

## **The Main Themes in Heart of Darkness**

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### **ABSTARCT :**

Joseph Conrad wrote the novel the heart of darkness in the year 1899. He started writing this novel with a greatest plot of dominant themes from 1898 and competed the writing in the year 1899 February. This novella was first published by William Blackwood and Sons and released in Edinburgh on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1902 (Dominic Davies (2019)). This novella was rich with dominant themes namely Imperialism, White Man's Burden, Lack of Truth, Colonization, Exploitation, Racial Discrimination, Alienation and

Isolation, Moral Corruption, Violence and Human Greed and Deception. The novel was written to enlighten the effects of Imperialism and Colonialism with the power of freedom and rationalist thought inherited from his Polish parents of Conrad. This novel was a predominant work to reveal the dominant themes raised from his inmost heart against the supremacy and racial discrimination demonstrated by the European emperors against the Asian and African people. This novel has reflected the contemporary political, social and economic conditions of Belgian Congo was witness with x-ray eyes. X-Ray indicates the external appearance as well as internal feelings. Heart of Darkness is the book which demonstrate the colonizers dominated the native Africans in the areas of Belgian Congo (Fothergill, Anthony (2003) PP 85-97).

## المواضيع الرئيسية في رواية قلب الظلام

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### الخلاصة :

كتبت رواية (قلب الظلام) للكاتب جوزيف كونراد عام 1998. كانت بداية هذه الرواية بحبكة مذهلة بالمواضيع المهيمنة آنذاك. وتم نشر رواية قلب الظلام من قبل وليام بلاكوود وابناءه في نوفمبر 1902 وهي غنية بالمواضيع المهمة مثل الامبريالية وعبء الرجل الابيض وغياب الحقيقة والاستعمار والاستغلال والتمييز العنصري والعزلة والوحدة والفساد الاخلاقي والعنف وجشع الانسان والخداع. وكتبت الرواية لتتویر الازهان حول تاثير الامبريالية والاستعمار بقوة الفكر العقلاني والحرية التي ورثها الكاتب عن والديه البولنديين. وكانت هذه الرواية مهيمنة لاطهار المواضيع المهمة الناشئة من صميم قلبه بالضد من التعالي والتمييز العنصري المفروض من قبل السلطات الاوربية ضد الشعوب الافريقية والاسيوية. وعكست هذه الرواية الظروف الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والسياسية للكونغو البلجيكي التي كانت شاهد عيان بمنظار وعيون الاشعة السينية التي تمثل المظاهر الخارجية والمشاعر الداخلية. فرواية (قلب الظلام) تشرح الهيمنة الاستعمارية على شعوب افريقيا الاصليين في بقاع الكونغو البلجيكية.

## **.IMPERIALISM**

The novella *Heart of Darkness* has focused on Imperialism and Colonialism. The two worldly present concepts were prevail in the contemporary world since 15<sup>th</sup> century. In this novella a colony was inhabited and acquired by conquest by the Europeans. The imposition of foreign rule in that colony was established by the Europeans (Fothergill, Anthony (2003) PP 87-99). Establishing the foreign rule used to do by Europeans in the areas of Asia and Africa. The native Africans were suppressed by the Europeans and working like slaves in the areas where the European rule was incorporated. In the contemporary times of Conrad the Imperialism and Colonialism were seen everywhere in the world. That is why the author has focused the insane activities and the peaks of supremacy in ill-treating the native Africans in this novel (Achebe, Chinua. (2001) pp.4-5). Even though the government authorities of Africa has attempted to justify the colonial systems, the power of European emperors have suppressed the retaliation and modifications. The meaning of Colonialism has been changed and modified by the activities of European companies who were doing the establishment of their supremacy. This has been demonstrated in this novel. Actually Europeans started the establishment of

Colonialism from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continued upto 1800 with the first phase. In the second phase of establishment was done from 1800 to the end of Second World War. The impact of Colonialism and Imperialism did lot of damage and exploitation to the countries where the Europeans established their power and supremacy (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp 102-138).

