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**RESEARCH PAPER****Sovereigns of the Primitive: The Rise and Fall of Kurtz and Jack**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the thematic parallels between Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*, and Jack from *Lord of the Flies* focusing on their descent from civilization to savagery. Both characters, in spite of their different social backgrounds, ages, and circumstances, expose the fragility and inherent vulnerability of civilization when individuals are kept in isolation, and removed from the societal norms, mores, and other social structures that sustain harmony and order in human society. Through this comparative analysis, the study explores the inherent forces that prompt their moral degradation, highlighting the broader themes of human nature and psyche, the debasing impact of unrestrained power, and the ultimate collapse of civilization. The study highlights the similar routes of both characters, illustrating how absolute power and lack of external checks contribute to their moral degradation. The findings suggest the significance of further scrutinizing these forces to better understand the dynamics of morality and power in isolated environments.

**KEYWORDS** Civilization, Comparative Analysis, Human Nature, Isolation, Moral Degradation, Power, Savagery

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**Introduction**

Literature has been a common mode of wandering through the perplexing folds of human nature since long. In this regard, the fine line separating civilization from barbarism particularly interests the literary scholars. This thematic examination can be witnessed in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Both novels dig into the dark recesses of human nature. Through the characters of Kurtz and Jack they demonstrate that isolation from society, and the allure of unchecked freedom can strip a man of the trappings of civilization. This shows the seeds of savagery lying within man's nature. Through their adventures in their respective landscapes and their particular environments, the novels demonstrate that, when isolated, man naturally loses control. He sheds the societal limitations and the trappings of civilization, which reveals the fundamental savagery underlying the mask of sociability and civilization. Through their stories, these novels give an ugly and bitter account of man's capabilities for moral degeneration when liberated from societal restrictions with unchecked power at their disposal.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1899, delves into the issue of civilization in contrast to savagery, using framework of European colonial oppression in Africa. The novel is skillfully situated in the context of late 19th century, when the power of imperialism was at its zenith. It recounts the tale of Charles Marlow's Congo expedition who is a steamboat captain. Marlow travels up the Congo River to find the legendary Kurtz, the celebrated ivory trader in the interior who has secured the status of a mythical figure among the colonial agents. Once an idealist and promising professional, Kurtz has fallen into madness, who now rules over the African natives ruthlessly inflicting sickening

brutalities. He is reported to have sold his soul to the devil and his “nerves went wrong and caused him preside over certain midnight dances with unspeakable rites...offered up to him (Conrad, 2006).” Kurtz has assumed the status of a demi-god, and the tribal chiefs “would crawl.... when approaching Mr. Kurtz (Conrad, 2006)” with reverence and fear.

Kurtz’s descent into inhumane persona is emblematic of the sinister effects of social isolation and unchecked power. Introduced as a model of European refinement, Kurtz, gradually but inevitably, collapses morally and ethically. His unrestrained authority, and unbridled freedom from legal and moral constraints in the Dark Continent consume him completely, giving no way back towards the civilized life where one can safely walk “delicately between the butcher and the policeman (Conrad, 2006).” He indulges in satisfying his vilest desires which lead him to a complete moral depravity. His oft-quoted words “The horror! The horror!” portray his epiphany of his horrible crime he has committed. This moment of clarity, however, arrives too late to rescue his soul from the hell he has bargained for his soul.

*Heart of Darkness* is often taken as an account of Europe’s colonization of the world, a system that rationalized its occupation of Africa under the mask of “civilizing” the “savage” world. Conrad unveils the hypocrisy and falseness of this civilizing mission, highlighting the real savagery lying in the hearts of the colonizers rather than in the African natives or its wild landscape. Conrad’s depiction of Kurtz’s ruthless barbarism and his devil like rule in the Congo’s interior is a direct condemnation of the colonial project and civilizing mission of Europe. It exposes how absolute authority and the ethical laxity it engenders can result in the overwhelming erosion of civilization and refinement.

