

Dankness states that the darkness here is many things:

"It is the unknown, it is subconscious, it is the moral darkness, it is the evil which swallows up Kuntz, and it is the spiritual emptiness, which he sees at the center of the existence, but above all it is a mystery itself, the mysteriousness of man's spiritual life."

Heart of Darkness

is a short novel, and yet has several themes. It is indeed strange that such a short book should deal with so many themes. There is, in this book, the theme of self-restraint. Then there is the theme of the working of the subconscious mind of man. There is the theme of the influence of barbarism and evilness. And there is, of course, the obvious theme of the imperialism. Thus Heart of Darkness is a masterpiece which deals with a number of important ideas. Conrad's treatment of the theme of white imperialism was influenced by his own visit to the Congo and his exploration of that dark continent. The keynote of the theme of imperialism is struck at the very outset of Marlow's narration. Marlow speaks at the very beginning of the ancient Roman conquest of Britain; The ancient Romans, says Marlow,

"They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale and men going at it blind - as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness."

The another keynote of the theme of imperialism or imperialist greed is Marlow's experiences in the Congo, which clearly show that the white man there had failed to perform his functions. Instead of civilizing the savages, the white men who went there became exploiters. And the most striking example of imperialist greed to be found in Mr. Kuntz who, in the later stage of his stay in the Congo, shows no self-restraint at all. Many times he was heard saying:

"my ivory, my station, my intended, my career, my -."

HEART OF DARKNESS

- Joseph Conrad

TITLE, THEME AND STYLE

Heart of Darkness by Polish English novelist Joseph Conrad was published in 1902. The entire theme of the novel lies in its title. The darkness refers to the dark civilization of Africa and Heart symbolizes the very core of the African nation where people are savage, inhuman, uncivilized and fully ignorant. The setting time of the novel Heart of Darkness dates back to those periods when the continent of Africa was not fully explored. So the continent was called the heart of darkness. The major and significant events of the novel take place in the dark continent, though the first and the end of the story take place outside the continent. The description of the scenery by Marlow adds something vital meaning to the title of the novel. The wild scene, the jungle, the pictures of the natives hiding in jungle, the silence of the river Congo, all these features are suggestive to the title Heart of Darkness.

"Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy and sluggish."

The term Heart of Darkness stands for another meaning too. The journey of Kurtz and Marlow to explore the interior of the dark continent called Congo, is not only the physical search of some territory but is an exploration of the inner part of the human mind and human heart. Both Kurtz and Marlow are in this journey to find their dark region of mind and heart. Their journey to Africa is, symbolically, exploration of the dark side of human life, either morally or psychologically or spiritually. A critic commenting upon the title Heart of

with the character of Marlow. His eyes become our guide. Under the person of Marlow, Conrad himself is relating the story of pain, misery and unbearable truth of human existence. With the use of impressionistic style, the author has been able to share his personal experience of human barbarianism in Congo. The author's style of Conrad is his use of imagery, that creates the environment necessary for the depiction of a civilization which is at the lowest ebb. In *The Heart of Darkness*, the author gives such a vivid description to the landscape that on the physical level it is certain for the travellers that they are moving from light Europe into darkness.

Like all modern writers, Conrad has skillfully employed symbolic use of language to effectively carry the style of the novel. His novels also carry a melodramatic touch. Though a novelist's prime aim is to relate the story but several of the novelists have endeavored to touch upon the dramatist's tool of dialogue to brighten their structure of the novel; Conrad is certainly one of them. He has very perfectly reflected the style of modernist, impressionistic, dramatic symbolism and imagery in this novel.

the spiritual
darkness,
the spiritual
darkness, but above
the spiritual light.

Heart of Darkness conveys to us in a nutshell the deceit, fraud, robberies, murders, slave trading and the cruelty of the Belgian rule in the Congo. There is an incident of time in the story and there is the long trek during which the natives have to carry a heavy load on their heads in the service of their white masters. Indeed, in this novel the brutal futility of the Belgian imperialist rule is memorably captured in image after image.

