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## Insights on Dog Behavior and Vices

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*“The greatest gift that mankind has is not superior intellectualness over other organisms, but to be content with small happiness and these two examples are our kids and dogs, which needs to be cherished, enjoyed and nurtured constantly”*

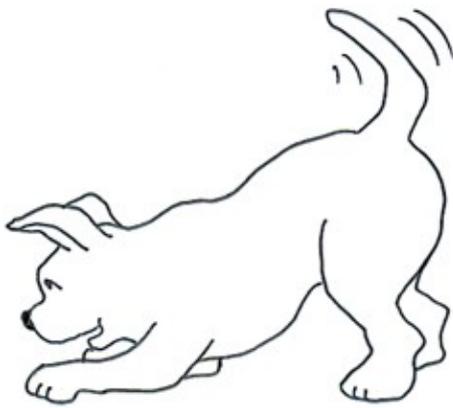
*- A.K.Wankar*

The association between humans and dogs goes long back in the time and dog is the first animal to be domesticated by men (Freedman *et al.*, 2014; Perri, 2016). The dog is member of genus *Canis* (canines) the same family to which the extinct gray wolf belongs (wolf like canids) (Wang & Tedford, 2008; Lindblad-Toh *et al.*, 2005). Early humans domesticated the dogs some 15000 thousand years ago mainly for companionship, strength, endurance and sensory abilities which were mainly utilized for hunting (Larson & Bradley, 2014; Perri, 2016). Another important characteristic of dog is that, it is pack animal because of which the early humans could train,

live and hunt with dogs. This association spanning over millenia resulted in selective breeding and development of numerous breeds of dogs all over the world (Dewey & Bhagat, 2002). Modern dog breeds show more variation in size, appearance, and behaviour than any other domesticated animal. In modern world dogs are has different purpose like as companion for blind or disabled humans, for hunting, herding, transportation, military, police operations, airport security, narcotics detection, and as supportive treatments in some of the serious chronic medical ailments (Fenton, 1992; Ensminger *et al.*, 2002; Audrestch *et al.*, 2015). Dogs association with hu-

mans, its playfulness like a child, its utility, unselfish love and companionship has bestowed him the title of **“Man’s Best Friend.”**

The highly developed senses of the dogs i.e. smell, vision, hearing, taste, touch, ability to detect natural calamities and sensitivity to the earth's magnetic field make it an excellent utility intelligent animal (Nießner *et al.*, 2016). Like infants, dogs learn from their surrounding environment, form memories, can re-



member, decide and act accordingly. Dogs are more efficient in reading and reacting to human body language, to understand human voice commands and human gestures like pointing etc. Similar to humans the dogs also respond to external or internal stimuli and can change their behaviour. Because of this parallel evolution with humans dogs are easily able to understand, communicate and alter its behaviour accordingly to human mood (Berns *et al.*, 2012). For all these special senses and abilities dogs were not domesticated for production purposes, unlike all other domesticated animals.

As compared to wild wolf, dogs show reduced fear and aggression but naturally retain the aggressive ability as evident in some of the dog breeds (Cagan & Torsten, 2016). With the new industrial era and urbanization after late 1950's the rearing of dogs primarily as companions or pets exponentially increased. With the constant human and canine population as pets the interaction between two also increased, both of them affecting each other's behaviour, respectively. Environment, human interaction and behaviour, type of work and training, others dogs and animals all shape up the behaviour of the dog profoundly. Like the human infants they have to be imbibed with good habits and sound behavioural practices right from the birth. It can be said that the dog will take the nature of the family where it is reared and behave accordingly. Dog behaviour problems are often misunderstood or mishandled by dog owners. Understanding the most common dog behaviour problems is the first step to solving and preventing them. In majority of dogs strong obedience training can help impart new behaviour and get rid of old vices.

Some common dog vices, behaviour and their reasons,

### **Barking**

Dogs like to communicate and they bark, howl or whine to do so but excessive barking is a serious behavioural problem. The possible reasons for barking are anxiety, over excitement, playfulness, lack of attention,

warning, fear, nature's call and boredom. One must try to understand the dog's mood and accordingly instruct the dog very patiently. The obedience training involves repetition, rewards and stringent actions. This training must be started since early life of dog. Another aspect of this training is that the dog should be able to distinguish between friends and foes and warn the owners.

### **Biting**

Biting is very common in young pups, naturally as part of exploring the environment but is a serious vice if continues. Fear, defence, sickness, aggression, predatory instincts makes the dogs bite. In the natural conditions bitches regulate these biting habits in the pups. When the pups are reared at home care should be taken to make it clear that nipping and biting are totally unacceptable for family members, other humans and animals from very small age. More the animal socializes with others better are the chances to understand and improve behaviour for reduced biting habits.

