

Human Behaviour and Behaviourism: A Psychological perspective on Robert J. Conley's *Cherokee Dragon*

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Abstract - The behaviour of a person is not a hereditary activity but it can be learnt and also influenced by the environment and circumstances that take hold of human emotions. American psychologist and father of behaviourism, John Broadus Watson popularized the scientific theory of behaviourism. He emphasised in the external behaviour of people and their reactions on the given situations, rather than the internal mental state of the person. Behaviours and reactions are the only objective method to get an insight into human actions. Robert J. Conley is a Cherokee (Native Indian Tribe in America) writer and historian has brought out the life and behaviour of Dragging Canoe (Tsiya Gansini) in the tenth novel of 'Real People Series,' Cherokee Dragon Cherokee tribe is the descendants of a large and powerful 'American Indian Tribe'. Dragging Canoe was not recognised as a patriotic leader because he rose to prominence only during, 'the American Revolution'. This paper aims to bring out the elements of behaviourism through Watson's theory in the character Dragging Canoe.

Keywords - Behaviourism, Cherokee writings, behaviour and relationships, Robert J. Conley.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human behaviour and their relationship are seen as conditioned behaviour that can be taught and developed. People can learn or unlearn or relearn anything. Behaviour reflects the visible and invisible sides of any personality, it speaks about the quality, kind and character of a person. The foundation resource of all human activities has been the human mind, which determines the behaviour and activities of human beings. Human consciousness is reflected in the behaviour of man, which would be reflected in society by which conscience is connected to society. Man and his existence have been seen as the fundamental theme of literature, where human beliefs, understandings, religious values and concepts of life form a skeleton called mind, where all the human activities are centred. The meaning and definition of mind and psychology have been changing and developing from time to time. The human mind or soul is not a part of the human anatomy or a thing, but, it is a function, which serves as basics of all physiology. The function of the soul determines the physical well-being of the possessor, and literature as a primitive art of life had existed even before the theoretical formulation of psychology. The study of

mind helps to reflect the different aspects of life in various dimensions. By this means, a reader of literature is exposed to multifaceted problems and their solutions would lead to problem-solving skills in life.

American psychologist and father of behaviourism, John Broadus Watson popularized the scientific theory of behaviourism in the article “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It” he outlines his philosophy of, “Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior,”(158-177). He emphasis on external behaviour of people and their reactions on the given situations, rather than the internal mental state of the person. Behaviours and reactions are the only objective method to get insight into human actions. His behaviourism rejected the study of consciousness and he stated that psychology should no longer be considered as the science of mind. Instead, it should focus on the behaviour of the individual and not on their consciousness. Behaviourism often went extremes, like scientific research, the data of psychology must also be brought to light for others to view. The Behaviourist attracted considerable attention in the United States during the period immediately following World War I under the leadership of E. L. Thondike, John B. Watson, W.S. Hunter, and J.F. Dashiell

Psychoanalysis shows the unconscious factors that affect behavioural patterns, relationships, and overall mental health. No two psychologists would agree upon one definition of mind, thus it ignored the objective nature and behaviourism of man. Therefore, psychology as the science of mind could not progress during its initial stage of introduction. Even the great philosophers failed to explain the complex nature of mind through psychology. Saul McLeod in “What is Psychology?” has expressed psychology as a new form of science, whose reflections can be traced back in the philosophical contexts of great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle during 400 – 500 BC. According to them,

Psychology is the scientific study of mind and behaviour. Psychology is a multifaceted discipline and includes many sub-fields of study such areas as human development, sports, health, clinical, social behavior, and cognitive processes. Psychology is really a new science, with most advances happening over the past 150 years or so. However, its origins can be traced back to ancient Greece, 400-500 years BC. The emphasis was a philosophical one, with great thinkers such as Socrates influencing Plato, who in turn influenced Aristotle. (n.pag.)

