

**DEHUMANIZATION OF THE AFRICANS IN CONRAD'S
'HEART OF DARKNESS'**

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Abstract

Forcefully marginalized, exploited, colonized population for different selfish motives forms Fourth World. These are internationally unrecognized nations. Exploitation, racial segregation, class contrast, malnutrition, utters cruelty-all present modern man's practical, selfish socio-political approach looking to others. All this results into Dehumanization. Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' is the best example of dehumanization of the Africans. The colonizing culture presents threat to the socio-cultural existence of the Fourth World. This novel is an outspoken expression of materialism & imperialism. It is noticed that imperial powers have been colonizing & exploiting the 4th World by using sugar coated labels like progress, development.....etc. It shows that silent, marginalized voice can be raised through 4th worth literature. Conrad's 'Heart of the Darkness' presents the same idea.

Key Words: *Exploitation, Colonization, Racial Segregation, Horror, Cruelty, Dehumanization.*

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The term 4th world is still in its formative stage. World's 1/3 population is undergoing this change. Population forcefully marginalized, exploited, colonized for different selfish motives forms 4th world. It always tries to maintain a distinct political culture & sovereignty. These nations are internationally unrecognized nations. After the ii world war particularly, after 1950's Euro-American countries formed 1st world. Communist-Socialist countries like Soviet Union, China, North Korea & Eastern Europe form II world & other decolonized countries which don't want to intermix these two worlds form III world. Populations from some nations which don't know modern industrial norms- these nomadic, pastorals and farmers constitute the 4th world. They don't get economic & political upliftment. The Fourth world can't afford access to the 1st world standards of living. Ironically they are called as 'hidden nations'. The colonizing culture sets up the laws & completely threatens the cultural existence of the 4th world.

The term 'Fourth World' presents the following general meaning- the indigenous people descended from country's original population & today who are completely or partly deprived of the right to their original regions & its riches. In broader sense the concept of the 4th world is the result of the struggle between the forces of centralization & decentralization. Though the 4th world comprises marginalized, colonized, exploited nations 'group, it covers millions of people of small nations & their groups. They are struggling for autonomy & independence. It now has resulted into a movement that is struggling against the cruelty, selfishness of today's mass societies. They demand to form a new human scale & a decentralized world order. Demand of the right to self determination is at the centre.

The Fourth world literature tries to understand the shared cultural experiences of the people. They experienced colonization & so they are in minority. 4th world literature is the outspoken expression of materialism & imperialism. Sociolinguistics studies cultures, languages & oral traditions. Ultimately, it better presents 4th world. This international conference aims at bridging the gap between the 4th world & rest of the population upon the earth. It also pinpoints 4th world nations as marginalized nations. Imperial powers by using the label modernization have done all this. It is noticed that these powers have been colonizing & exploiting the 4th world by using the labels- 'progress, development.....etc. All these are sugar coated labels. Reality presents devastating effects. Silent, marginalized voice can be raised through 4th world literature.

In the 21st century, international migration is viewed as a global challenge. It has started from the beginning decades of the 20th century. After Second World War migration, displacement for trade, commerce, education, employment has begun on large scale. Depiction of all this has acquired central place in the literature. Though people all over the world started acting globally, they didn't separate themselves from the set values & mentality. 4th world literature is the reflection of all this codes of conducts, morals & values. Some such consistent practices are reflected through this literature. Exploitation, Racial Segregation, Class Contrast, Malnutrition- all this presents modern man's practical, materialistic selfish, socio-political approach looking towards the society of the 4th world. All this results into '**Dehumanization**'. It is reflected through the novels of many writers from 20th century. Joseph Conrad is the main among these novelists. This paper aims to throw light upon the view that how Conrad through his novels deals with the presentation of the plight of the 4th world people. His famous novel 'Heart of the Darkness' is referred to highlight the issue of how whites dehumanized the Africans living in the Congo basement. Plot outline of this novel, its structure, thematic aspect, symbols used in the novel-all this presents dehumanization of the Africans.

In 1890, Conrad sailed to river Congo on a Belgian steamship. He sailed through the ivory trading stations which were established by the imperialist whites. He noticed that the agents were collecting ivory & exporting it to Belgium & further it was sold to various European nations for making ornaments & other articles. Conrad observed deteriorating

conditions of the black natives. His own experiences of the dark continent-Africa have explored through this novel. Title of the novel is also symbolic. It shows inner depths of the human mind & the darkness hidden in human mind.

