

PERSISTENT PURPOSE: A PURPOSIVISTIC STUDY ON ROBERT J CONLEY'S CHEROKEE DRAGON

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Abstract

Human life must have purpose to add meaning to its living. Purposivism is a branch of psychology, which contend that mental life is hormic or goal-seeking. Robert J. Conley in Cherokee Dragon, A Novel present spurposivism through the characterization of Cherokee Dragon's father Ada-gal' kala, he is one of the important characters with purposivism. He was recognized as the second man in the Cherokee Nation but, "he longed to rise to the highest position" (3). Being a diplomat he strives toget the number one position and also attains it. All behavior has a purpose and it is determined by the instincts which drive individuals into activity towards a particular goal. Human beings have an attitude to respond towards feelings that they develop in their inner self. Firm desire and determination towards life will lead towards success. When the seed of life is deposited in the inner soul it would find its means and ways towards successful upcoming and bearing sweet fruits gradually. Firm determination and fixed goals with purpose would definitely bring success in life.

Keywords: Purposivism, Robert J. Conley, Cherokee Dragon.



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Human life attains its highest meaning when it is conducted as a journey of purpose. In the journey of life a traveler must have goals oraim to attain or achieve the eternal intended bliss. Life attains its meaning only if it has a purpose. Purposeless life is meaningless and any activity without a goal or a purpose is considered waste. Purposivism is a branch of psychology, which contends that mental life is hormic or goal-seeking. Meenakshisundaram in *Psychology of Learning and Human Development* informs that, Purposivismis also called as Hormic psychology. McDougall was the chief exponent of this school. According to him, "all behavior is pourpurposeful and the purpose is determined by the instincts which derive individuals into activity towards a particular goal. The school is called 'Hormic' because it puts emphasis on 'striving' or the 'urge to do a thing'"(12)

Albert J. Levine, classifies purposiveness in *Current Psychologies: A Critical Synthesis*. His definition of conduct is pointed toward a clearly defined purposiveness. For him conduct is characterized by;

- (1) Activity independent of a stimulus,
- (2) Cessation of action as a consequence of change in the situation,
- (3) Re-alignment of psyche forces to meet any alteration in the old situation, and
- (4) Repetition of the same or similar actions resulting in facilitating future conduct. (270)

According to McDougall, personality is a product of five factors. They are disposition, temper, temperament, intellect and character. These characteristics were interlinked with each other and was presented with a purpose, they themselves possess positive purposivism. Robert J. Conley in *Cherokee Dragon, A Novel* presents Cherokee Dragon's father Ada-gal'kala's character as one of the important character with purposivism. Ada-gal'kala was recognized as the second man in the Cherokee Nation but, "he longed to rise to the highest position" (3). Ma'dohi was named as the "Emperor of the Cherokees" (4) by the English and it was also casually accepted by the Cherokees.

Traditional Cherokee policies do not have an Emperor with ultimate authority but they have a War Chief and the Peace Chief and they followed a democratic system where they take decisions only after the consultation with all the members of the tribe. When English people came to Cherokee Nation they could not understand the political system of Cherokees. Cherokees democratic system was new for the British people, who were ruled by a monarch. Cherokees democratic government seemed to be challenging for the Whites, because they found it difficult to take decisions quickly; Cherokee leaders did not have an ultimate authority they always consulted with other leaders and the people before taking any important decision. This was time consuming and the business tricks cannot be applied, hence they just needed a single leader, where they can achieve the desired results. Moreover, executing trade and business under multiple leaders or under different head for authentication made trade impossible. So, they chose Ma'dohi as the 'Principal Chief'. But "Ada-gal'kala' wanted that merit for himself" (3). In this circumstance the purpose of the traders was accomplished, but this served as a source of inspiration to Ada-gal'kala to shape a new purpose in his life. He made a firm decision to rise himself as the Emperor or the Principal Chief.

McDougall was the Chief exponent of purposivism. According to him, "all behavior is purposeful and the purpose is determined by the instincts which drive individuals into

activity towards a particular goal” (n.pag.). Ada-gal’Kala’s behaviour was purposeful, he had learned the ways of English men. He knew that there were many changes taking place socially and culturally, and Cherokee system of matrilineal clan system was also fast changing, because of some Cherokee women who “had actually married white men” (4). Cherokees followed a matrilineal system where women were given full power and freedom, but things were changing. He understood that the women were giving up their autonomy and “watching their own authority gradually erode,” (4). Hunting for food had changed and the hunters, “hunted for hides for the trade business” (5). Women spent their time in the preparation of the hides. Now, “hunting had become a commercial pursuit, a small industry involving both men and women”(5). Ada-gal’kala felt jealous about the activities of Ma’dohi. He says, “As for the “emperor,” let the English call him what they will. Let Ma’dohi puff up his chest and strut around his town(5). Ada-gal’kala had a goal and he prepared to take advantage of the changes for his own goodness.