In the novella Heart of Darkness did focused to demonstrate the exploitation of the Europeans in the areas of Africa. This novella demonstrated the sequential establishment of Colonialism and Imperialism in the colonies of Africa with skillful representation of Conrad Ideology and narrative power. The presentation would be with the combination of humor, adventure and reflection of contemporary political situations. This type of writing style has made him to distinguish as one of the greatest writers of English literature (Dominic Davies (2019) pp 3-4).

In the Second World War Great Britain spearheaded European expansion into Asia, Africa and Pacific. The establishment of Imperialism and Colonialism was become the traditional way of their ruling style and invading the countries and took them under their control. In this process they did not take care of the feelings of the native Africans and Asians. The idea of writing this novella was the root cause and main plot for demonstrating the Imperialism and Colonialism in Africa and Asia (Dominic Davies

(2019)). The novel reflected and mirrored the feelings of the native Africans. In this novel Conrad has skilfully depicted the implementation of Colonialism and Imperialism into the colonies of Africa in the name of Ivory Trade. Ivory Trade is the mask and slowly the mask could be revealed and demonstrate the real attitude of Europeans with the execution and establishment of their foreign rule. In this novel the second period of Colonial era was depicted and described with African geographical conditions in the metropolitan territories of Africa. This Imperialism was established on the periphery established with the European interests. In fact the contemporary conditions of the world are influenced largely with the Imperialism and Colonialism by the British Empire. Though Joseph Conrad was residing in the European Countries i.e England he did not feel any fear and criticized the supremacy and ill-treatment under the mask of Imperialism and Colonialism towards the fellow human beings living in the other countries. In the year 1914 the colonialism era was ended in Asia and the Pacific. But the novel was written in the year 1899. The power of this representation of the imperialism has demonstrated largely in the hearts of the people and influenced the people that the activities and supremacy demonstrated under the mask of Imperialism and colonialism was wrong. This was established by Conrad through this writings and literary works.

The slow injection of change in the minds of the people could realized that the policy of Colonialism and Imperialism were wrong. The idea of writing a novel to represent the bad effects of Imperialism and Colonialism were the replication Conrad's daresness (Dominic Davies (2019) pp 4-5).

## WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

Heart of Darkness is the novel which represented the White Man's Burden. White Man's Burden was the responsibility to spread the enlightenment of Christianity in the darkness. The darkness is prevail everywhere where the Christianity is not seen. In this heavenly mission the character of a white man called Mr.Kurtz was engaged to spread the Christianity. The white man's burden is spoiled with the participation of a murdering plan and assassination of native Africans. The white man's heavenly mission was to inculcate the doctrines of Christianity was spoiled and become a white man's burden with the hands associated with the killings of native Africans. This was presented in this novel heart of darkness with sequence of twists with malignity and cruel plans of Europeans to dominate the local and native Africans in the colonies of Africa (Fothergill, Anthony (2003) PP 87-99). The human greed has played a vital role to make the heavenly mission into White Man's Burden. Christianity preaches the good and humanity. The colonialism and

Imperialism was flooding in the nerves of Europeans and while inculcating the heavenly mission the spoiled and corrupted minds of Europeans carried the mission in association with the killings of native pure hearted Africans (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp 321-347).

Conrad has depicted these sequence of the notorious activities of Europeans against the uncivilized and pure hearted native Africans. He named these activities as White Man's Burden. While preaching Christianity the whites might have experienced obstacles. In the process of eliminating the obstacles the supremacy and discriminating nature of Europeans might have participated in the Killings of native Africans (Joseph Conrad (2010) 237-241).