'Heart of the Darkness' is an autobiographical novel. During his visit to Congo, Conrad has maintained a diary & the recordings he used as the raw material for designing this novel. It presents Marlow & Kurtz as the main characters. Both are from white community & for different purposes they entered the dark continent of the Congo basement. The chief accountant, manager, brick maker, the Russian, black natives are the minor characters in this novel. Story of this novel begins on the deck of 'Nellie.' Marlow tells others that Britain, now civilized was a dark country. Civilized Romans invaded & conquered Britain many centuries ago. Marlow got appointment as a captain of the steamship & his mission was to sail to the inner station of the company in the Congo basement & to bring back ailing Kurtz to company's office. After his physical & mental checkup, he signed the contract & got appointment. He traveled by a French steamer to Congo & took charge of a steamboat. As the journey began, he saw many shocking things & witnessed horrifying conditions of the black natives. Then he started his journey to the outer station of the ivory trading company. Marlow's observations, experiences & exploration of the Congo basement are presented through the three sections of the novel. They present his visit to the outer, central & inner station.

Opening section presents Marlow as a narrator of the story, He narrates about colonization of Britain by Romans. In the same manner whites colonized the powerless, helpless black Africans. **One's power is other's weakness** This principle was followed everywhere. To Marlow, colonization is nothing but robbery with violence, murder on large scale & total darkness for the colonized. Marlow told them that he visited a dark place-Africa, Congo basement. He described the great Congo river as like an immense snake uncoiled with it's head in the sea & body covered a vast country & lost in the depths of lands. After laborious journey, Marlow reached the outer station of the ivory trading company. He saw machinery lying useless in thick grass. Some men busy in rock with gunpowder. It was useless effort. He also saw black native men, each with iron collar round his neck linked by chains. They were treated like beasts & not as human beings. Marlow

thought that he entered the gloomy circle. He saw a skeleton that is starving small black boy with white cotton round his neck. He saw black shapes lying on the ground dying slowly due to starvation & disease. All this shows malnutrition, starvation, exploitation, colonization & above all-**Dehumanization**. At this station Marlow met company's accountant – a flawlessly & neatly dressed white man who maintained accounts in perfect order. It is contrasted to the total darkness.

After this, Marlow reached the central station. He met the manager who had no intelligence & manners. He told Marlow about company's motives. Marlow saw a painting of blind folded woman carrying a torch. It was painted by Mr. Kurtz. He was the member of the '**new gang of Virtue.**' It is said that the whites like Kurtz entered the heart of the darkness that is Congo basement to civilize the black natives but actually they became the part of that society & turned themselves as members of uncivilized society. All this shows Conrad's perfect use of setting that is Darkness. It is presented by using words like- red, mournful, brooding, hateetc. It shows philosophy of attack of the conquerors – by right or might .It is the first step of Dehumanization. Through this novel Conrad presents the whites as colonizers who were looting the treasures of Congo by carrying ivory to the other European countries. To Kurtz such station should be centre for trade. Also, for humanizing, improving people. But actual happenings in the novel present total dehumanization of the black natives. Marlow's visit & stay at central station shows manager's rivalry against Kurtz & his innate cruelty against the black. These blacks showed more restraint & self control than the whites.

At last Marlow reached to the inner station established by the ivory trading company. Third section of the novel presents Marlow's visit to this station. Here, he tries to complete his mission. He had to face many difficulties in reaching to this station. He saw Kurtz was ailing & was on the death bed. Black natives were opposing Marlow. They supposed Kurtz as the image of God. They attacked Marlow's crew. At last Kurtz died with the last words on his lips, 'Horror! Horror!' His dead body was buried in muddy hole. It shows dehumanization. A descent burial was denied for him. He was a white man, gathered much ivory (white) but, at last buried in the muddy hole. All this shows deteriorating human standards. Kurtz's last words show the real truth & nature of human life in that total