Ada-gal’kala knew all about the changes and was certain, that he could take advantage of these changes for his own good. He would require patience and diplomacy, but he had those two qualities in abundance. He had watched the Englishmen closely for some years now, and he had learned their language”(5). Ada-gal’kala was called as “the Little Carpenter” by the English, which was a different translation of the word “the learning wood”, which was given by some “jealous and suspicious” Cherokee men of his town. Learning the ways and means of the Whites shall be noted as the first step to achieve his goal. He had actually travelled across the great water and “met the great King George II, face-to-face”(5). They also “signed a paper with the king’s men. The English had called the paper the Article of Agreement and with the words on the paper, the Cherokees had promised to trade only with the English”(5). The agreement had promised that the Cherokees would trade only with the English.

Male heir was always considered as a successor of a royal heritage. Ada-gal’kala was not a first man yet, but he aims to become a first man of the Cherokee’s and when he comes to the first position he needs a son to rule after him. This act of future planning and acting towards a goal with a purpose constitute the major component of purposivism. When his wife Ni-on-e was with a child, he wished her to give birth to a male child. He thought that a son would be more useful than a daughter. He hoped that she would have a son. When considering the new circumstances of the Cherokees, a son would be more useful to him than

a daughter, for Ada-gal'kala to achieve his goal of becoming the next "emperor," then a son would be there in later years to succeed him in that exalted position that, Ada-gal'kala was certain, would become more and more important (4). Later, when his son was four years old he went on a trip and he was captured by another tribal group called Ottawa. They were people from the far north. The Ottawa warriors captured him and carried him to their home in the north. Under their captivity Ada-gal'kala learns and compliments about himself as; "that my tongue was my best weapon. It was diplomacy that kept me alive"(29).

He had a purpose to live even during the time of captivation. He had a firm determination to keep himself alive and to return to his hometown, to meet his people and family. He performed all, "menial chores, building their fire and cooking their meals, fetching water for them and the like" (29). He did all the works without complains. By the time they reached their home, the captors started treating him more like a, "visiting friend than a prisoner"(29). He was free, but he was not allowed to leave the town and he, "did not try to escape," (29)but he met all the head men and befriended them. The greatest man among them was Pontiac. He was younger to Ada-gal'kala and he was a very capable leader. Pontiac even came to him,"for advice in dealing with the white men. Ottawas were friendly with the French men, but the Cherokee supported the English. While staying with Ottawas, Ada-gal'kala got chance to meet the French men and learn their tongue. Every activity done by him was not without purpose. "I meet many of the French men and learn to speak their tongue easily" He found the French, "more honest and dependable than,"(29) English. After seven years, Priber himself made Ada-gal'kala free to go. He also gave him fine horse, saddle, dress and escorted all the way to the frontiers of the country. Ada-gal'kala' spatience of purpose attained its goal after seven long years. He came back to his mother land, the Cherokee Nation and saw his people and family.

The seed of ambition was laid in the heart of Ada-gal'kala, years before the birth of his son. Now his son was sixteen years old. Yet, Ada-gal'kalawaited patiently equipping himself to become the first man, he was observing the changes happening around him and waiting for the right time. Ammouskossittee was made as the Principal Chief by the White, he was a young and effective leader of twenty-eight, but he died at a very young age. After him Guhna-gadoga was forced by English to become a leader, as a Principal Chief and he proved to be an ineffective leader. Ada-gal'kala knew what was happening. He was the only one who could see the gradual evolution of the English. "He aspired to the role for himself

and later for his oldest son (35)". Ada-gal'kala's dream, goal and purpose of his life came true and he became the Principal Chief. The seed of ambition that was laid deep into his soul came to life only after sixteen years.

Human beings have an attitude to respond towards feelings that they develop in their inner self. Firm desire and determination towards life would lead towards success. When a seed of life is deposited in the inner soul it would find its means and ways towards successful upcoming and bearing sweet fruits gradually. Conley emphasizes on patience with wit, most of his characters attain success at the end. There is no revolution for personal gain, but, a well planned and organized attitude is exhibited throughout the novel. Ada-gal'kala was also man of diplomacy and he maintains this character towards the end. Representation of historical characters through the *Real Life Series* was a lesson to the younger generation to adopt a diplomatic attitude towards life and maintain patience in all their deeds and means. Firm determination and fixed goals with purpose would definitely bring success in life.

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