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## **Human Conditioning in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World**

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**Abstract:**

*A new behavior is learnt by a living thing through the process of association which forms the base of Classical conditioning theory. The theory involves in provoking a new learned response in a person or animal by interlinking the two stimuli together. Eventually the response becomes an unconditional psychological response due to repetition. Correspondingly, conditioning a human mind affects the nature of man. Aldous Huxley employs psychological conditioning in Brave new world to produce a conditioned society with proper order and harmony. Human conditioning is an attempt to alter the human nature by using science and technology in order to suit the society as a whole. The creation of such a utopian society tends to believe that man's nature is a fiction which can be shaped and conditioned to fit happily in a utopian society. The psychological conditioning of human beings in Brave New World reveal how people compete with the facets of survival instincts after being conditioned into a sect of society. The paper serves as an eye opener for the society to know about the psychological adverse effects of Human Conditioning by analysing its elements in Huxley's Brave New World.*

**Keywords:** Human Conditioning, Utopia – a Desire for Change and survivability of humankind.

Science Fiction is a genre which combines science and fiction. It locates human beings imaginatively in time and space. Science Fiction evolved as a response to fantasy. It explores the past, reality and predicts the future with responsibility. The first true science fiction novel was Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. The novel seems to be a tale of terror but the plot actually revolves around a laboratory experiment that has gone awry. Writers of Science Fiction take scientific possibilities and develop them step-by-step from known data to form a story. *Brave New World* is a science fiction, written in 1931 and published in 1932. It is set in London in the year AD 2540 (632 A.F. "After Ford"). The setting of the novel is a futuristic society in the Central London Hatching and Conditioning Centre where people are grown artificially as identical embryos in bottles and conditioned to remove strong desires, the need for human relationships and strong emotions. The motto of the artificial society is Community, Identity and Stability. The influence of technology is such that during the gestation period the embryos are conditioned to belong to one of five castes: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, or Epsilon. Even before they were born, they lost their sense of individuality, as they are no different from one another. They are born to look completely identical and conditioned to think the same thoughts. Scientific development had led to a perfect world, in which there is no freedom and individuality.

*Brave New World* is often considered as a utopian science fiction. A utopia is an imaginary society organized to create ideal conditions for human beings, eliminating hatred, pain, neglect, and all of the other evils of the world. The societies described are meant to represent the perfect society, but also try to explore alternatives in political, social, and religious life. The society in *Brave New World* is not a "good place," and so it can be called as a "negative utopia," the opposite of the traditional utopia. It is a perfect "dystopia," that depicts a conditioned society where human beings lose their individuality and becomes controlled by technology. Huxley's disturbing views of science and technology have even echoed in the projected conditioned society of the novel.

Ivan Pavlov proposed the classical conditioning theory postulating that the individual's behaviour can easily be trained and conditioned by the proper stimulus. The classical conditioning theory is based on the assumption that learning is developed through the interactions with the environment. The environment shapes the behaviour and internal mental state such as thoughts and feelings. This theory contains four important elements like Unconditioned Stimulus (US), Unconditioned Response (UR), Conditioned Stimulus (CS) and Conditioned Response (CR). The learning process that happens through the proper use of stimulus in order to elicit a response. Conditioning in *Brave New World* is modelled on the classical conditioning theory which plays a key role in the maintenance of social peace and the caste system.

Neo-Pavlovian conditioning in *Brave New world* is modelled on Ivan Pavlov's Classical Conditioning theory by which human babies are conditioned. The conditioning happens in certain ways like hypnopaedia otherwise known as sleep conditioning. The Delta caste infants are conditioned to create aversion towards nature and books in "Infant Nurseries - Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning Rooms." The

conditioning involves in presenting colored, playful picture books and a bowl of roses to the infants at first. As the babies crawl towards the books and roses there appears a shrill alarm bell that scares the infants. Soon after this the infants face a mild electric shock as they go near the books or flowers. This lesson of conditioning was repeated 200 times as the repetition would make the infants hate and also fear books and flowers.

- "There was a violent explosion. Shriller and ever shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded. The children started, screamed; their faces were distorted with terror..... "And now," the Director shouted (for the noise was deafening), "now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock."

As the delta children are conditioned to factory work, they receive this cruel conditioning that result in the elimination of choice, increase of economic and social stability but reduces the potential for individual's growth. The cruelty of conditioning also extends in the name of Elementary Class Consciousness lesson that teaches the children of one caste system to be proud about their own sect and hate the other types. This lesson is easily taught through hypnopaedia or sleep teaching where the infants are allowed to sleep and a mild voice whispers the lesson in their ears. The lesson is as follows

- "and Delta Children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able to read or write. Besides they wear black, which is such a beastly colour. I'm so glad I'm a Beta."

The lesson gets repeated one hundred and twenty times, three times a week and for thirty months in order to take pride on their own being and never long to be in the other sect of society. The Elementary Class Consciousness lesson is considered as "the greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time" in the novel. The lesson in class consciousness gives each child a social identity but cuts off the possibility of forming friendships outside their caste or even impends them from having their own opinion. Thus conditioning results in creating individuals without individuality. The society is full of individuals who possess dominant unthinking obedience.

This system allows for social stability, economic productivity within narrow constraints, and a society dominated by unthinking obedience and infantile behavior. Soma has also been one of the prominent way of controlling the population of *Brave New World*. Soma is a n euphoric, narcotic and hallucinant used in the hypnopaedia lessons. The lower sections like epsilons, deltas and gammas take soma everyday but the upper classes may have the liberty to choose how often they need to take soma in order to escape into the world of happiness. Soma is considered to be commonly used by everyone of the society and one cannot imagine a world without it. The drug creates a mental numbness in making the individual to get pleasure and hidens human beings to think on their own.

Human Conditioning as portrayed by Huxley can never reaffirm the societal order as the main notion of these controlled society lies in making the individuals to lose individuality. Even the seeming societal order that appears to be peaceful in the novel distorts by certain characters like Bernard Marx and John, the savage. The stability of society becomes effective only if there exists individual's free will. The character of John from the Savage reservation is the only one who reminds the readers about humanity in the cruel world. Bernard Marx's questions and his failure in adopting to the conditioned society reveals the question of identity in the conditioned society of *Brave New World*. Human beings should never be deprived of their freedom to share thoughts, attitudes, feelings and the mere humanity amongst each other. The survivability of human kind lies only in the individuality and not on the controlled societal order.

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