Similarly, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), has the Cold War as its backdrop – an age of global hostilities and the threat of impending nuclear war which could lead humanity to complete annihilation. Golding was a British novelist and schoolteacher, who underwent severe sufferings during the World War II. He gained a firsthand experience of the horrible human conflict and ruthless killings. His *Lord of the Flies*, which opens with a bunch of British school boys marooned on a deserted island, has allegorical connotations. It alludes to the innate desire and capacity for evil, that lurks in human mind no matter what is the age, or background of the individual. Initially, all the boys try to establish peace, order, and discipline owing to their school and societal learning. They attempt to select a leader and make rules to abide by. However, under the negative impact of extreme freedom and absence of law, they give in to violence which gives birth to chaos in their little society on that remote island. The isolated nature of the island erodes the group’s sense of society, thus leading to savage and barbaric social conditions. Jack Merridew, one of the older boys, represents this descent into barbarity and chaos most distinctly. Being the head of the well-organized and self-controlled choir group in the beginning, Jack gradually loses his disciplined ways, and falls prey to the vicious allurements of power, authority, and control. He thus becomes the leader of a group of savage boys who Golding calls the “the tribe of painted savages (Golding, 2001).” In his new persona of an untamed and ruthless leader, Jack internalizes the psychic energies for tyranny and violence to assert his control.

Jack’s transformation is a significant component of Golding’s narrative, which serves as a microcosm of the novel’s larger theme: the vulnerability of civilization. In the beginning of the story, Jack’s hesitation to kill a pig portrays his internal fight with the remnants of his civilized upbringing. However, the boys’ self-discipline and sense of civilization gradually but steadily wanes. The passage of time and the effects of new and chaotic environment weakens his connections to his former ways of life. This has almost devilish impact on Jack, and thus his bloodlust grows. He eventually sheds his reluctance to kill the pig – and later on a human. This act of killing the pig, and the symbolic offering

of its head to the “beast,” so called by the boys, marks his full-fledged stride into the realm of savagery and barbarism. Apparently naïve and trivial in the context of the boys’ maturity, this piece of violence is a defining moment; it is specially a turning point for Jack in terms of his initiation into the evil world of savagery. Apart from Jack, it also proves to be an omen of the future atrocities and slaughters that are to come too soon, including the murders of the two innocent boys Simon and Piggy.

The societal collapse witnessed in *Lord of the Flies*, is not something imaginary and abstract; it rather reflects the anxieties and apprehensions of the real world about the fragility of civilization, and the vulnerability of social order in the face of horrible chaos. It shows how easy it is for the order to give way to chaos when there is no external controlling power. Golding’s description of the boys’ fall into savagery and barbarism actually reflects his disillusionment with, and pessimism about, human nature which was a direct result of the devastations he witnessed during the World Wars. By showing how quickly the veneer of refinement and civilization can collapse, Golding advocates that man’s inherent darkness is never far from surface, a motif that resonates with the readers today. The novel’s enduring relevance since its publication makes it a significance and seminal work on the societal collapse in the face of evil unleashed.

Although Kurtz and Jack have different settings and circumstances, one can see some thematic parallels between the two. Both of them have refined and civilized context and personalities in their background. Kurtz is a promising and idealistic European, who pursues the sublime mission of enlightening the Dark Africa. Similarly, Jack is a refined schoolboy with better training and a clear sense of what is right or wrong. However, under the adverse and corrupt influence of social isolation and unrestrained power, they undergo drastic changes in their behaviour and personalities. The allurements of unquestioned authority and primitive instincts in that rules-free environment works as a catalyst for Jack’s descent into savagery. Likewise, the seductive invitation of freedom, the intoxicating appeal of power in the African wilderness, and the ultimate futility of his ideals fuel Kurtz’s moral decay.

The environment befalling these two characters play a vital role in their behavioural and psychological transformation. The African wilderness in *Heart of Darkness* is portrayed as an evil and dark place where there is no or very thin line between the realms of savagery and civilization. Similarly, the uninhibited island in *Lord of the Flies* is shown as a microcosm of a chaotic world with no rules to maintain the social order. This brings about the ultimate transition of Jack and his followers to barbarism and savagery. The geographical conditions, their sinister and corrupt allurements of power and license, and the absence of societal rules leading to inhuman behaviour, echo the chaotic potential of man.

Both *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies* have exercised a permanent impression on literature since their publication. Critics and literary scholars frequently discuss these novels for their profound and psychological insights into the fragility of civilization as well as the complex human nature. Kurtz and Jack, as central figures in these novels, personify the dark and evil potentials that lurk in man’s psyche, and which jump out when they find favourable conditions, a subject that retains its relevance in the modern world. Their actions and fates are cautionary tales warning us about the risks of unrestrained authority. They demonstrate the greater possibility of, and the extreme ease with which the layer of civilization can be stripped away for the evil aspect of savage man to be visible.

