



Heart of Darkness- Matter And Design

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ABSTRACT

Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" brings the description of Marlow who works as a fair carrier down the Congo. All the way through his voyage, he creates a keen curiosity in investigating Kurtz, an ivory procurement agent. He shocked upon seeing what the European merchant have done to the inhabitants. In short, the story is the investigation of the darkness potentially inbuilt in all creature hearts. It is highly multifaceted piece of art having the diversity of themes. The writer made the work hard to read deliberately as he wanted the language of his novel should create the atmospheric fighting through the jungle as Marlow had done in search of Kurtz.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

The novelist and the master mariner Joseph Conrad is a unique phenomenon in the history of English novel. He was Pole by birth and did not know a word of English until he was over twenty and yet he wrote in English language with distinction. He is said to have been inspired by Victor Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea" and travelled to Marseilles in 1874 to become a sailor. There after his life was spent mostly at sea visiting port and strange seaports that he subsequently wrote about. In 1886, he became a naturalized British subject. A few years later, his childhood ambition of commanding a river steamer in the Belgian Congo was realized. "Heart of Darkness" is based on this voyage during which he contracted fever that forced him to give up sailing. It brings the narrative of Marlow who works as a fair carrier down the Congo. All the way through his voyage, he creates a keen curiosity in investigating Kurtz, an ivory procurement agent. He shocked upon seeing what the European merchant have done to the inhabitants. In short, the story is the investigation of the darkness potentially inbuilt in all creature hearts. It is highly multifaceted piece of art having the diversity of themes. Though not English by birth, he is regarded as one of the greatest stylists of the language. His prose offers a brilliant insight into his views of life together with his own personal experience. He tried to explore the psyche and soul of people. He chose to put together his own understandings of aquatic life and humid areas as the subject matter of his novels. Secondly, he desired to use the novel to illustrate one fundamental fact of life-fidelity and faith between man and man. He also shed light the problem of evil in human life and its distracting influence on the working of his characters.

It is Conrad's the most intricate story. It offers a brilliant fictional account of the savage extortion which often flourished in the guise of imperial progress. It is a journey through the Congo-deep in to the heart of Africa and into human nature. The focus of the story is the charismatic Mr. Kurtz who has the power to corrupt others that it is through eloquence. The title suggests that in real sense, it is a story of darkness. In fact, this complex work of art can be read on several levels and interpreted in several ways. In the first place, all can say "Heart of Darkness" is essentially a story of darkness on different levels. Walter Ellen says,

"The "heart of Darkness" of the title is at once the heart of Africa, the heart of evil, everything that is malign, corrupt and perhaps the "heart of man".

The title essentially refers to the African continent which is named as "The dark continent" literally the title means the uncharted territory of the continent. Conrad gives the pic-

ture of the Congo which is suggestive of physical darkness. The sky is overcast by dark clouds; the Congo River is invisible in the dark fog. All kinds of evil-forces are hidden behind the dark bushes and even the hearts of men are under the influence of darkness of evil. Inner darkness is also suggested by the story. Marlow's exploration of the Congo can be studied as his exploration of the inner recesses of his own mind. On broader level, the human mind can be taken as Dark Continent thus; symbolically it is the story of an fundamentally introverted expedition concerning deep saintly modify in the voyage. The natives of the Congo are representatives of pragmatism. Kurtz has come to Africa with the mission to civilize the primitive natives and to dispel the darkness of uncivilized life. But he falls a prey to the primitive ways of life. He loses his identity and his plunged into abyss of degradation.

"Heart of Darkness" is an exploration of the inner self of Conrad himself. Conrad has identified with Marlow. Marlow's experiences in the dark region of Africa are the experiences of Conrad himself who had visited Congo-"Heart of Darkness"-during the course of one of his voyages. The figure of Mr. Kurtz has been portrayed after the real person Mr. Klain.

It is one of the most sarcastic reflections of imperialism ever written. It deals with the cruelty of imperialistic exploitation. The greed, cruelty and savagery of colonizers are fully exposed and condemned. British colonialism has been referred to by Marlow in the very beginning. Apart from the British, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French were the chief notions competing for European greed and commercial mentality. In their lust for wealth the colonizers threw to the wind all human values and exploited the natives for their own gain and wanted only to kill and destroy them. Marlow discovers the white man who had come to Africa as a messenger of progress and light the darkest region has lost his European social order. The behavior of the white man in Africa becomes worse than the cannibalism of a black man. The knobs on the poles round Kurtz's residence are human heads and they fire from their ships among the natives merely for sport. The novel tells about the fraud, robbery, murder and slave trading of the Belgian rule in the Congo. Marlow sees a lot of black people, mostly naked, moving about like ants. Thus Conrad presents "an angry document on absurd brutal exploitation." To be considered at the psychological level, the journey of the Congo is a voyage of self exploration and self analysis.

It gives us a peep into the hidden recesses of the human soul and the evil that lurks within. In this sense the "Heart of Darkness" is the core of evil within man. The journey gives Marlow an insight into his own soul. It results in an inner illumination and self-knowledge which would not have been possible in any other way. Further the novel brings out the corrupting in-

fluence of those dark places on the earth The white men go to the heart of darkness to conquer but are themselves destroyed and corrupted spiritually by their contact with dark interior of Africa A core of irrational impulses and emotions exist in the heart even of a civilized man These irrational instincts and impulses are brought to the surface in the dark wilds of the tropics. Kurtz may not be mad intellectually, but as Marlow realizes he is "mad in his soul". Marlow himself is driven to the verge of insanity and it is only devotion to duty that enables him to maintain his sanity. After his experiences in Congo he is never the same man again.

To conclude with the words of E.Y.Solibroke "Heart of Darkness" is an extremely dense account of a voyage to a place, called the heart of Darkness. It has a complex style, structure and characterization and consequently also meaning. The several themes don't run along beside each other, they contain each-other and to separate them does injustice to the work. One of them is the descent into the subconscious to encounter the irrational instinctual portion of a human mind. Another is the systematic exploitation of men for the purpose of selfish ends. The writer made the work hard to read deliberately as he wanted the language of his novel should create the atmospheric fighting through the jungle as Marlow had done in search of Kurtz.

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