

**The Reading of *Notes from Underground*: An Enigma unto Enlightenment**

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**Abstract**

*Notes from Underground* is one of the seminal works laying foundations for the modern psychological theories. It is a complex work of art and a masterpiece that fuses both the story and the psychology so dexterously that the deep meaning of life is absorbed by the readers in a very congenial environment. The novella, which is clearly divided into two distinct parts viz. 'Underground' and 'On the Occasion of Wet Snow' presents in the first part, the nameless and solitary underground man who carrying no particular name stands for all who witness life like him, whereas in the second part we have his interaction with the other characters i.e. some of his school day friends and the downtrodden and coerced young woman in prostitution, Liza. Journeying a long way the narrative finally reaches to the place where we are able to grasp the full meaning of the life led by the underground man and be enlightened by thoughts of one of the greatest minds of all times.

Dostoevsky, the undisputed master of man's mind has used his pen to portray the feminine concerns at more than one place. *Notes from Underground* is a spectacular work that initially went unnoticed on its publication, but as fate would have it, after the initial indifference received at the hands of the contemporary critics it moved on to be one of the seminal works laying foundations for the modern psychological theories. This is a complex work of art which reveals its secret on multiple readings. It is certainly a masterpiece that fuses both the story and the psychology so dexterously that it becomes a rewarding experience to pursue it diligently. The pains of mind are amply rewarded by the pleasures of the heart once it is comprehended as a harmonious whole. Its significance in the literary world can be judged by the statement of George Steiner: "Had Dostoevsky written nothing else, he would have been remembered as one of the master-builders of modern thought" (qtd. in Briggs 45). In *Notes from Underground* we get a great deal of insight not only into the life of the protagonist who is leading a self styled secluded life but also the tormented and marginalised women symbolised through the character of Liza serving her life in a brothel in St. Petersburg. Dostoevsky has used approximately two thirds of the text to work upon the underground man and the remaining one-third for Liza. She appears only in the last part but her significance does not diminish by this, rather it gains more value in the same way as the conclusive part of

any literary output. This novella, which is clearly divided into two distinct parts viz. 'Underground' and 'On the Occasion of Wet Snow' presents in the first part, the nameless and solitary underground man who carrying no particular name stands for all who witness life like him, whereas in the second part we have his interaction with the other characters i.e. some of his school day friends and the downtrodden and coerced young woman in prostitution, Liza.

The paper has the intention of critically analysing the text by throwing light on thoughts and acts of the underground man in addition to bringing out the impact of this young woman Liza over him. Liza, who has no voice of her own being a part of a ruthless social system where women are treated as saleable objects and not human beings with independent existence, turns out so strong that the underground man who has the guts to hit hard in the face of the strongest person in this world, succumbs to her silent presence. In order to examine and understand both these aspects of the work, it becomes essential to have a thorough analysis of the situations and settings in which the protagonist and his counterpart are placed by the author.

In the first part of the novella Dostoevsky presents his underground man with all his whims and wishes and who at the very outset speaks about himself thus: "I AM A SICK MAN.... I AM A SPITEFUL MAN. AN unattractive man." (Dostoevsky 1). Dostoevsky captures his state of mind and ways of life in the most ingenious way:

"I have been living like this for a long time – about twenty years. Now I am forty. I used to be in the civil service; today I am not....I was rude, and found pleasure in it.... In fact I could not become anything: neither bad nor good, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect.... an intelligent man cannot seriously become anything" (2-3).

The underground man believes that after the age of forty nothing new can be added to human life at least for a wise man as he claims earlier and now exclaims, "I am forty now, and forty years – why, it is all of a lifetime, it is the deepest old age" (3). He suggests that human life should be so full of acts and actions, and be lived so fully that a man of forty should possess all the experiences and essentials of life which an ordinary man does not gain even at the age of hundred. There are people who have been saying: 'work is worship' and a man need to be working as long as his body and mind allow him to do so, but the underground man holds a view quite contrary to it and says: "I worked in order to eat (but solely for that reason), and when a distant relation left me six thousand roubles in his will last year, I immediately retired and settled down in my corner" (4). This in no way means that he does not value the significance of work but his philosophy is not skin deep, he ponders on metaphysical level. He points to the very core of life's philosophy that retirement from work should in no way degrade a man from his human existence. Work should be done to support life it should not be vice – versa.