This paper conducts a comparative literary analysis of Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness* and Jack from *Lord of the Flies*. It focuses on the thematic and psychological parallels in their

moral decay. It analyzes how factors such as isolation, the collapse of societal norms and the seduction of power, bring about their transformation. By exploring these parallel journeys into darkness, the present analyzes analyze the broader themes of savagery, civilization, and the human condition as depicted by Conrad and Golding. It supports the analysis with close textual reading considering the texts' cultural and historical settings. The paper provides learned insights into and a deeper comprehension of the authors' take on the fragile boundary wall separating chaos from order, along with their commentary on existential realities of human nature.

### Literature Review

The themes of civilization and savagery in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies* have remained the topic for wide-ranging critical analyses. Scholars have examined the sociological, psychological, and historical implications of these novels. This section of the paper gives an overview of the critical responses these novels have evoked, with attention to their examination of man's inherent darkness, moral degeneration, and vulnerability of the veneer of civilization, when there are no constraints of law or society. This paper discusses the broader implications of these themes, in the context of the legacy of imperialism and post-war worries and anxieties.

### *Heart of Darkness* and the Critique of Imperialism

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1899, is an influential work with a longer lineage of critical opinions. Scholars have given a particular attention to the imperialist themes and their engendered moral decline. Set in the Congo when European colonialism was at its peak, the novel gives an account of Marlow's perilous voyage. As a captain of a steamboat, Marlow travels to the Dark Africa to rescue Kurtz, who has become a legendary figure among the colonizers due to his massive success as an ivory hunter who collects "more ivory than all the other agents together (Conrad, 2006)." Once a promising man of sublime ideals, Kurtz has become a tyrant who treats the African natives with iron hand, inflicting ruthless pain and unspeakable brutality to achieve his objectives. For him, ivory has become a fetish for which he can cross the horizon of humanity and civilization.

The critical debate about *Heart of Darkness* mostly focuses on the novel's critique of imperialist and colonialist system. They particularly deliberate its portrayal of the psychological and moral corruption of colonialism. Achebe (1977), in his "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" critiques Conrad's awkward representation of Africa and African natives in the novel. Achebe believes that such a biased portrayal only perpetuates the stereotypes of racism which degrades the Africans to the level of dehumanization. Achebe asserts that Conrad actually reinforces the colonial ideology in an attempt to justify European exploitation of Africa by depicting the African landscape as a "place of darkness." It is due to such feelings evoked by the dehumanization of Africans in the novel that confirms Conrad "a bloody racist (Achebe,1977)." This vehement and offensive statement divides the critics into two distinct groups, whom, for the sake of convenience, I call the pro-Conrad and anti-Conrad groups. The pro-Conrad critics defend his work calling it a critique of imperialism, while the anti-Conrad ones contend that the novel defends and reinforces racism which was prevalent at that time.

Numerous critics, despite the great controversy about Conrad's intentions in *Heart of Darkness*, hold the opinion that the novel openly and vehemently condemns the corrupt colonial enterprise of Europe. Edward Said in his *Culture and imperialism* (1994) analyses the novel in terms of exposing the exploitation of imperialism. He asserts that Kurtz symbolizes the moral degradation and ethical decay which is a corollary of imperialism

and its exploitative measures. A proverbial saying goes that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Accordingly, Kurtz enjoys absolute freedom and power in African jungle, which brings about his ultimate descent to madness and heartless brutality. This exposes the true nature of Europe's civilizing mission stripping it of its refined and humanistic facade. Said suggests that Conrad's description of the fall of Kurtz helps to expose the hypocrisy and hubris of colonialism. On the surface level, colonialism cashed on the false narrative of bringing "civilization" to the "savage" world, while deep down the surface, it was a total exploitative endeavour which perpetuated violence and exploitation of the weaker countries.

Critics have extensively interpreted and discussed Kurtz's infamous last words, "The horror! The horror!" owing to their unique significance in the scheme of the tale. For Watt (1980), these words of confession sum up Kurtz's recognition of the abyss of his fall. It is the proverbial moment of clarity for Kurtz which, as always, comes too late to rescue him from the horrible retribution for his nasty actions. For Watt, these final utterances of Kurtz echo the central theme of the darkness inherent in man's psyche. This darkness pops to the surface when Kurtz is isolated from civilization where he acquires absolute power and license to kill in the colonial setup in the Congo. This assertion gets further strength when Conrad uses the journey up the Congo River as a metaphor for journey into the deepest darkness of the human soul, which Khan (2021) refer to as "an odyssey into the Self." Both, the darkest recesses of man's soul and the interior of Africa, are regions where the boundaries between barbarism and civilization get blurred if not entirely dissolved.

