CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENT SCHOOL STUDENTS
(Survey of Literature)
2.1. Characteristics Of Adolescents:

In course of development of life, childhood is succeeded by adolescence, when the boy or girl becomes curious about his/her social identity and worth in the social world concerned with reference to respective social and cultural norms, conventions and stereotypes. An adolescent thus becomes aware of his own right, becomes capable of developing interpersonal relationship with others for gaining social competence. Puberty with concommitant physiological changes is an indicator of adolescence. The psychological changes accompanying adolescence can be easily understood if it is divided into two separate developmental levels. The first level is comprised of early adolescence (11 to 14 years) and the second level is comprised of late adolescence — the teen ages. The onset of puberty is accompanied by experience of strong erotic and aggressive impulses while the end part of late adolescence is spent for seeking for self-identity.

The second period is the late adolescence (13 to 19 years). The major task of late adolescence is identity seeking. Erikson (1979) defines it as the capacity to see one’s self as having continuity and sameness. It is consistent with the organization of experience.

2.1.(a) Adolescent Culture:

The peer group — its membership constantly shifting its roles never formally defined — is a vital agency for social growth and change. Here, for the first time, the adolescent forms significant relationships that lack the familiarity and security of those with parents and siblings. The peer group represents challenge and opportunity to a powerful degree. Where do the adolescents fit in? What roles can they play? To what degree will they be accepted or rejected? What changes need to take place? These are all critical questions and their importance is played out in the shifting relationships of peer group society (Mussen, Conger, Kagan et al, 1986).

The peer group is an informal institution, different for each adolescent. For most adolescent, there is a core made up of a small number of sustained and emotionally significant friendships; radiating out from that core are numbers of
Inherent in the nature of the peer group is the capacity for great social pressure carried out in a context of basic acceptance and support (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The social pressure is a powerful force that does much to shape adolescent character and values. The demand for conformity to the group ideal is extreme (Peplar, Debra O, Craig, Wendy, Roberts and William L., 1995).

Developing a well-defined sense of morality is a major accomplishment of late adolescence and adulthood. Morality is defined as conformity to shared standards, rights and duties. There is, however, the possibility of conflict between two socially accepted standards and the person learns to make judgements based on an individualized sense of conscience. There is moral obligation to abide by established norms, but only to the degree that they serve human ends. This stage of development internalizes ethical principles and the control of conduct (Newcomb, 1986).

2.1.(b) Parent-Adolescent Relationship:

The family is composed of interactional systems made up of different members of the family each of whom has a bearing on the development of the personality and behaviour of other members of the family. The larger the family the more expanded is its interactional network. Each interpersonal relationship in the said interactional system generates typical affinity, which ties the members of the family involved in this system.

As the child attains adolescence and develops urge for self-dependence so the parents demand from the child different social and cultural norm-abiding behaviour to ensure effective social adjustments. They expect him to shoulder some of the burdens of the family, as per age norms. At this critical stage of demanded compliance and obedience, interpersonal or intrapersonal conflicts are generated — when adolescent revolts or resents. Puberty brings a change in early family
relationship and social behaviour which makes the conflict-ridden adolescent uncooperative, arrogant and quarrelsome. Unless parents recognise these psychological changes in the child and try to understand him sympathetically and develop good relationship, it may have an adverse impact on his personality development leading towards socio-cultural deviance (Sen, 1999).

The major influence of the family relationships on the adolescents is reflected in their attitude and behaviour. The said relationships is premised mainly on parents understanding of their children's social and psychological needs (Freitag, Milam, Belsky, Jay, Crossman, Kalus and Schewr, Enlisch, Hernann, 1996).