Through the course of the book we get the image of the underground man opening like the petals of a flower and all this comes from within him, the expression of his views and opinions. He loves to talk about himself without being a hypocrite. He even seeks pleasure in opening himself before the readers. He speaks of the eternal dissatisfaction of man with himself and his unending desires. The nature of desires is such by default that one is doomed to be defeated in fulfilling them as they constantly change shape like a protozoa and man being foolish can never grasp the hold of them. At one place the underground man speaks about this strange form of desires: "I'll tell you solemnly that I have often wanted to become an insect. But even that wasn't granted me (4). Dostoevsky through the underground man touches upon a very significant aspect of human existence i.e. consciousness of being alive. His approach is unique and authentic as the underground man exclaims: "I swear to you sirs, that excessive consciousness is a disease – a genuine, absolute disease....I am firmly convinced that not only excess of consciousness, but any consciousness is a disease" (4-5). This statement comes out of him to evoke the fact that one can live in peace only by being shut to the pains and pleasures existing around oneself. Anyone who is conscious is bound and doomed to be troubled by the omnipresent desires. Each desire leads to another and thus the vicious circle is never closed and this churns the life from man. He further says "The more aware I was of goodness and of everything 'lofty and beautiful,' the deeper I sank into my slime, and the more likely I was to get mired down in it altogether" (5).

Man when unable to dominate the outer world directs his energies towards his inner self and since he does not know how to conquer the inner world this energy starts biting him inwardly. In the underground man we find that after continuous affiliation with this inward conflict of energy and self he starts deriving a peculiar kind of pleasure as he states:

"I would gnaw and gnaw at myself in silence, tearing and nagging at myself until the bitterness would finally begin to turn into a kind of shameful, damnable sweetness and, in the end – into a definite, positive pleasure! Yes, a pleasure, a pleasure! I stand by that. The very reason why I brought it up is that I've always wanted to find out: do other people experience such pleasures?" (6)

He explains here in detail the dynamics of this pleasure arising out of pain. He points out that the extreme state of consciousness leads to a kind of inertia making one to stick to his current situation as he finds that "there is perhaps nothing to change to" (6). Ultimately the underground man comes to realise that nothing can be done to change one's situation since in whatever condition an over-acute conscious man finds himself he is always struck in the state of inertia with the belief that all the situations are akin to each other. He is soon bored with the realisation that magnanimity, intelligence, and sensitive ego all mean the same to him as he has the superlative degree of all these qualities and one who is on the top always feels lonely and loneliness finally leads to boredom.