Besides, *Heart of Darkness* has also evoked critical debates for its relevance to the psychological reading. A promising and excellent ivory trader, Kurtz transforms into a horrific tyrant and a symbol of dread. This transition from normality to madness has been analyzed in terms of the erosive impact of unchecked power with absolute freedom in the wild landscape of African jungle. "In the wilderness Kurtz's integrity collapses; only the extremes of appetite and intellect, of savagery and idealism survive (Lynn, 22)." He further argues that Kurtz's fall into madness is the direct upshot of his disconnect with the ethical and moral restraints of European refinement. With the absence of policeman Kurtz feels freedom to act according to his instincts to satisfy his basest desires. Lynn's analysis reflects that the novel lashes out at imperialism and condemns its corrupt practices. Additionally, it also suggests that the novel is a journey into the man's soul which is replete with potential for evil when removed from the constraints of societal norms.

Kabbani (1988) further explores the theme of isolation in *Heart of Darkness*. She says that the African jungle is a space which has ample power to peel off the fake and thin veneer of civilization. She further contents that the African wilderness essentially fuels Kurtz's transition into madness by supplying conditions which are apt for the repressed primitive impulses and inherent darkness to bounce back. This explication is in line with the broader theme of the novel, which asserts that the latent ingredients of savagery lurk in man's psyche. These latent ingredients lie dormant until the right conditions of chaos and licentiousness are found. Kabbani's study depicts the vital role of social environment when it comes to shaping human behaviour, a subject *Lord of the Flies* also explores parallel to *Heart of Darkness*.

The skillful use of symbolism, and the layered narrative structure of *Heart of Darkness* is also frequently discussed in the scholarly discourse surrounding it. Miller (1985) contends that Conrad skillfully uses the framing device in the novel with Marlow narrating his inconsistent story to his four listeners aboard the ship. This framing device with abrupt and unannounced change of narrators is a clever technique which helps to detach the reader as well as the author from the events of the story. This, by extension,

adds vagueness and moral ambiguity to the narrative (Miller, 1985). Miller argues that the Conrad's narrative technique echoes the intricacy of the novel's themes making the story a difficult read. Symbolism in the novel, specifically the imagery of light and darkness, further enhances the novel's grapple with the moral ambiguity of colonialism (Miller, 1985). The stark contrast between the "light" of civilized Europe and the "darkness" of savage Africa is consistently questioned. This calling to question of the contrast between the two suggests that the true darkness does not lie in the external world of civilized and uncivilized. It is rather a universal phenomenon which lies within the man's soul regardless of colour, cast, and creed.

### ***Lord of the Flies* and the Collapse of Civilization**

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is acclaimed as an authoritative study of man's darkness within. Published in 1954, the novel reflects the apprehensions of the post-war period, an era of confusion with the world community struggling for survival against the aftershocks of World War II, and the impending Cold War. With this perspective, *Lord of the Flies* offers a powerful commentary on how susceptible civilization is in the face of decaying forces, and how easy it is to strip away the cloak of civilization. Golding's own experiences as a naval officer during World War II severely impacted his opinion of human nature. One can see this outlook of Golding when he portrays the otherwise refined boys' descent into savagery, particularly that of Jack Merridew.

There is a long list of critics debating the psychological implications of *Lord of the Flies*, mainly related to Jack Merridew. According to Kermode (2000) Jack's transition, from a self-controlled choirboy to a ruthless and savage leader, mirrors a crucial critique on the fragile nature of societal norms. Kermode posits that Golding wants to assert that the constraints of social order are not strong and durable. They can easily give in to the corrosive power of isolation, which offers favourable conditions for the primal instinct to flourish (Kermode, 2000). Golding's own commentary on the novel supports this view when he said that the novel was an attempt to "trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature" (qtd. in Epstein 288). Golding's naval services in World War II took him to believe that "the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation (qtd. in Reiff 29)."

