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Heart of Darkness is a famous novel written by Joseph Conrad and published in 1899.

The story is about a sailor named Charles Marlow who travels to Central Africa on a river journey to meet a mysterious ivory trader called Kurtz.

Through this journey, Conrad shows the cruelty of colonialism, the dark side of human nature, and the moral corruption hidden inside civilized society.

Plot Summary

The story begins on a ship on the River Thames in England. Marlow tells his past experience to other sailors.

He had worked for a Belgian trading company and was sent to Africa to captain a steamboat on the Congo River.

During his journey:

He sees violence, slavery, and suffering caused by European colonizers.

He hears about Kurtz, an agent who collects huge amounts of ivory and is respected like a god by local people.

As Marlow travels deeper into the jungle, he realizes that Kurtz has become morally corrupt and mad because of unlimited power and isolation.

When Marlow finally meets Kurtz, Kurtz is very ill and near death.

Before dying, Kurtz speaks his famous last words:

“The horror! The horror!”

These words show his realization of the evil inside himself and human civilization.

After Kurtz's death, Marlow returns to Europe and meets Kurtz's fiancée, but he lies to her by saying Kurtz's last word was her name, showing society's tendency to hide the truth.

## Major Themes

### 1. Darkness in Human Nature

The "darkness" in the title does not only mean the African jungle.

It represents the evil, greed, and violence inside human beings.

Kurtz becomes a symbol of how civilization can easily turn into savagery.

### 2. Criticism of Colonialism

Conrad strongly criticizes European imperialism in Africa.

Instead of bringing civilization, colonizers bring:

exploitation

slavery

cruelty

greed for ivory

The novel shows colonialism as inhuman and destructive.

### 3. Civilization vs. Savagery

The story questions the idea that Europeans are civilized and Africans are savage.

Kurtz, a "civilized" European, becomes more brutal than anyone else.

This suggests that civilization is only a thin mask.

### 4. Isolation and Madness

Kurtz lives alone in the jungle with unlimited power.

Isolation removes social rules and leads him to madness and moral collapse.