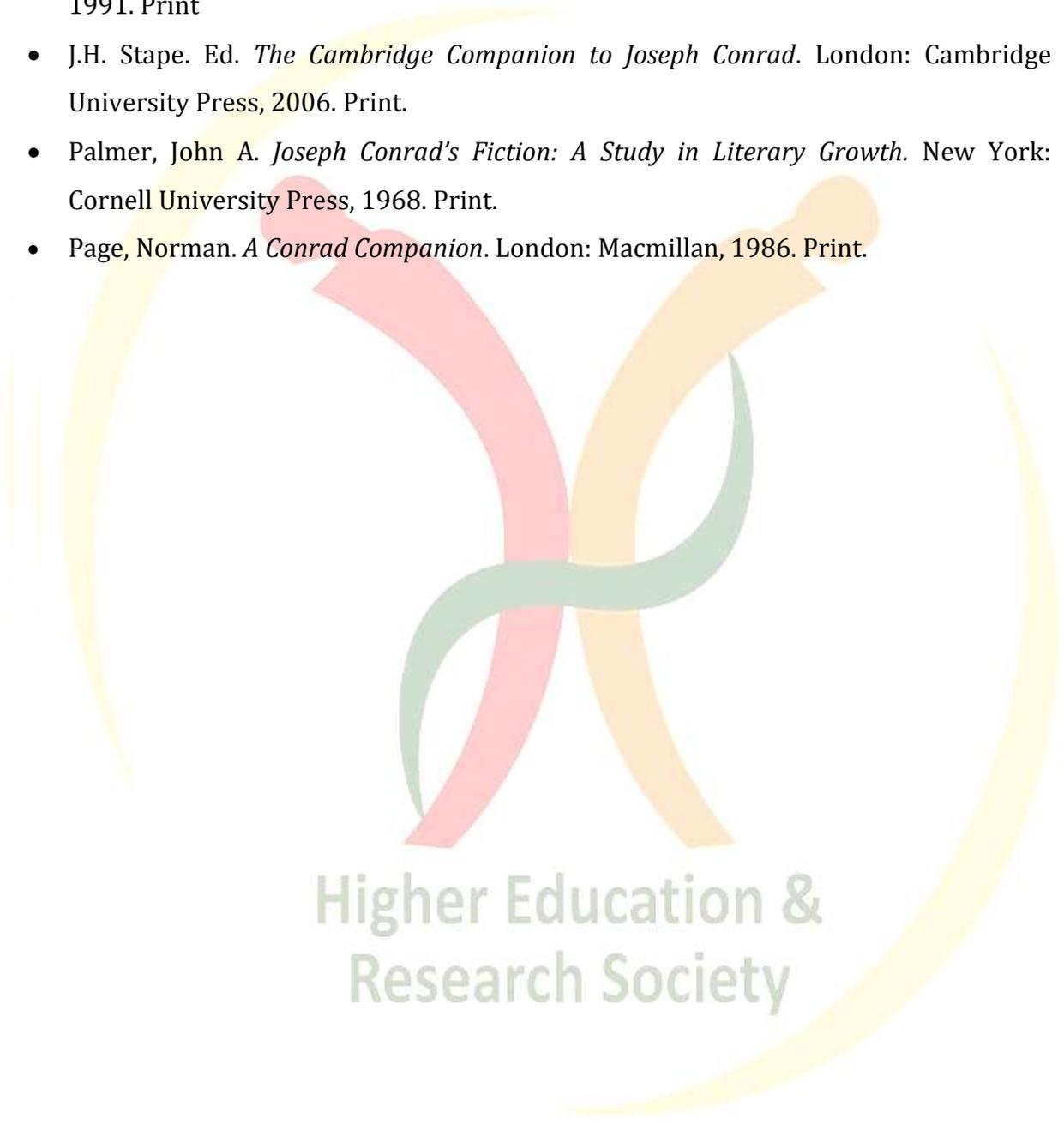
darkness it shows total Dehumanization- What man has done to man. End of the novel presents merciless beating of the blacks, their poor living conditions, starvation, chaining & hard work, their exploitation by the whitesetc. Manager has rightly said to Marlow, **'The white ivory that matters and not the lives of the black natives.'** It shows total dehumanization.

Dehumanization of the black natives can be seen through their- colonization, starvation, hard work, slavery, exploitation.....etc. Conrad reflected it by making use of characters, their actions, dialogues & things as symbols. Kurtz's character is much symbolic. It clearly shows how uncivilized society affects lives of people. He was a man of 'Universal Genius.' He entered the Dark Continent to civilize the black natives. But, instead of civilizing them, he himself almost became a savage. Novel presents that he was degenerated from civilized to uncivilized, from cultured to uncultured (savage) and at last traveled from light to the total darkness. It is also Dehumanization.

Manager at the central station & accountant at the outer station represent typical white civilization - practical, selfish, materialistic & above all their exploiting, colonizing & dehumanizing nature is presented. Always they maintained difference between white & black. Evil in that Dark Continent had centered in the form of white trading agents. It shows that not the black but the white symbolizes the evil. Conrad through this novel shows that cultured are not cultured but, uncivilized present culture. What Conrad did was to find out & to throw light on the evil hidden the human mind. Exploration of the evil is at centre of this novel. Marlow refers to the city of Brussels as, 'White Sepulcher'- it means a place outwardly pleasant but inwardly corrupt & evil. Evil imperialism & colonial exploitation of the ignorant natives by the whites- this central idea is used to show Dehumanization of the black natives. Along with his main thread, Conrad uses other symbols. The two black knitting women showed Marlow Company's office. This symbolizes that they were guiding Marlow to the doors of darkness, doors of evil. Ivory the white colour shows greed, selfishness of the white people. Silence, thickness of woods shows mystery, horror & darkness. It means that Conrad used darkness as setting to show Dehumanization of the black natives.

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