Further in-depth investigation of Jack's personality demonstrates the psychological factors that lead to savagery and relentless barbarism. Here Freud's theory of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* befittingly describe the insane and chaotic conduct of the boys marooned on the deserted island. Among these boys, Jack signifies the unrestrained *id* which stands for the primitive and instinctual drives that lurk deep down the mask of refined behaviour. Slowly and gradually, Jack's callous *id* gets the better of him. In other words, his *id* eclipses the refined *superego*, which is represented by the societal codes of ethics and morality, and which the boys initially possess and try to maintain. In Freudian context, Golding is portraying a tug of war between the forces of the primitive self and those of the civilized self. This theme of the tension between the primitive and civilized selves makes *Lord of the Flies* resonate with the power dynamics in the post-war setting of the novel's publication.

Sociological readings of *Lord of the Flies* also depict of the collapse of social order. The boys' initial effort to establish order on the island through some agreed upon rules "affirms the common desire for an orderly society (Bloom, 1998)." However, with the passage of time, these much-desired social structures collapse, and the thus far innocent boys regress to a more primitive instinctual state. Accordingly, they form their distinct tribes and engage in vicious and violent rituals. Bloom (1998) argues that this reversion to primitive instincts echoes Golding's loss of faith in the stability of human nature. This

disillusionment of Golding reflects the instability of social constructs and civilized environment when faced with conditions which are not favourable and where there is an open invitation from the instincts. The novel's portrayal of the boys' transition into savagery and barbarism serves as a warning about the risks of counting too much on social norms to maintain order against the conducive conditions for chaos.

Another significant aspect of the novel *Lord of the Flies* is its representation of the loss of innocence and a plunge into violence. Babb (1970) emphasizes the symbolic significance of the conch shell, which is symbolic of both order and authority. It, however, gradually loses its power as the boys make a psychological transition from civilization to savagery. The breaking of the conch, followed by the brutal and heartless killing of Piggy, serves as the last nail in the coffin of civilization on the island. Chaotic disorder has a complete control of the island and its inhabitant boys. This signifies the complete defeat of moral integrity and rational thinking against the monstrous powers of primal instincts and overwhelming chaos. Babb claims that this is the proverbial moment which starts a movement in the novel. It gives the central theme of the inherent darkness within man which patiently waits for the weakening or removal of societal limitations so it can emerge.

Besides these sociological and psychological analyses, *Lord of the Flies* has been examined from a historical perspective, in the context of the ensuing Cold War after the devastating World II. The novel portrays the existential anxieties and fears of the post-war epoch, with the world "facing the greatest nuclear annihilation threats (Early & Asal, V., 2014)." The island, thus, becomes a miniature sample of the world, where the boys practically plunge into the ocean of violence. This sad reality serves as a metaphor for the inevitable downfall of civilization on universal scale. The vague and ambiguous ending of the novel further strengthens this argument as the boys on that "barren emotional landscape (Singh, 1997)" of the uninhabited island get rescued with the help of a naval office. The presence of the naval officer symbolizes the continuation of war in the form of the Cold War after the World War II has ended.

Generally, the critical responses to *Lord of the Flies* reflect the inherent darkness within humanity as well as the fragility and weakness of civilization. Golding uses the character of Jack as a tool to show that the societal structures are weak and unreliable. They cannot withstand the powers of chaos which easily and unconsciously lead to the triumph of primal instincts, and moral degradation. This theme of evil eclipsing humanity is still relevant to the readers of today, specifically, in the backdrop of current world scenario of vested interests, international conflicts for global hegemony, and the innate tendencies for the societal collapse.

### **Comparative Analyses of *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies***

Comparative analyses of *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies* often emphasize their commonalities in terms of the profound theme of man's inherent darkness that these novels dwell upon. Both novels tell of how man succumbs to moral deterioration and chaos when set free from the societal constraints. Bloom (1998) argues that both Kurtz and Jack give an eye-opening caution, through their characters and their ultimate disaster. They warn the readers of the threats of unrestrained power demonstrating how easy it is for the civilization to lose its anchor and give way to savagery and barbarism. Bloom (1998) further contends that, though in different time and place with dissimilar contexts, the two novels pinpoint the weakness of the ideals of civilization alike with equal indignation towards the colonial projects. In *Heart of the Darkness* Kurtz's removal from the European society fuels his descent into madness. Similarly, in *Lord of the Flies*, it is the absence of parental as well as societal control that facilitates the boys' descent into savagery. This absence of external

control in both novels allows the latent darkness and repressed instincts to emerge with greater force. Both novels, thus, expose the vulnerability of civilization as a construct. Hence, it cannot hold to its center when societal constraints are removed. This fragility makes it easy for the forces of chaos and disorder to dismantle it.