"The grass grows through the ribs of a trader's corpse in a village abandoned in panic upon his accidental killing, colonialist and local community destroyed equally by their encounter."

We can go so far as to say that Conrad is here not only exposing the hollowness and the weakness of the Belgian imperialist rule over the Congo but also indirectly reminding us of British imperialism in various countries of the world of his time. Today the picture of the world is widely different from what it was in Conrad's time. Today white imperialism has crumbled and most of the countries of Asia and Africa have become independent. But in Conrad's time, most of the Asian countries were still a part of the dark continent. Now all the subject-countries have become independent, though independence has brought new problems for them. The evil of imperialist rule has ended but other evils have come into existence.

The novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad is a proof that a novel does not have to be long to have literary merit. Heart of Darkness is quite short, yet intriguing due to the content of the novel. In this novel, both a modernist style of writing and the impressionistic style are utilized to convey Marlow's epic narrative. Conrad's style is a peculiarity in English novel. Reacting against the traditional novels of his time, Conrad's task is:

"by power of the written word, to make you hear; to make you feel, it is, before all, to make you see...."

Conrad uses the impressionistic style to relate the story. We move forward.

HEART OF DARKNESS

- Joseph Conrad

BEGINNING OF HEART OF DARKNESS

Heart of Darkness by Polish-

English Novelist Joseph Conrad was published in 1902. It begins on the river Thames in London, where Marlow is talking to his fellow shipmates. Marlow's story begins in London as well, so the novel and the narrative have parallel beginnings. So, in the beginning of the novel, a pleasure ship called, the Nellie, lies at the mouth of the river Thames, waiting for the tide to go out. Five men relax on the deck of the ship: the Director of Company, the Lawyer, the Accountant; Marlow and the unnamed Narrator. As darkness begins to fall, the scene becomes

"Less brilliant but more profound."

Suddenly Marlow remarks that this very spot was once

"One of the dark places of the earth."

This train of thought reminds Marlow of his sole experience as a fresh water sailor, when as a young man he captained a steamship going up the Congo River. Marlow recounts how he obtained a job with the Belgian Company through the influence of an aunt. Then he boards a French ship to Africa. The ship drops Marlow off and he walks most of the day to get to the company's Outer Station. There he meets the company's chief accountant and learns of Mr. Kurtz, the company's most effective agent. Marlow leaves the Outer Station with a group of men on foot to get to the Central Station, where a steamboat is waiting. At the Central Station, Marlow meets the company manager, who tells him two things: first his mission to retrieve Kurtz from the Inner Station and second that the steamboat is at the bottom of the river. In order to fix it, the men are delayed for three months before they can head up the river.

HEART OF DARKNESS

- Joseph Conrad

ENDING OF HEART OF DARKNESS (1899)

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad was published in 1899. It tells us the story of Marlow's trip to Africa in taking a position with an ivory trading company, Marlow is sent to retrieve Mr. Kurtz: a man who is something of a marvel and celebrity. At the end of the novel, Marlow and his crew make their way up the difficult river and are ambushed by an African tribe, where Kurtz is staying on his own will. His crew take the unstable Kurtz to the ship to take him back. Kurtz's health worsens on the return trip. The steamboat breaks down and while it is stopped for repairs, Kurtz gives Marlow a packet of papers and a photograph. When Marlow next speaks with him, Kurtz is near death; as he dies, Marlow hears him weakly whisper:

"The Horror! The Horror!"

A short while later, the manager's boy announces to the rest of the crew:

"Mistah Kurtz - he dead."

Upon his return to Europe, Marlow gives Kurtz's report and papers to a journalist. Finally Marlow is left with some personal letters and a photograph of Kurtz's fiancée. When Marlow visits her, she is dressed in black and still deep in mourning, although it has been more than a year. When Kurtz's fiancée asks to hear his last words, Marlow tells her that Kurtz's last words were her name. Marlow feels only despair, knowing he failed to give Kurtz the justice he deserved. But he just couldn't get himself to tell the intended the truth - it would have been too dark. The story then ends depicting the scenes of the Thames.