Behaviour is used as a tool to understand human psychosis. Behaviour includes conscious behaviour and activities with the subconscious and unconscious. It exhibits not only the visible behaviour but also the invisible behaviour that includes the inner experiences and mental process. In short, behaviour can refer to the entire life activities and experiences of the entire living organism. Behaviour includes all motor activities like walking, swimming, and dancing and cognitive activities like thinking, reasoning and imagination and effective activities like feeling sad, happy and angry. Psychologists give different definitions to ‘psychology’, but most of it connects human behaviour with the human psychosis. Walter Bowers Pillsbury, defines “Psychology is the science of human behaviour”(n.pag.) were, educational psychologist Lester D. Crow and Alice Crow calls it a study of human behaviour and human relationships, they define it as, “Psychology is the study of human behaviour and human relationships” (n.pag.). Psychology is a branch of the scientific study of mind along with its conditions. According to

William Mc Doug Halls, “all Psychology is the study of human behaviour, its causes and conditions,” he also adds that “Psychology is the science of which aims to give us better understanding and control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole”(n.pag.). Conley has also made a study on the life of ‘Real People’ and brought it out through his fictional works describing the behaviour, causes, and conditions in human relationships to the environment.

Watson's theory of “twelve infants” claims that he could take any twelve human infants and by applying behavioural techniques he could create them into whatever kind of person he desired, In *Behaviorism* he claims;

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select— doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. I am going beyond my facts and I admit it, but so have the advocates of the contrary and they have been doing it for many thousands of years.

Watson's theory of behaviourism could be proved through the life of the great historical Cherokee leader, Dragging Canoe. His father wanted to become the first man or the Principal Chief of the tribe and he also wanted a son to take over his legacy after him.

“his wife Ni-on-e was involved with her classwomen, giving birth. He hoped that she would have a son. Given the new circumstances of the Cherokee, a son would be more useful to him than would a daughter, for if Ada-gal’kala should achieve his goal of becoming the next “emperor,” then a son would be there in later years to succeed him in that exalted position, a position that Ada-gal’kala was certain, would become more and more important as time passed.(CD 4)

Unfortunately, Ada-gal’kala was captured by the Ottawas when Dragging Canoe was only four years old, this made his mother sad and distress. The little boy went to her sides and put his arms around her neck and says, “Don’t worry, Mother . . .It may be a long time, but father will be back” (CD 17). His quality as a good leader has developed right from a young age. His behavior as a responsible grownup man was the result of his circumstances and the environment that puts his mother in a state of distress.

The behaviour of Dragging Canoe (*Tsiya Gansini*) could be studied in the tenth novel of ‘Real People Series,’ *Cherokee Dragon* by Robert Conley. Chivalric attitude and waging war constitutes a major behavioural characteristic of tribal men because they have a strong instinct to protect their tribe under any circumstances. Cherokee tribe is the descendants of a large and powerful ‘American Indian Tribe’. Dragging Canoe was not recognised as a patriotic leader because he rose to prominence only during, ‘the American Revolution’. The American Revolution was a colonial revolt that took place between 1765 and 1783. The American Patriots of the Thirteen Colonies fought against the British rule in America. Native Indians also took part in it. Due to the agreement made between Cherokee leaders and the King of England, Dragging Canoe and his people supported the British. The Cherokee leaders crossed the “great waters” (sea) and went to England to visit their King. During their visit, they were forced to sign a document to support the British reign in America. The Cherokees did not know or

understand the Whiteman's language, yet they were made to enter into an agreement, promising to support only the English. During the American Revolution, there were changes everywhere, but leaders like Dragging Canoe did not change their side, instead, they continued to support the King's men in America, but later on, the British alliance was defeated and the United States of America became a free state. When American Colonies fought against their mother country, as a leader who gave his commitment to the King, he believes that he must stand only by the sides of the king, hence they reject the friendship or alliance with the United States.

Emotions play an important role in the life of human beings. Watson's most influential and well-known work was his study of emotions. He says that emotions could be learned. He believed that "emotions were merely physical responses to external stimuli and that rage, fear, and love were all yet to be learned at birth." (n.pag.). Dragging Canoe was against the concept of selling the lands to the whites, but his father, "sixty-eight years old" (*CD* 122) Cherokee leader, the old war chief Ogan'sdo and Sawanooga,

meet with the white men Richard Henderson and Nathaniel Hart to finalize the deal they had previously made. . . . the old chief's looked greedily at the nearby log cabin, which they knew was to be filled with the weapons, guns, and ammunition that the white men were prepared to pay for the Cherokee land. (*CD* 122)

Dragging Canoe was thirty-eight and had facial scars of horrible smallpox, which was an unforgettable sign of the past biological war. He stared at his own father in a "hard way . . . because he believed you've come here to sell our land to these white men" (*CD* 123). Dragging Canoe had also bought his friends and brothers.