In this novel whites are leading the sophisticated life style with comfortable living. The native Africans were leading a peaceful life with uncivilized life itself. The question of happiness is the concept to compare between the whites and blacks. More over the heavenly mission was need to carry over the blacks. The blacks are quite comfortable with the local Gods and rituals. They are quite happy with what they have. The white man's jealousy, treachery and greed was flown out of the Europeans. At this juncture Conrad described the darker side of the white man's inner feelings and jealousy against the blacks. He depicted the scenes which demonstrates the peak side

of the jealousy reached to assassinate the innocent blacks to prove the Holy mission is inevitable to safeguard the blacks. This incidents demonstrated with natural narration power of Conrad to exemplify the heinous acts of Europeans. These were not factious incidents. These were witness by Joseph Conrad while making journey across the world. He exemplified these incidents with realistic themes to fight against the heinous incidents and humiliations against the Blacks (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp.147-156).

In this novel the theme White man's burden exemplified the holy mission which was corrupted and dissolved with the supremacy and racial discrimination to kill the fellow human beings who were pure hearted. The name of the novella was Heart of Darkness reflects the Darkness of Whites. People wrongly thinks Heart of Darkness means Heart of Blacks which symbolizes darkness. But in this novel the White Man's burden has symbolized the heart of Whites with mere darkness (Singh, B. Frances (1998) pp.2-4). In this novel the author wanted to convey the idea of preaching of Christianity that Exterminate brutes. In this novel the extermination part has been taken into the account to exterminate the blacks who are standing before and not convinced to their preaching. In this novel the saying of Christianity "Exterminate all the brutes!" was presented from the White Man's civilized thinking. White Men are civilized people. They

were always playing civilizing role. The character Mr.Kurtz wants to exterminate all the brutes. Brutes means the evil thoughts and ideology. But what was happened? The innocent blacks were murdered by the Whites for the cause of religion. Mr.Kurtz realized in the story that the meaning of the brutes was the evil thoughts and cruel killing behaviour of whites. Conrad has reflected the thoughts of Kurtz what was the burden of White Man. The burden of White was contaminated heavenly mission of spreading the Christianity to the darker side of the society. But the story depicted the darker activities of the white man. This was presented to the readers in the theme of White man's burden (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp. 98-107)<sup>1</sup>.

Actually Kurtz came to Africa to spread the enlightenment of Christianity to the darker side of society. He himself through that the darker side of the society was prevail in Africa. He dreamt about the heavenly mission how it has to carryout in Africa. But the white men associated with him did unrecoverable sins and damage to the mankind with their killings. The participation was included for Mr.Kurtz also. The consequences and circumstances were created to inevitably kill the obstructions of the Christianity in Africa. The group of White Men in association with Kurtz did the sin and executed the extermination of so called innocent brutes. That was

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Conrad (2010) A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of Heart of Darkness published in 2010 by Penguin Group (USA)

the reason the theme White Man's Burden was created and implanted in the minds of the readers by Joseph Conrad (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp.24-37)<sup>2</sup>.

In this novel Conrad depicted and picturized the Europeans as the greedy monsters under the mask of Christian preachers. The greedy monsters behaviour under the mask of heavenly mission to spread the doctrines of Jesus Christ. The heinous thoughts and rude behaviour with inherited supremacy was demonstrated in this novel very much. The morbid activities of the so called civilized white men were sucking the blood of the backward class and uncivilized people of Africa like leeches. Conrad evidently described the outcome of the white man without realization in doing the blood sucking nature towards the blacks. Finally a white man Kratz realized that the activities contaminated the heavenly mission as the White Man's Burden (Joseph Conrad (2015) pp.14-27)<sup>3</sup>.

### LACK OF TRUTH

Heart of Darkness was the novel which resembled the themes and genre of Quest literature. Hero quest for novelty in his life and passed through a series of typical tests to find an important person (Singh, B. Frances (1998)).