In fact, the underground man voices the truth which is faced by every human being the only difference is that while a conscious man knows the fact the unconscious one remains oblivious to it and thus happy with life, which is impossible for the former one. Furthering his idea of consciousness he declares that a man of heightened consciousness is fully free to live his life according to his wish, the external factors do not prevent him from doing that. His freedom is so intense that he may even choose to feel himself as a mouse and not a man. He says, "And the main thing, again, is that it's he, he himself, who considers himself a mouse; nobody else asks him to, and that is the important point" (9). He relates his own life with the life of this mouse. He has been humiliated and insulted by the normal men who hold the posts of judges and arbiters. They are unable to value the real worth of this man with elevated consciousness who slips into his 'hole' being crushed and destroyed by ridicule. For forty years the underground man like a mouse shuns the society and seeks pleasure in his own private world. This pleasure is so unique to the conscious man that he remarkably pours his sentiments thus: "It is so subtle, so elusive, so difficult to grasp that people with the slightest limitations, or even simply those with strong nerves, will not be able to understand an iota of it" (11). He further asserts: "it is evidently necessary to attain profounder development and deeper consciousness to understand all the complexities of this voluptuous pleasure" (14). The man of consciousness to him is a man of inertia while on the other hand the active men are dull, and limited and engaged only in "nothing but idle exercises in logic" (22). He is not satisfied in his outpourings only with the conscious men but considers the entire civilization in the most authentic manner. The thoughts are not only thought provoking but original, too. He says: "Civilization merely develops man's capacity for a greater variety of sensations, and ... absolutely nothing else. And, through the development of this capacity, man may yet come to find pleasure in the spilling of blood. Indeed, this has already happened. Have you noticed that the most refined blood letters have almost all been most civilized gentlemen...?" (22). The bloodthirsty men have strange justifications for their deeds. With the progress of civilization man has grown shrewder in his ways of violence. Says the underground man: "Before, he used to regard bloodshed as a matter of justice, and he exterminated those who had to be destroyed with a clear conscience. But today though we regard the spilling of blood as an abomination, we still engage in this abomination, and to a far greater extent than before" (23). He has a deep knowledge not only of the functioning of human mind but also its behaviour in a given set of circumstances as he asserts boldly that man "has always and everywhere preferred to act according to his own wishes rather than according to the dictates of reason and advantage" (25). Rousseau has stated that 'man is born free but he is everywhere in chains' but this holds true only for a rational man, and man is not only a rational being as claims the underground man:

"I quite naturally want to live in order to fulfil my reasoning capacity alone, which is no more than some one-twentieth of my capacity for living.... What does reason

know?...while human nature acts as a complete entity, with all that is in it, consciously or unconsciously; and though it may be wrong it's nevertheless alive" (27-28).

It is the rest of his life beyond this one-twentieth that adds salt to human life, to be irrational at times even to the point of madness makes a man 'independent' as a living entity. This makes us superior to all other living beings "Because at any rate," exclaims the underground man "it preserves for us the most important and most precious thing – our personality, our individuality" (28). Man, though sensible and wise, "will do something deliberately contrary, solely out of ingratitude, and to insist on his own way" (30). And why to do it, it is again for the simple reason of asserting his own free will because exclaims the underground man: "Ah, gentlemen, what kind of independent will can there be when it comes down to graphs and arithmetic, when nothing counts but "two times two makes four"? Two times two will be four even without my will. Is that what you call man's free will" (31). The underground man challenges all the efforts to make a man wise according to the demands of science and good sense. He very wisely and cautiously raises his doubts regarding the common intelligent man's conviction that "not going against true, normal advantages, guaranteed by reason and arithmetic, is really always to man's advantage, and is a law for all mankind? After all, for the time being this is no more than your hypothesis. Suppose it is a law of logic, but not a law of mankind at all?" (32). Man is creative by nature and the underground man appreciates this creative instinct of man but he is equally aware of the other side of the coin too and he states it with wonderful clarity argument: "Man loves to create, and to build roads. That is beyond question. But why, then, does he also passionately love destruction and chaos?... because he is himself instinctively afraid of achieving his goal and completing the edifice he is constructing?" (32). Man according to him is different from ants that love to build anthill as a goal while man builds edifices only to desert or destroy them. The act and not the goal is the ultimate sign of human existence, the underground man too says:

"And who knows (no one can vouch for that), perhaps the only goal toward which mankind is striving on earth consists of nothing but continuity of the process of achieving – in other words of life itself, and not the goal proper, which, naturally, must be nothing but two times two is four – in other words, a formula; and two times two, gentlemen, is no longer life, but the beginning of death" (33).

This theory is attested by Arthur Miller when one of his characters Happy in his most cherished play *Death of a Salesman* says:

"All I can do now is to wait for the merchandise manager to die. He's a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy once it is finished. And I know that's just what I would do. I don't know what the hell I'm working for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment all alone. And I think of the rent I'm

paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and a plenty of women. And still goddammit, I'm lonely" (11).