Dragging Canoe is a man of determination, his anger and his unavoidable situation to go against his father sounded as irritation in his voice. He had a strong look of determination on the face, his father knew about his son, who always wanted to go to war and that earned him the name, "the Head Warrior of Big Island Town" (*CD* 124). His father was happy with the guns, powder, shot and the blankets and cloths provided by the whites and he tried to persuade Dragging Canoe to accept the proposal and go in peace. But, he had proper knowledge about the Whites, he explains to his father that the natives must not fight with the other native tribes, instead, they must extend their, "hand in friendship. We should not fight any Indians. All Indians should unite and keep the white men from moving any farther west. We all have a common enemy, one who will not stop taking our land unless we unite and stop him together" (*CD* 124). Thus his previous knowledge about the whites had invoked his emotions to react against the land grabbing policies of the whites and to stand with his own people to protect himself and the tribe in totem.

The behaviour of a person arises from the knowledge of the past and his previous knowledge. Skinner, an American psychologist, and behaviourist explain it as "Psychology is the study of the human behaviour and experience" (n.pag.). Dragging Canoe reminds the words of his father when his father goes against his words, he says, "Father," all my life you've taught me that the Real People never sell their lands, The bones of our ancestors lie buried in this land. The land is our mother and nourishes us all. God over all gave this land to us to use" (*CD* 125). His beliefs are based on the early education provided to him from his father, his clan elders and other leaders. He tries to stick on to the clan rules and beliefs. According to him, scientific psychology must focus on the

relationship between environmental contingencies and behaviour, rather than presumed content of consciousness. In Conley's presumed content of *Dragging Canoe's* consciousness had taught him to respect elders but the current situation turns oppositely that of his early knowledge. Proving Watson's theory *Dragging Canoe* shows his irritation and anger in the form of staring his father in front of the tribal leaders and relatives, through his behaviour he emphasis on the past experience with the white men.

Social behaviour has its early influences from Aristotle, who believed that humans were naturally sociable, which allowed them to live together. Whereas, Plato believed that state-controlled the individual and encouraged social responsibility through social context. Hegel said that the society has an inevitable link with the development of social mind. Lazarus and Steinthal emphasized the notion that personality develops because of the influences of culture and community. Murphy Gardner, an American psychologist in social and personality says that "social psychology is the study of the way in which the individuals become a member of and functions in a social group" (n.pag.). He also calls it a "science which deals with the mutual interaction between an organism and environment" (n.pag.). Human beings are social animals they can hardly live a life of isolation, but as a community, they can build a strong and prosperous living structure as a family, clan, country or a society.

Human character has been influenced by the environment. The presence of consciousness controls human behaviour and the environment plays an important role in controlling emotions. This was emphasized by Woodworth as, "Psychology is the science of activities of the individual in relation to the environment" (n.pag.). In *War Woman A Novel*, The traders Whirlwind, Daksi, and Little Spaniard reached the part of La Florida where the "landscape was changed utterly. There were plants, birds, and animals that the three Real People had never seen before. The bird-songs and the chattering heard from the woods were strange to their ears. The air was thick with moisture, and inland the ground was wet and swampy" (64). Little Spaniard did not like the Spanish colony where they went for trade. He said "I don't like it here," . . . "It smells bad, and it's too loud" (68). The landscape and the environment in the Spanish colony disturb and distracts Little Spaniard, he feels displaced and he develops a mental agitation to leave the place and go to their home town as soon as possible.

Understanding the situation and the people also constitute a major role in behaviourism. Andrew Slade in, *Psycho-Analytic Theory and Criticism, by Way of an Introduction to the Writings of Sigmund Freud*, talks about psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud. He calls Freud as, "a man of considerable curiosity" (1). He also adds that Freud had widely read the history of literature and culture to analyses the mind. Curiosities along with commitment pave the way to understand, the character and attitude of man, which helped him to read and understand the relationship between nature and human beings. Like Freud, Robert J. Conley has widely read the history texts in order to find out the proper form and name of the real people. In the Introductory Note of *Cherokee Dragon*, he says, "In my search for the proper form of names as well as in examining the history and the lives of the people involved in this story, I have heavily on the following texts:"(viii). A man with considerable curiosity would take pains to understand the history and literature of a particular time and bring those findings to the world. He would try to collect details from books, experienced narratives and also through his intuition. This kind of attitude is seen in the nature, character, and works of Conley. He has a blended history, psychology, and the culture of the Cherokees

with a right proportion of imagination to bring out a literary product that would teach the current generation about the pain and sufferings their people had undergone. His works also answer many questions which the younger generations raise. His concern, curiosity, responsibility, and care for his tribe and people is also reflected in his behaviour and works.