Affectionate family relationships are indicated by the degree to which the adolescents show a feeling of trust and security on his parents, by sharing confidences with them, by taking interest in all social activities of the family and being happy with the family members. On the other end parents should give opportunities for the adolescent to express his motives, recognise his play and work activities, treat him as their equal by giving recognition to his activities and take pains to ensure order and discipline in the home without resorting to force (Hurlock, 1956). A common way in which affectionate relationships are shown by the different members of the family is the social recognition of adolescents as much wanted family member. It is true, as number of children increases, the family may not always be able to bring them together to share and enjoy the social activities of the family, but it has to record its urge to get the adolescents along with others to perform their cooperative role and share the household duties (Rhodes, Jean and Englund, Susan, 1993).

A good social adjustment is important not only because the adolescent craves for social success but also because his social adjustment in adolescence will determine to a large extent what he will be throughout his adult years. The adolescent who gains experience of social adjustment within the family will determine the type of adjustment he would make in his social world outside the family. His social competence stems from the kind of family in which he is reared and to which he is expected to adjust and contribute.

Sociologically adolescence is a period in the life of a person when the society in which he functions ceases to regard him as a child and does not accord him full
adult status, roles and functions (Hollingshead, 1949). In the terms of behaviour it is defined as the roles expected to be played by a person by virtue of his status in the society.

Thus the transition period of adolescence from childhood to adulthood is a critical period for the adolescent to adjust to the social needs of the adult world. The society expects him to act according to his age and at the same time shoulder certain social responsibilities. Parents with better understanding of this period of a child's life help him in the healthy development of his personality by recognising his status both within and outside the family. One of the means for such psycho-social development of the adolescents is the family programme of social activities.

The participation of the adolescents in the social activities of the family along with their parents and the parents' responsibility to create situations for such get together activities of the family may foster healthy parent-adolescent relationship.

Adolescents, by participating in the social activities and by sharing the household duties of the family, enjoy close company of the parents and the family members for a good span, frequently. Adolescents are also interested in having a social relationship with people other than family members, like school-friends and neighbourhood-friends. He insists upon choosing his own friend. Opposition from parents, teachers or other adults merely serves to strengthen his determination to cling to the friends of his choice and not to permit parent interference. Parents' attitude towards the friends of their child and the type of affectionate treatment they give to their friends is important for the adolescents to establish his status in the peer world (Tucker, Carolyn, Harris, Yvette, Brady, Beverly, Keith, 1996).

Both boys and girls call their friends home to show them the house they live in. Hurlock (1956) says: "to an adolescent girl the home is her background. She wants to be as glamorous as possible to provide a fitting setting when she entertains her friends. Even to an adolescent boy the home is important, may not be so much from the angle of interior as of the exterior".

2.1.(c) Adolescents' Attitude Towards Social Responsibility:

There are some common interests pertaining to the social life of the family which develop within the family. The social interests of the family are termed as social norms.
The term social norm indicates a set of norms which the families have laid down regarding the social life that prevails within its boundaries. The more one comes to observe and study families, the more apparent are the existence and operation of certain prescribed forms of interests and activities of the family. This constitutes an important part of family life and the personality formation process of its younger members.

The social norms of the family develop in connection with many aspects of the family life, but cluster particularly round such activities as celebration of festivals, religious activities of the family, marriages of sons and daughters.

The adolescent boy or girl has many interests. Some of them are continuation of childhood pursuits. But many are new which develop as the child grows and by the time he reaches early adolescence his interests are mainly related to his multifarious activities. The root of his interests depend upon his favourable attitudes towards an activity in which he desires to participate. The parents are the transmitters of culture to their offsprings. They orient the child with the values of education. Belief in the value or otherwise of education is deeply rooted in the value system of the particular family in which the child is reared.

Certain co-curricular activities should be encouraged in schools such as scouts and guides, social services and road safety control. Such social activities not only help the child to develop social responsibility but it also helps him to become an ideal citizen. He also realizes his responsibilities towards his community and tries to fulfil his obligations by taking active part in the life of the community in which he lives. Thus by coming closer to the community he may gain insight into the problems of the people of the community (Chu, Lily and Powers, Peter A, 1995).

Thus the attitude of the parent towards their child as well as adolescents attitude towards peer group definitely have a bearing on the development of social competence.