This loneliness is characteristic of man only however hard he may strive to achieve his goal, many achieve this goal but at some point he feels the futility of it all and this perhaps can be counted for his instinct to destroy his creation, which is not to be witnessed in other beings such as ants, sheep and so on, and so forth. The individuality of man is beautifully summed by the underground man in the following words: "He is fond of striving toward achievement, but not so very fond of the achievement itself, and this is, naturally, terribly funny. In short, man is constructed comically; there is evidently some joke in all of this" (33). It is rare to find such a champion of man's freedom to will and his consciousness as this underground man. Says he, "Though I declared in the beginning that consciousness, in my view, is man's greatest misfortune, I know that man loves it and will never exchange it for any satisfactions. Consciousness, for example, is infinitely nobler than two times two" (34). In spite of the fact that he finds the existence in the present form a futile thing, he is not ready to believe that this life is meaningless; he is a highly optimistic person, though superficially he appears to be the contrary. He is forever in search of higher meaning to life but totally against the contemporary rat race in which man is so blindly engaged, he says, "Destroy my desires, eradicate my ideals, show me something better, and I will follow you" (36), otherwise, "I have my underground" (36). Though he speaks in favour of conscious inertia as the best thing to do in the current situation of mankind, he is ever in search of true meaning of his existence, says he, "Why, then, was I endowed with such desires? Can it be that I was made this way simply so that I'd come to the conclusion that my whole way of being is nothing but a fraud? Can this be the sole purpose of it? I don't believe it" (36). It is perhaps near to impossible to find a man truer than this one in the entire world of fact and fiction both. He presents the true image of man as he says,

"In every man's memory there are things he won't reveal to others, except, perhaps, to friends. And there are things he won't reveal even to friends, only, perhaps, to himself, and then, too, in secret. And finally, there are things he is afraid to reveal even to himself, and every decent man has quite an accumulation of them. In fact, the more decent the man, the more of them he has stored up" (39).

And further goes on to write that his purpose of pouring the secrets of his heart is because "I want to test whether it's possible to be entirely frank at least with oneself and dare to face the whole truth" (39). The underground man after deliberating enough upon his position and the world around him wishes to say the final word and thus writes: "the best thing is to do nothing! The best thing is conscious inertia!" (37), and even this inertia is rarest of the rare things since, "without a pure heart there can be no complete and true consciousness" (38). These outpourings bring the first part of the book to a close and leads to the opening of the second part entitled 'On the Occasion of the Wet Snow'.



The second part deals with a personal experience of the underground man from his past life as he himself sates: "It's snowing now, an almost wet snow ... that recalled me the incident that now refuses to let me rest" (40). He, like Coleridge's ancient mariner could not rest before he pours out all that is boiling within him. This takes him back as says he, "I was only twenty four at the time" (41). Explaining about himself in detail at that period of time he says, "I was morbidly developed, as a cultivated man of our age must be ... It was true in fact: I was a coward and a slave" (43). However, it is not merely a personal feeling but a well pondered over statement as he states further, "a decent man has generally and at all times had to be a coward and a slave. This is a law of nature for all decent men on earth" (43). The underground man at that phase of life was young and alone. He liked not to mix much with people and owing to his morbid temperament; his friendship with his colleagues did not last long. The thoughts of underground man verily explain the make-up of a man's mind. As he moved one day in a street he found a few people quarrelling in a tavern, and one of them was thrown out of the window. Suddenly a strange emotion overtook him and he too decided to partake in that fight, only if to be thrown out, at least that would mean some kind of interaction with the world around him. He entered the tavern but went unnoticed, and this hurt him immensely: "I could have forgiven blows, but how could I forgive just being moved like that and being so completely ignored?" (48). To be ignored is the greatest pain a man has to bear with. To be recognised is one of the wishes a man may demand most strongly after the demand of life as W R Inge in one of his essays says: "Recognition by others is essential to all, but the strongest and proudest virtue" (22). Non recognition by his fellow men is deeply felt by him as he says, "I had been hated as if I were a fly" (48), and, "I was nothing but a fly before all that fine society, a revolting, obscene fly – more intelligent, more cultivated, nobler than anyone else, that went without saying, but a fly nonetheless, forever yielding the way to everyone, humiliated and insulted by everyone" (51). The underground man, however, takes the matter a little further as his is wont to do. He is a chronic sufferer of inferiority complex, "I suffered painful spasms in my heart, and my whole back would get hot at the mere thought of the poverty of my clothes, the wretchedness and meanness of my darting little figure" (51). He is, because of this complex, having an eternal ache in the heart. He, here becomes the spokesperson of the plighted and downtrodden figures of the world and his chain of thoughts runs in that universal strain that is so characteristic of such lowly placed people. He voices his concern of not being able to face a certain officer who had ignored him in the tavern. He harboured thoughts to have a fight with this officer to restore his presence which was challenged by this attitude of treating him as a fly. He deliberately tried to run into the officer in his evening walks at "Four o'clock along Nevsky Prospect" (51). But wonder of wonders; as the officer came closer facing him he stepped aside on each occasion. Says the underground man:

“It tormented me that even in the street I couldn’t manage to treat him as an equal. “Why must you step aside first?” I’d rant at myself in wild hysterics, waking up sometimes at three in the morning. “Why just you, why not he? There is, after all, no law about it, it isn’t written anywhere. Why can’t it be on equal terms, as always when well-bred people meet: he’ll yield half, and you’ll yield half, and you will pass each other with mutual respect” (52).

The pain in the heart was so severe that it did not allow him a moment’s rest. Many times he tried to meet the man face to face but to no avail. However, one day he decided to settle the issue once and for all:

“And suddenly, three steps away from my enemy, I made up my mind in an instant, shut my eyes, and – we collided firmly, shoulder against shoulder! I did not yield an inch and passed him by entirely on an equal footing! ... Naturally, I got the worst of the collision, for he was stronger, but that was not the point. The point was that I had achieved my goal, I had sustained my dignity ... I was jubilant” (54).

This feeling of jubilancy, however, was not a permanent situation with him; he was too much inclined to go back to his hole. He could not bear to get his dignity hurt any more by any other superior being and since he himself was not superior socially, there was every possibility of getting hurt by some or the other snob. He says, “I could not conceive of a secondary role, and this was precisely why in reality I very calmly occupied the lowest. Either a hero, or mud; there was no middle” (56). After living in his hole for three months he would develop an irresistible urge to plunge into the society. He would then visit his few acquaintances such as his office chief Anton Antonych Setochkin and his former schoolmate Simonov. He decides to visit his schoolmate though “this gentleman found my presence irksome and that I should not be going there” (59). As he entered Simonov’s apartment visited only after a gap of over a year he found two of his former schoolmates sitting and seemed to discuss some important issue. As usual his entrance was not welcome to the degree of contempt. He however, being accustomed to such experiences time and again, “Disconcerted by all this, I sat down somewhat dejectedly and began to listen to their conversation” (60). The meeting there was regarding the farewell of their former school friend who was leaving the town. He did not enjoy harmonious relationship with this friend as there was a great difference between their social status, and, “he was afraid to compromise himself by greeting so insignificant a person as myself” (62). The only advantage that the underground man had in his school days was his superior intellect. He offered himself to be the part of the treat and was very unwillingly allowed by the group. At the party says he: “The numbskulls think they’ve done me a favour by letting me sit at their table, they don’t understand that it’s I, I who am honouring them, and not the other way around!” (75). The dinner party turned out to be a sour affair as he was not welcome and he in turn tried to make them realise that he was the superior one. The party dispersed and all but he went to a brothel