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Conrad (2010) The Secret Agent A Simple Tale second edition published Release Date: December 24, 2010 [eBook #974]

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Conrad (1915) Victory published 1915 available e-book @[www.globalgreybooks.com/victory-ebook.html](http://www.globalgreybooks.com/victory-ebook.html)

In this process he found that the true nature of the world of human soul. In this novella Marlow was the hero who was questing for an important person, object or place. In this process he travelled several horrendous stations on his way to Congo. Finally he found Kurtz. Kurtz was a shining beacon of European civilization and European culture. This quest of Marlow could not ended with finding Kurtz. He could understand the real behaviour and innermost feelings and real cruelty behind the person. Marlow found this person in the midst of the dark jungle and the Flabby rapacious folly among all other Belgian agents working in the company. In this novel there were three chapters demonstrated the theme of lack of truth. In the first chapter the theme of lack of truth could be found 30 per cent. In the part 2 the theme was exhibited from the characters 25 per cent. Finally the lack of truth theme is understood by the reader and exhibited nearly 98 percent to show how the human beings behave and how their internal feelings would be (Dr. Khandekar Surendra Sakharam (2016) pp.1-16)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Khandekar Surendra Sakharam (2016) Narrative Techniques In Joseph Conrad's Novels published by New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (ISSN: 2348-1390) VOL. 3 SPECIAL ISSUE 1 DEC. 2016

In this novel Conrad has quoted the words when he was illustrating the theme of lack of truth.

“The word ‘ivory’ rang in the air, was whispered, was signed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I’ve never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared space on the earth stuck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.” (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp.56-67)

These words were spoken by Marlow about the person who had been found as the goal of his quest. But the reality is different from what he aspired. He aspired that Kurtz was a person who wanted to spread the Christianity to the darker side of the world. But he is totally influenced by the Colonialism and Imperialism. Under the shade of these doctrines he was spreading the untruth instead of truth. As soon as Marlow found these facts he

was astonished and thinking how the people will behave under the mask of civilization (Erdinast-Vulcan, Daphna.(1999) pp.78-108)<sup>5</sup>.

In the reality the colonization was the real cause of European companies coming to Africa and invading them with their supremacy intrusion. But when they were observed they spoke all untruth words to fascinate the public and uncivilized native Africans. Marlow the background narrator depict the lack of truthfulness in the words of European officers and priests under the shadow of imperialism and Colonialism. In this novel it was observed that Marlow was justified in lying to the intended. The truth found from the sourly troubled world which is stressing with lack of truth enables Marlow live the rest of his life without having to bear the weight of truth on his shoulders. Initially Kurtz used to be a hypocritical man. When he was in the death bead he revealed all the truths about the life how it was in Africa. He could reveal the true heart of man (Singh, B. Frances (1998))<sup>6</sup>. He told the evil activities how they have killed innocent local

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<sup>5</sup> Erdinast-Vulcan, Daphna.(1999) *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 78-108

<sup>6</sup> Singh, B. Frances (1998) "The Cannibalistic Bias of Heart of Darkness." published by Norton Critical Edition, Oxford University Press New York: 1998

Africans. Initially Kurtz used to pretend with his preaching from Christianity but he was also involved in the killings of innocent Africans who did not cooperate with European companies for their expansion. In this novel Marlow could recollect the past words spoken by Kurtz and compared. The theme of lack of truth was exhibited in this novel clearly in the final part. In the final part when Kurtz was talking to the women who were affected by the brutality of European officers of the company. Marlow could realize the real truth and how it was manipulated by Kurtz. Initially Kurtz was talking about mankind and humanity. His preaching was enriched with the valuable sayings to remove all the brutes from the hearts. But the truth was the gang associated with Kurtz could perform the most heinous activity of killing innocent native Africans. Marlow speaks about the killings as the heinous act of European officers. But initially he supported the officers with the sacredness and true realism to serve the mankind. Initially Marlow spoke that he detests the lies. He was also telling that he was hating and detesting the lies in the world. He added in his speech that the taint of death prevail in the lies. Lies were spoken by Kurtz with a favour of mortality. At the end of the book Marlow could be belated with the world of Kurtz that he could pretend under the mask of

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Heavenly mission and did cruel activities along with the group of people came from Europe. Marlow was the true follower of Kurtz but as soon as Kurtz revealed the truth and how he was living with lack of truth in the past, he hate the world and detest the people whom he loved. Evidently Marlow did not changed but his method of looking at the people was changed. His methodology was changed. He could realize the world is full of untruth and lack of truth was the root cause for the hypocrisy associated with lies. In this novel Conrad has demonstrated the lack of truth with the help of Kurtz character in a dramatic scene on his deathbed. His idea is no one tell lies on their death beds (Fothergill, Anthony (2003))<sup>7</sup>.