### **Urinating and defecating**

Inappropriate frequent urination and defecation are among the most frustrating dog behaviours. Puppies up to age of 10-12 weeks cannot control the urinating and defecation. After this initial growing period, the dog should be trained for scheduled urination and defecation times at least 5-6 times for urination and 2-3 times for voiding faeces daily. The habit will establish natural biological rhythm of

the dog and therefore should be continued for at least for a month to get best results. Some reasons for urinating and defecation are anxiety, attention seeking, territorial marking, lack of proper housekeeping, fear and for frequent urination might be due to renal impairment. If mature dog with established urinating and defecation habits suddenly starts to urinate and void faeces irregularly one must immediately contact a veterinarian.

### **Digging**

If natural space is available all dogs will go digging, reasons being excess energy, fear, boredom, anxiety, comfort seeking, hunting instincts, hiding possessions etc. One must try to find out the cause of digging and change the habits of dog like more exercising, playing with him and discouraging digging. If natural space is available dogs should be trained only to dig at a particular piece of land.

### **Eating faeces**

Dogs tend to sniff and eat faeces of the same species or of other animals. The reasons for this behaviour can be nutritional, mineral or fibre deficiency or simple curiosity. If the animal engages frequently in this activity he should be strictly prohibited to do so, till the behaviour is abolished completely. Also, the nutritional plan of dog can be changed / improved with the help of veterinarian.

### **Chasing**

All dogs love to chase and play as natural predatory instincts, but become a problem in civilized society,

scaring or hurting people unintentionally. Some of the steps to overcome this dangerous behaviour is to put a leash on dog when outside the home, make the dog obey to stay and not move, make him sit and not run after a moving object, make him come to you when called or by whistle sound. One can train the dog to only fetch something which is thrown purposefully and not any random moving things like a jogger, running dogs or other animals, motor vehicles etc.

### **Circling**

A dog chasing its own tail is a sight to watch and funny but might be due to some health related issues like ear infections or parasites or balance disturbances. Try to find out the underlying cause and consult a veterinary doctor for further guidance.

### **Jumping up**

Pups jump to greet the bitch, also jumping is part of their natural behaviour. But when this habit continuous in adult dogs, may lead to unwanted fear and injuries to human companions. One of the reasons for jumping behaviour is attention and reward seeking which should not be promoted. Avoid giving attention to the dog and simply ignore and walk away from him when he jumps. Eventually the dog will understand your intentions and stop jumping unnecessarily all the time.

### **Anxiety/separation anxiety**

Dogs are pack animals need constant company. The signs of separation anxiety are evident only when a

dog is left alone for short or long periods. The confirmatory symptoms of separation anxiety are; the dog becomes anxious when the owner prepares to leave, the dog follow you around constantly, misbehaviour occurs in the first 15 to 45 minutes after the owner leaves and defecating in home. This behaviour in dogs is a common problem in modern society where the children are at school and the parents are working. Spending quality time with the dog, exercising or playing immediately before you leave greatly reduces the separation anxiety, stress and calms the dog. Another practice is regular training of dog for your long absence, continued till the behaviour diminishes; if not then a veterinarian should be contacted.

### **Aggression**

Some of the dog breeds are naturally more aggressive. Dog's environment has a major impact on his behaviour. Regardless of breed a dog may inherit some aggressive traits and exhibit aggressive behaviour towards people, other dogs and animals. Dogs manifest aggression by growling, snarling, showing teeth, lunging, leaping and biting. First the cause of aggressive behaviour must be identified, whether it is due to internal or external stimuli. The purpose for which the dog is reared, environment in the family, behaviour of the family members within themselves and with the dog, surroundings and neighbourhood all influence the aggressive behaviour. Harsh treatment or abusive language

should not be used with the dog. Treat the dog affectionately and lovingly, which will be helpful to minimize the aggressive tendencies of the dog in the longer run. If all the attempts are unsuccessful guidance and treatment of veterinary doctor is advised.

Since ages humans and dogs have lived together, which has resulted into the strongest bonding possible between man and any animal. Similar to humans dogs also learn from their surrounding environment and initial months are very crucial to shape the behaviour. Dogs can sense our emotions, especially fear, love, anxiety and joy. We don't want our pet dogs to be afraid of us, but love and respect us like they deserve our love and respect. Sometimes strict behaviour/action is essential, so that dogs realizes and differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. So, human beings should give love, compassion, proper attention, training and nutrition to the pups which will help raise a joyful, strong dog with good ideal behaviour for the human society and further enrich the companionship.

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