The two novels, in addition to their thematic parallels, also possess a common concern with the adverse psychological effects of unchecked power. Both, Kurtz and Jack, begin as refined individuals from the civilized world of societal limitations. Put into a world of isolation, they gradually become figures of authority who ultimately yield to their primordial desires in the lawless environment. Hence, the two characters are epithets of the decaying effects of power. Both novels navigate this theme by depicting the personalities and fates of Kurtz and Jack exposed through their interactions with fellow individuals in their respective environments full of oddities and unpredictability.

The entire critical discourse surrounding *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies* reflects their continued relevance in examining dark side of man's nature. Through probing into the historical, sociological, and psychological settings of the novels, critics have explored the themes of savagery, fragility of civilization, and moral corruption. This literature review provides a footing so as to analyze the characters of Kurtz and Jack, and demonstrates how and why these two enigmatic characters metaphorically represent the instability of civilization and the darkness inherent in man's nature.

## Material and Methods

This paper compares the characters of Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness* and Jack from *Lord of the Flies*. In the beginning, both characters possess and exhibit traits of civility and refinement, but gradually, under the evil impact of isolation and lack of external control, turn savage. The present study closely follows their developmental journey from civility to savagery through a close reading of important parts of both novels to explore how these transformations occur. It also considers the historical and cultural contexts, in which the authors wrote these novels, to look at their take on civilization and man's nature. The analysis focuses on three comparative and inter-related themes of how being alone corrupts them, how absolute authority impacts them, and how their natural personality traits contribute to their fall. It investigates how these factors bring about their moral collapse, and how each author depicts these changes. Through a close textual analysis, the paper looks at the symbols, and the recurrent themes in the two novels to comprehend how Kurtz and Jack symbolize man's inherent darkness.

## Discussion

### Kurtz's Moral Corruption

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad dwells upon Kurtz's transformation, calling it a descent into the depths of man's ethical and moral decadence. Kurtz begins his career as a man of promising qualities with huge potential for excellence. He commands respect and admiration due to his eloquence and intelligence. The colonial administration regard him as a sublime figure among the "bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" of civilization (Conrad, 2006). He is celebrated as a man who can actually enlighten the "dark" Africa and its natives. However, Marlow tells a totally different story against the powerful but fake narrative built by the colonial enterprise. During his travel to the African interior down to the Congo, he finds out the truth of Kurtz as well as that of civilizing mission. Once known as the epitome of European ideals, Kurtz has now become a despotic ruler using tyranny and violence against the local population.

Kurtz's moral decline is the direct outcome of his isolation in the jungle with no traces of civilized society of Europe there. Kurtz indulges, due to absence of checks of civilization, in the vilest and most heinous crimes to satisfy his darkest desires of primitive instincts. He exploits the natives to accumulate wealth and gain power. He exercises brutality and "lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts (Conrad, 2006)." Marlow can fathom Kurtz's moral collapse and his extreme brutality when he discovers that the "round knobs" on the stakes, he sees from a far around Kurtz's compound, are actually human "heads" (Conrad, 2006).

Kurtz's final utterances, "The horror! The horror!" echo his final recognition of the damnation to which he has opted to plunge. These words are symbolic of epiphany, when Kurtz finds out how monstrous is his moral decline. This realization, however, comes too late. His eyes open to his satanic actions at a time when he is beyond redemption – the last moment of his life when the devil is there to claim Kurtz's soul as his profit of the bargain. His physical death may be the death of an individual, but metaphorically, it symbolizes the ultimate fiasco of colonialism and its ugly claim of bringing "light" to the "dark" Africa.

Conrad uses Kurtz to expose the disparaging nature of imperialism and colonialism. Kurtz's transition into savagery and brutality does not reflect a personal tragedy alone; it rather offers an open disapproval of the entire colonial project, which, under the mask of civilization, dehumanizes not only the colonized but also the colonizer. Kurtz's story is a powerful reminder of the evil consequences of unbridled control as well as the risks of isolation of man from the society.

### **Jack's Descent into Savagery**

In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding explores the inner recesses of man's nature through the personality transformation of Jack. Initially a choir leader, Jack knows and respects authority. He possesses a clear sense of order, and can lead the choirboys with proper discipline. However, the refined aspect of Jack's character begins to deteriorate when he, along with other boys, is marooned on a lonely island where there is no adult supervision. The first clear indication of this deterioration is discernible when they come across "a piglet caught in a curtain of creepers (Golding, 2001)" whom he decides to kill. However, Jack, still possessing some vague impressions of his early refinement and training, hesitates to kill it.