to ice the cake. He being left alone started pondering at the state of affairs when suddenly it dawned upon him that he should slap the guest of honour of today's party, Zverkov and settle the score. He followed them to the brothel: "I forgot everything else, for I had decided irrevocably on the slap, and felt with horror that *now it was bound to happen*, right away, at once, and *nothing in the world* could stop it" (85). However, upon reaching the place he could not find them. He however, took a girl for himself and that for a strange reason, rather in contrast to other men in choice of such matters, says he: "Mechanically I glanced at the girl who had just entered: a fresh, young, rather pale face with straight dark eyebrows and grave, as though slightly astonished, eyes. I liked her immediately; I would have hated her if she had smiled" (86). He went to bed with her mechanically and came to normal state as the sleep and the love of this girl worked together as an elixir of life to make him feel fresh and hopeful. He slowly started taking interest in the girl and with this started the most troublesome episode in his life i.e. to be subjugated in mind by someone else, a thing which till date he had very carefully been able to resist. After some preliminary conversation he gathered that her name was Liza of nearly 20 years in age. She was a girl of ordinary beauty but tall and with a strong built. He was sympathetic towards her but suddenly his old self returned and victimised Liza as he glibly succeeded in making her realise about her miserable existence as a prostitute. The image of her future presented by him ended her dying of consumption in a street, uncared and unlooked for:

"No loving hand will touch you; no one will bless you or sigh for you. All they'll be thinking of is how to get rid of you as quickly as possible,... and, others have children, fathers, husbands visiting their grave – and you? Not a tear, not a sigh, not a thought, and no one, no one in the whole wide world will ever come to you. Your name will disappear, as though you'd never lived, as though you'd never been born! Nothing but mud and swamp" (102-3).

During the course of the conversation the fear of loneliness and meaninglessness grips the girls gradually and the more she loses hope in her life the more is satisfied the sick soul of the underground man. In fact, by telling to her the forthcoming miseries he unconsciously refers to his own miseries since both are sailing in the same boat in some or the other way. Both are bound to their sufferings, one forcefully while the other willingly. He says, "I knew that I was speaking stiffly, artificially, even bookishly; indeed, I was incapable of speaking otherwise" (103). Behaving contrary to his way of life he gave his address to her inviting her to his hole. However, as the impact of his inebriated state reduced and he came back to his senses fully he assumes his old position of being secluded in his own world, he for the first time feels troubled at the thought: "And why the devil did I give her my address? What if she comes?" (106). He was not a man to be cowed down so easily by any soul in the world, he never gave second thoughts to the toughest situations in life, he met the most difficult circumstances in face with perfect boldness and ever showing a trace of meekness. However, his meeting with

Liza had touched the chords of his heart in a different manner to which he was not accustomed to and, he, who would wave off everything from his mind and heart without losing a second, was troubled immensely, “Something would not die down within me, in the depths of my heart and my conscience; it refused to die down and scalded me with anguish” (108). The influence and impact of a woman is immense on man and even the underground man could not escape out of it easily. He was an adept in dealing with the situations in his own fashion and would never let the other trouble him. He was quick to settle the score so that the thoughts did not rankle his being. However, with Liza he was unable to deal in the same coin. Says he, “But with regard to Liza I was no longer pleased. As though it were she alone who troubled me. What if she comes? I kept asking myself” (109). He was troubled perhaps because this was the first instance in which he felt some consciousness of his ugly existence. Since every woman has an inborn sense of aesthetics, it was sure that Liza would look down upon the shabby surroundings of his dwellings, and all the regard and respect that she showed to him at his high flown concerns about her life would all appear to be fake and false to her. This would reduce his dignity which he could not think to bear. Though he says, “Well, what of it, let her come. Hm. It will be rotten, though – if only because she’ll see how I live. I posed before her yesterday as such a ... hero ... and now, hm!” (109). He is troubled to meet Liza at his dwellings not owing to any inferiority complex regarding this poverty and living standards but that he feels forced to be unnatural before her. He is a man ‘thinking’ and for such people it is very painful to present themselves before the society in their unreal face. Thinking of her arrival he contemplates: “I’ll simper and fuss before her, and wrap myself in my robe and smile, and lie” (109). However, on second thoughts on the issue he is not ready to buy the proposition at any cost that he lied to her on anything, “I spoke sincerely last night. I too felt genuine emotion – I remember it” (109). The underground man for the first time in his life had to think so carefully to meet someone. He was obsessed with the thoughts of her arrival at his house for days together and shrugged every time he thought of it. The particular expression on Liza’s face which appeared out of the noble lecture delivered by him at her dark and dingy dwellings was still fresh in his memory even after a lapse of fifteen years, says he, “But I still did not know then that even after fifteen years I would recall Liza precisely with that pathetic, crooked, unnecessary smile on her face at that moment” (110). Never ever had anything tortured him more and for such a long time than his waiting for Liza. And she had no power to wield over him being only a common prostitute. But the silence was immensely potent and weighed heavy on his heart. Had it been anybody else he would have settled the score immediately. But he could not shake off Liza from his mind and that for a simple yet profound reason, “The damned romanticism of all these *pure hearts*!” (110). Dostoevsky is a man of immense wisdom and has a great knowledge of the functioning of human mind. People can fight and face the greatest challenges in life but they give up before the innocent and tender ones. The weapons designed for the mighty and brave do not