Heart of Darkness has resembled the ruthless behaviour of White man in the process of inculcating the doctrines of Jesus Christ with lack of truthful behaviour. They white men do the preaching one side and the same men did not follow the truths what they taught. The dual behaviour with different attitude was described in the heart of darkness (Singh, B. Frances (1998))<sup>8</sup>. The narration style of Joseph Conrad was amazing in describing the dual nature of Europeans with greediness and Colonialism. The greediness of Europeans were expressed by Kurtz when he was in the deathbed. In this

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<sup>7</sup> Fothergill, Anthony (2003) Heart of Darkness. Open University Press, Buckingham, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Singh, B. Frances (1998) "The Cannibalistic Bias of Heart of Darkness." published by Norton Critical Edition, Oxford University Press New York: 1998

novel Conrad skilfully revealed through Kurtz with great realization the truths about the heinous killing activities of Europeans (Gollancz (2015))<sup>9</sup>.

## COLONIZATION

Colonization means intruding and invading the colonies or territories of Africa with the supremacy of Europeans. The British came to Congo in the name of doing business with Ivory available in the African Islands. The supremacy and civilized culture has dominated the uncivilized people of Africa and treated them as slaves. This facts were demonstrated in the novel Heart of darkness (Singh, B. Frances (1998))<sup>10</sup>. The Europeans were colonizers. Their basic concern was to perform the trade with the local treasure. The local treasure was ivory. They could get the survival in the tropical climate. They execute their foreign law wherever they do business in Africa. Marlow witness the supremacy and adaptability of the areas with their foreign law to capture the areas under their control. This was incorporated in the novel by the Europeans while they were doing the business. The background of the novel was taken from the conference in Berlin. In this conference King Leopold II of Belgium requested and ordered to perform the trade in all nations. All nations should permit the Europeans

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<sup>9</sup> Gollancz (2015) "SFE: The Science Fiction Encyclopedia." Conrad, Joseph published by SFE : Science Fiction Encyclopedia. Web. 19 Oct. 2015

<sup>10</sup> Singh, B. Frances (1998) "The Cannibalistic Bias of Heart of Darkness." published by Norton Critical Edition, Oxford University Press New York: 1998

to perform the trade. The trade is a cause but the main cause was to spread the doctrines of Jesus to the entire world. The cause of God and spreading the good and mankind was accepted by the nations and agreed upon the trade which could be performed by Europeans. But the real cause was suppressed by the human Greed and invasion spirit. King Leopold II has started the trade in all nations with the monopoly of products which could not be sold by others in that nations. The unique products manufactured by England were promoted in the trade. In return they could purchase the local items available in those countries. This agreement was created and continued in Congo by King Leopold II. The plot of the story the heart of darkness was developed. The main reason for the trade to spread the Christianity to other nations was suppressed by the colonialism (Singh, B. Frances (1998))<sup>11</sup>. The promise behind the free trade in all nations was turned into the lie. The followers of King Leopold II were establishing the principles of Colonialism and Imperialism in the colonies and territories of Metropolitan areas of Congo (Levin, Y. (2008)).. They started invading the areas with their

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<sup>11</sup> Singh, B. Frances (1998) "The Cannibalistic Bias of Heart of Darkness." published by Norton Critical Edition, Oxford University Press New York: 1998

supremacy under the shade of trade and imposed the rules and regulations of European Union Empire (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp.67-77)<sup>12</sup>.