He raised his arm in the air. There came a pause, a hiatus, the pig continued to scream and the creepers to jerk, and the blade continued to flash at the end of a bony arm. The pause was only long enough for them to understand what an enormity the downward stroke would be (Golding, 2001).

This moment indicates the internal struggle between the primitive instincts of his present life on that "uninhabited island with no other people on it (Golding, 2001)" and the norms and values he upheld in his previous civilized life.

As the novel proceeds, Jack becomes more aggressive and brutal. He neglects the moral training he possessed, and the refined manners he grew up with. His final success to kill a pig is a significant step, rather a turning point in his journey towards damnation. Now he completely accepts the dictates of savagery, and establishes a firm grip on the boys as their de facto leader. The killing of the pig is more than just an act of struggle for food and survival; it is symbolic of Jack's outright refutation of the norms and rules of civilized life. The ensuing savage ritual of his offering the pig's head to the imaginary "beast," highlights Jack's complete transition into a life of violence, superstition, and barbarism.

Jack's style of leadership and control drastically turns to despotism and tyranny. Instead of creating mutual respect through democratic consensus, Jack terrifies and intimidates the boys. Instead of earning respect, he imposes his hegemony and control over them. His transition into villainy is noticeable in how he orchestrates Simon's murder at the spur of the moment with no prior planning. After this murder, Jack makes a final dive into the realm of devilish acts disregarding every single "taboo of the old life (Golding 51-52)." Now he completely identifies himself with being a savage leader with no mercy for anybody. Jack's complete embrace of the devil becomes evident when he, with the help of his tribe, hunts Ralph to murder him. This act of Jack underscores the degree of his moral and ethical decline from being a refined and disciplined boy to a hideous devil.

Golding uses Jack's fall into savagery to show the fragility of civilization when the structures that support it are detached. The island becomes a landscape where the boys' dark instincts are allowed to flourish, with complete freedom from the norms and rules of civilization. It is evident from Jack's descent into savagery that societal constraints have no firm footings. They can collapse with ease when faced with the negative forces of disorder and chaos. What Golding wants to convey through this is that all such negative forces are the forces of the primitive instincts which reside in the deeper recesses of man's personality and nature. The novel reflects Golding's pessimism regarding human nature. He suggests that civilization is a weak social construct which loses its center immediately after it confronts isolation and absence of external force in the form of law and/or parental control.

### Comparative Analysis

Although Kurtz and Jack belong to different worlds with dissimilar environmental and historical contexts, both tread identical routs of moral erosion when there is no societal control. Kurtz's destruction in *Heart of Darkness* is more intricate. An idealistic individual in the beginning, who thinks high of European civilization and progress, Kurtz ends up drenched in evil with no chances of redemption. His isolation in the African wilderness and the unchecked power that the continent yielded, fuels his moral and intellectual hubris. Accordingly, he commits the unspeakable violence against the African natives to collect wealth, ivory, power, and allegiance, which unveils the emptiness and the evil darkness of his soul. The too late realization of his villainy expressed in his last utterance of the word "horror" marks his total moral collapse and eternal damnation. In contrast, Jack's transformation in *Lord of the Flies*, exhibits his desire for power which is a corollary of youthful rebellion and defiance. Initially introduced as a choir leader with a respect for authority, Jack makes a quick transition into barbarism and tyranny when set free of societal limitations. The absence of law and external control on the island invites him to gratify his latent desires driven by his dark instinct. These dark instincts, operating from the deepest recess of his nature, lead to complete alliance with the god of savagery symbolized as the "beast" in the novel.

Both, Kurtz and Jack are symbolic of the inherent potential for darkness that exists within all humans. Their stories prove how easy it is, for the civilization and moral values, to crumble under the assault of chaotic isolation and unchecked authority. Through the parallel journeys of Kurtz and Jack to the realm of damnation and madness, Conrad and Golding vehemently criticize the human condition. In their own particular style, the authors suggest that there reside the elements of and instinctual desires for barbarism beneath the thin veneer of civilization. This savagery and instincts have monstrous nature which can appear in the seemingly most developed and civilized man.