function on them. Such is the situation of this incident in the underground man's life. The more he thinks of her the more distressed he grows. In fact, he repents for ever speaking to her in a sentimental tone as she was an innocent human being who could not look behind his eyes. However, as the time passed and she did not turn up he started to calm down but she never passed out of his mind and at times he had the feeling that one day she would surely come, "for some reason I felt certain that she must come in the evening, and precisely at seven o' clock ... The devil take it, she'll come, she's sure to come!" (112). This continuous thinking of Liza's arrival gave birth to one more troublesome situation for the underground man. He felt that his servant Apollon with whom he never held harmonious relationship would surely make the situation worse for him upon the arrival of Liza. He was sure to make most of the situation by defaming him more in her presence. Apollon was always on look for an occasion to trouble and torture his master. Though a servant in hierarchy he however, dominated mind and soul of his master. He was so strong nerved that he would not even demand his wages and would in turn force the master to invite and hand the money after waiting for unbearably long period. Apollon though the servant was in fact master of his master. Both of them had a strained relationship but things were going on as they had to. The things get worse when one day Liza appears at the door of the underground man and he mutters, "You have found me in an odd position, Liza", but next moment he regains his lost composure and exclaims: "I am not ashamed of my poverty.... On the contrary, I regard my poverty with pride. I am poor, but honourable.... One can be poor but honourable" (118). In order to ease out the situation he hurriedly sends Apollon for some snacks and tea but Liza still weighed heavy on his head and he wished to escape at any cost, "As I was returning to Liza, the thought occurred to me on the way: wouldn't it to be best to run away, just as I was, in my torn robe, no matter where, and let things turn out as they might?" (119). This was not an easy option as it was easy said than done and after some moments his true character came to the fore for it could not be subdued for such a long time, even this much waiting was possible only because Liza was a woman and gallantry demanded so much of decency from him, outburst he: "Why did you come? Answer me! Answer me!" I cried out, scarcely aware of what I was doing. "I'll tell you, woman, why you came. You came because of my *pathetic* words to you that time. So you got sentimental, you want some more 'pathetic talk'" (121). He explains the reason for this sudden and unceremonial outburst, "I had to vent my feelings on somebody, to get my own back.... I was humiliated, so I had to humiliate someone else; I was treated like a piece of trash, so I had to show my power over someone else..." (121). The underground man at this juncture becomes the spokesperson of all the turmoiled and troubled beings on the globe. His outbursts before Liza are the most significant part of the book and most helpful in peeping into that part of his psyche that was closed to the readers till now. It has been truly said that a person opens himself truly only when either he is in love or in anger. Every being is forever in search of finding victims upon whom he can impose his