The story specifically depicted the trade of Ivory how it was ruling the native Africans. The supremacy and civilized way of leading made the native Africans to become slaves of their own nation. The so called civilized Europeans told to the entire world that they are impinging the civilization in the African Countries. But in reality they made Africans as slaves. This process of colonialism brought the land and local treasure to European countries and made the uncivilized the people of Congo as slaves and sufferers (Joseph Conrad (2010) pp189-195).

In the novel Heart of Darkness Joseph Conrad demonstrated the greediness and tactful implementation of colonialism under the mask of Christianity and spreading the civilization to the uncivilized world. In this novel Marlow was describing as a third party narrator about every character and the themes of the novel (Singh, B. Frances (1998) pp5-6)<sup>13</sup>. Marlow declared the Europeans as Colonizers and they were telling that they wanted to bring the civilization and light of peace with the religious convention to the primitive

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Conrad (2010) *The Secret Agent A Simple Tale* second edition published Release Date: December 24, 2010 [eBook #974]

<sup>13</sup> Singh, B. Frances (1998) "The Cannibalistic Bias of Heart of Darkness." published by Norton Critical Edition, Oxford University Press New York: 1998

continent of Darkness. At this juncture the Belgian company's agents did visit Congo and started the trade with the local credulous native Africans. They did not have the money to purchase the civilized and unique articles selling the market by the European companies. Instead of giving money they were probed to accept the local and natural treasure what they have was Ivory. They should give Ivory and take the plastic goods sold by Europeans. The Europeans were undervalued the precious Ivory in Congo and exchanged the goods what they are selling. In the other way they ivory was sold in European, American and Asian Countries with several times higher than what they have purchased in Congo. The innocent local native Africans could not realize the fact that they were selling much higher rates in the other countries. The money earned from this goods made the Europeans rich and strong. With this money power and richness they demonstrated the supremacy in Congo and made the innocent native Africans as slaves. The Europeans could purchase the land of native Africans at lower price and established their empire. The roots of colonialism was demonstrated in the novel Heart of Darkness (Singh, B. Frances (1998) pp 6-7). In this story Conrad has depicted the striking scene with the help of Marlow to narrate the incident at the Outer Station. This scene was a sharp contrast between the immaculately and elegantly dressed Chief Accountant and the ghostly

contorted dying Africans in the nearby inferno-like grove. (Joseph Conrad (2010)<sup>14</sup> Page 37 *Heart of Darkness*)

Another predominant theme was demonstrated by the Kurtz. He was described as a preacher with highly civilized culture. He could fascinate the uncivilized native Africans with his dressings and smooth speeches and gathered lot of Ivory. In this connection he did occupy the land of Africans as a part of colonialism principles. The business of Ivory obsessed group of whites to collect as much as ivory from native Africans against the inexpensive goods given to native Africans. He could manage to collect with his capability lot of ivory from Congo. He could also collect and taken lot of primordial land as kind Leopold II claimed in his ambitions to design of the Congo. He could occupy lot of land of Congo from innocent Africans with his tactful transactions and made them as slaves. He did harm with the help of cruel white group by killing innocent native Africans who have retaliated with their realization (*Joseph Conrad (2010) page 49 Heart of Darkness*).

Colonialism was largely demonstrated with its all means of forces in acquiring the land and their natural local treasure of Congo. Conrad did explain the scenes with the high peaks of cruel side of colonialism in

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Conrad (2010) A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of Heart of Darkness published in 2010 by Penguin Group (USA)

acquiring the land and treasure in this novel. At the end of the story Conrad has revealed the cruelty of colonialism by revealing from Kurtz who was on his death bed. The vastness of African Land was described by Conrad in the words of Marlow and Russian Harlequin. Under the mask of colonialism what happened in the holy land of Africa and to its people in this novel (Joseph Conrad (2010) Page 168 Heart of darkness)<sup>15</sup>.

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