Marlow's account of Kurtz's tale serves as a caution against the risks of destructive impacts of removal of social constraints, and unquestioned authority with no fear of

accountability. Kurtz comes to Africa with his ideals of “humanizing, improving, instructing (Conrad, 2006).” However, he fails to pursue his ideals and falls prey to the force of freedom in the jungle. His dark impulses take over him and he indulges in using “unsound method (Conrad, 2006)” of savagery to fulfill the instinctual demands of the darkness within. Thus, Kurtz falls to moral abyss due to his detachment from European society, and also due to the complete absence of accountability for the wrongs. Kurtz’s story demonstrates how much societal control is important to maintain moral order and to block the evils of isolation.

Jack’s transformation, on the other hand, illustrates the evil influences of lack of social structure and external supervision on mind of adolescents. His primitive instincts are allowed to emerge in the favourable environment which is the direct outcome of the absence of parental control. His initial hesitation to stab the pig with his raised spear echoes the presence of the remnants of his refined upbringing in European society. However, he gradually accepts the dictates of violence feeling comfortable with the barbarism he commits. Further events and developments in *Lord of the Flies* and the character transformation of Jack reflect how the behaviour of those around the adolescents in unrestrained conditions can affect their behaviour.

Both Kurtz and Jack, also offer a critical examination of their respective societies they belong to. Kurtz’s fate gives a critique of Europe’s colonialist regime and its atrocities under the mask of bringing “light” to the “dark” and “savage” regions of the world. This exploitative colonial project actually dehumanized both the colonized and the colonizer simultaneously. Kurtz’s savagery and ultimate damnation reflect that the true “darkness” lies not in African landscape but in the hearts of enlightened European colonizers. Using Kurtz’s character and fate Conrad exposes the damaging impact of unrestrained power for exploitation, and challenges the moral validity of colonial project. Jack’s transition into violence, meanwhile, mirrors the flaws and shortcomings in the process of educating and socializing the youngsters. His character development reflects that parental and academic training is only skin-deep. The civilized behaviour, which the school masters and parents inculcate, can easily collapse when these external factors are removed. Using Jack’s character, Golding questions the validity and efficacy of social norms in curbing the assault of the dark instincts residing in man’s nature.

To sum up, both Kurtz and Jack are symbols of man’s inherent potential for ethical and moral decay. Their stories illustrate the fragility of civilization. The authors dwell upon how easily it can get dismantled when humans are removed from society. Conrad and Golding use the two protagonists’ journeys to destruction to give a mature critique of man’s nature emphasizing the evil residing there. They suggest, through the fall of Kurtz and Jack, that civilization has a weak surface where remnants of savagery and barbarism reside. These ingredients of inner darkness await the perfect time to emerge up to the surface in even the apparently most civilized and refined men.

## Conclusion

*Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies*, through the character development of Kurtz and Jack, show the intricate relationship between savagery and civilization. Both the protagonists go through radical transformations when placed in a wild environment that allows their instincts to come to the surface. Removed from the constraints of the society they know no restraints – ethical, morel, social, and legal – and indulge in unspeakable acts of violence. Kurtz’s complete destruction and his fall into madness is tragic fall form moral and intellectual grace that colonial enterprise and the imperialist Europe. Likewise, Jack’s

journey into barbarism is evident in his complete dive into the ocean of tyranny and violence.

The descent of Kurtz and Jack into violence and savagery, as explored in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies*, offers a significant reflection on today's world society. The breakdown of social structures, in today's volatile world, regardless of their origin in economic inequality, political instability, or technological isolation, may lead to the rise of extremism and the decay of moral values. Individuals and groups, when set free from the legal and ethical restrictions of society, can succumb to violence, greed, and the pursuit of power, much like Kurtz and Jack do. This is manifest in the rise of global conflicts, and authoritarianism, which social media's powerful impact may amplify, and which may and can add to divisive and destructive behaviour among the world community particularly the youth. The novels remind that the stability of civilization is precarious, and requires constant vigilance from all corners of the society to maintain it. They also emphasize the need and significance of ethical leadership to establish accountability and just societal norms of mutual tolerance. This, the novels suggest, is the only solution to curb the power from going unchecked into the hands of men with no restraints.

### **Recommendations**

The research suggests that literary scholars thoroughly analyze the two novels, and look for multiple meanings and messages inherent in the diction of these novels. The two novel offers involved reading on the part of the scholars. The two novels offer a higher potential for analysis form multiple perspectives including psychological, linguistic, and feminist theories.

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