Human behaviour and attitude are not accidental reflections, but they are deeply rooted in the character of a person, which is blended with the conscious and subconscious mind. Psychoanalysis was brought out systematically through the case study of Freud. His applications and explanations were used by researchers in their research works. The founder of psychoanalysis Freud himself wrote in his *Outline of Psychoanalysis* “the teachings of psychoanalysis are based on an incalculable number of observations and experiences, and only someone who has repeated those observations on himself and on others is in a position to arrive at a judgment of his own upon it” (11). Psychologists applied the psychic elements upon themselves and the others to find the result. They also tried to understand the real place of the people during the period in which they lived. They also foresaw the future of their people and tried to educate their people and protect them from their enemies. They were committed to the society and exhibited a kind of responsibility towards the society. This responsibility is highlighted in the society through their words and deeds, by which one would raise themselves high above all the others to develop themselves as leaders and great beings.

Psychoanalysis does not speak only about the heart, feelings, and character, but it speaks about the relationship, behaviour, environment and belief. The relations and its contradictions are studied under psychoanalysis to understand the social and personal behaviour of a person. The study of the mind was first introduced by Freud, in fact, psychoanalysis was, “developed substantially since Freud worked and wrote” (2). Freud’s theories provide a basic insight into the research, where his theories have also been used as a torchlight to focus on specific areas. In an interview with Ramin Jahanbegloo, the eminent Indian psychoanalyst, Sudir Kakar says,

I completely subscribe to his (Freud’s) basic assumptions, such as the importance of the unconscious part of the mind in our thought, behaviour and action, the vital significance of early childhood experiences for later life, the importance of Eros in human motivation, the dynamic interplay, including conflict between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. (30)

A method of understanding the mental functioning and the stages of growth and development of behavioural patterns come under psychoanalysis. It is a general theory of individual human behaviour and experience, which includes many other disciplines within itself. Psychoanalysis also seeks to explain the complex relationship between body and mind, further, it understands the role of emotions in illness and health. In 1896, Freud coined the term "psychoanalysis," and for the next forty years of his life, he worked on to develop the main principles, objectives, techniques, and methodology of psychoanalysis. According to Kristen M. Beystehner, “Freud's many writings detail many of his thoughts on mental life, including the structural theory of the mind, dream interpretation, the technique of psychoanalysis, and assorted other topics. Eventually, psychoanalysis began to

thrive, and by 1925, it was established around the world as a flourishing movement” (n.pag.). Psychoanalysis is the most effective method to obtain knowledge of mind and achieve a greater understanding of oneself and others.

Human life and character are greatly influenced by their inner psychosis, which is not a part of human physiology and hence it is a difficult fact to analyse and make a report on it yet, learning society and their history without understanding their mind and matters would not enhance total learning. The behaviour of a person is developed by numerous social, cultural and personal experiences, which mould a person and urge him to act to create further social changes in society either directly or indirectly. Cherokees goal-oriented people, they had a good plan or a purpose and reason for living, which form the basic structure for living.

Psychoanalysis is an effective method to obtain self-realisation, to know about others and their behaviour. The behaviour of a person is not a hereditary activity but it can be learnt and also influenced by the environment and circumstances that take hold of human emotions. External behaviour of a person depends on the situation, rather than the internal mental state of a person. Unconscious factors describe the behaviours caused and conditioned in human relationships to the environment. Past experiences, promises, commitments, and the sense of gratitude influence the behaviour of human beings. Emotions play an important role in the reflection of human behaviour. Social behaviour is developed through a sense of protection for one's clan or people. Knowledge of an ability to understand the environment, society, or people would be reflected through behaviourism.

Behaviourism could be understood not just by the study of history or the socio-cultural behaviour of the people but, through a proper understanding of the mindset of the people. Robert J. Conley has brought out the behaviour and aspirations of the Cherokee leaders and the people through a pictographic representation of dreams and dialogues. He has developed the inner thought of the characters and brought out the reactions done by the characters in response to their thoughts. So a reader could understand the reasons and causes of his behaviour. There are a cause and reason for every behaviour and it is in response to the social, political and environmental context.

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