian solace” (Griffiths & Rabinowitz, 2011, p. 141).

Griffiths and Rabinowitz (2011) illustrate that Dostoevsky also proves to be a classic when he shares some of his literary traits with the Russian classic Gogol (1809-1852). In the beginning and end of his classical masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky, 1980), he brings forth different questions as raised by Gogol at different levels. Further, Dostoevsky returns towards the vista of crime presented by Gogol. In this way, many similarities bring this masterpiece closer to the epic style given by Gogol. The use of Dead Souls by Dostoevsky in the plot of *The Brothers Karamazov* reminds the reader about bestiary or the insect world presented by Gogol and also the world of souls created by Homer in *Ulysses*. This sort of scenes shows its direct connection with the traditions of Epic. Rabinowitz gives it the name of a relationship with “[...] a polar remove from the high style that Homer initiated” (Griffiths & Rabinowitz, 2011, p. 125).

Despite having all the ideal features and grandeur in style, this debate is also worth mentioning that classicism has now got a bad reputation in the 21st century. Artist of the day favours a more personal and emotional approach in literature and art. The claim of Mark Twain has got much importance that “[...] a classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read” (What is Classicism, 2020). The strangeness of the Romanticism and the excellence of Baroque seem more attractive than the intellect of classics. Today the classics like Raphael and David are honoured more than being loved. It is not the fault of classics but the fault lies with its construction by thinkers of the time as “[...] unexciting, formal and frigid” (What is Classicism, 2020). The sun of classics like Dostoevsky does never set because of their universality and appeal towards humanity.

CONCLUSION

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) is a Russian novelist and a short story writer. He is well known in the world of literature for his masterpieces: Notes from the Underground and four long novels, Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Possessed and The Brothers Karamazov (1965-1980). He has been acknowledged by the great thinkers of this world and Miller (1951) mentions the acknowledgements of different great scholars like Nietzsche, who calls him “[...] the only psychologist who has anything to teach me [...]”, W. B. Yeats, who tributes him as “[...] greatest portrayer of men [...]” and John Cowper Powys, who refers to Dostoevsky as a great classic and even greater than “[...] all other novelists as Homer and Shakespeare” (Miller, 1951, p. 51). His world-famous works are also known as great novels of ideas that deal with the timeless and timely issues in the field of philosophy and politics. He has also presented the true picture of the society in his fiction. This portrayal of realism also brings him into the line of classics. Realism in literature also demands that all the contradictions of life must be described straightforwardly and he has done it in a very artistic manner.

Sometimes he seems to be following the great Classics like Homer, Euripides and Aeschylus. Though he has neither written a tragedy nor followed the rules of traditional tragedy, it is also noted that most of his works bring him in the line of classical tragedy authors when presenting the tragedy of life and the tragedy of a common man in his natural settings. His protagonists suffer from the common errors of judgment and it also brings the flow of emotions and feelings at the end. This flow of emotions further gives way to the catharsis for the reader. Crime and Punishment is the tragedy of an intellectual who suffers because of having social differences and discrimination in society. ‘The Brothers Karamazov’ is not an epic in the real sense but it is also clear that Dostoevsky has created the world of epic while living within the boundaries of a novel. It is a kind of monumental surpassing of the novel that leaves off where the traditions of an epic take up. These elements bring him closer to the classics.

The research concludes that Dostoevsky is a classic among the classics but also modern for all ages. His contribution to 19th century Russian literature is unique. His quality of presenting the real society of the day along with his bent towards the classical elements make him different. Different similarities between Dostoevsky and other classical writers show his bent towards the classics and make him classic as well. It is not a debate either the influence of Greek classics is direct or indirect. The description of different literary characteristics like themes, narration, characterization and similarities among the characters, the portrayal of his heroes or protagonists by Dostoevsky makes him a classic. Most of his heroes are highly educated and philosophical and the whole plot revolves around them like the classical heroes. Further, the tragic sufferings of his protagonists are also like the sufferings of classical tragic heroes, such as Ajax, Ulysses or Hamlet. So these all are the characteristics that not only bring him closer to the classical authors but also prove him to be a classic in modern times.

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