power. Says he to Liza: "It was power, power that I needed then" (122). Once he has expressed the real motives of his behaviour to Liza he goes on further to clarify his situation to her and accepts all that previously he had falsely claimed as he says: "I told you I'm not ashamed of my poverty. Well, I'll have you know that I am ashamed, I'm more ashamed of it than of anything else, more afraid of it than anything else..." (122). As he was laying bare his soul before Liza she was simply flabbergasted at the turn of things in such a manner. She being a downtrodden woman had more shares of sorrow and with more varieties and this entire tirade helped her get the truer image of the psyche of her 'hero from the blue'. This had a relieving impact upon the underground man too, as he says, "She understood out of all this what a woman, if she loves sincerely, will always understand before all else. She understood that I was myself unhappy" and "When I finished, she responded not my shouts of "why are you here, why don't you go!" but to the pain she knew I must have felt in telling all about myself" (123). Her reaction was human, the purest form of a human being: "Then she rushed to me, threw her arms around my neck, and burst out crying. I broke down too and sobbed as I had never sobbed before" (124). At this point he appears to us a normal human being and no more an underground man. All his earlier emotional outbursts were coloured with spite or hatred that were seated too deep in him. It was for the first time that his tears were unalloyed. These tears may be the outcome of hysteria but once they broke the banks they were all too human. They brought a radical change in him, "How I hated her, and how drawn I was to her at that moment! One feeling reinforced the other" (125). The arrival of Liza at his dwellings played a significant role in his life. He could for the first time in his life come out of his cell of spite and share an equal footing with other normal human beings. He through this meeting gained the missing wisdom of love and narrates his situation in the following words:

"I was incapable of loving because, I repeat, to me loving meant tyrannizing and flaunting my moral superiority. I've never been able even to imagine any other kind of love, and I have now reached such a point that I sometimes think love consists precisely of the voluntary gift by the loved object of the right to tyrannize over it" (125-26).

This incident fulfilled him, he had now come a whole circle which earlier was incomplete, says he, "Even in my underground dreams I have never conceived of love as anything but a struggle; I always began with hatred and ended with moral subjugation, after which I could not even imagine what to do with the conquered object" (126). Now it was realised that love was a fulfilment in itself, it had no other concerns, two lovers are in love because they love and not because of any demands upon each other. He, who a few moments ago, looking Liza at his door had thought that she was there to listen to some pathetic words of consolation in reward to the pain inflicted upon her by him in their previous meeting, now admits with full candidness: "And it never occurred to me that she had come, not at all to listen to pathetic words, but to love me, for to a woman love means all of resurrection, all of salvation from any

kind of ruin, all of renewal of life; indeed, it cannot manifest itself in anything but this" (126). Liza was hurt in her heart at such a treatment which she did not ever think may happen to her. She left after some moments later and the much desired 'peace' descended upon him. But whatever he did to Liza is not solacing and says, "Even today, so many years later, the memory of all this is somehow too *distressing*" (129). He further goes on to admit: "I have felt ashamed throughout the writing of this narrative: hence, this is no longer literature, but corrective punishment" (129). It may appear not literature to him but mankind will for ever be indebted to him for this piece of writing which has made us better humans. He here has spoken the truth that we so called modern learned scholars and philosophers dare not bear to listen not to talk of speaking. He truly says that this narrative is too much to bear for a normal man and it is so "because we have all lost touch with life, we all limp, each to a greater or lesser degree" (129). We the so called 'normal man' have forgot to enjoy life as it is and the 'living life' as categorised by the underground man is treated as "hard labour, almost servitude" (129) by us.

The above discussion amply brings out that *Notes from Underground* is an in-depth study of the psychology of pride and humiliation. Dostoevsky's protagonist and his feminine counterpart Liza both bare before us their true hearts devoid of all hypocrisy making us enlightened about the hidden recesses of human psychology. It would be apt to conclude this discussion with the words of Joseph Frank who has given to the world the richest treasure of Dostoevsky's life and works:

"Nonetheless, as we look at *Notes from Underground* as a whole we see that the egoistic Social Romanticism of 1840s, with its cultivation of a sense of spiritual noblesse and its emphasis on individual moral responsibility, does not have a totally negative value. Egocentric, though it may be, such sentimental Social Romanticism still stressed the importance of free will, and preserved a sense of inner autonomy of the personality, and without such a sense no truly human life is possible at all" (439).

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