CHAPTER - 3

THEORIES OF ADOLESCENCE
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Introductory: After examining the various theories of adjustment, it will be proper to review the different theories put forth by various psychologists to understand the special stage of development known as adolescence.

6. Stanley Hall

Hall was the first psychologist to conduct research on the changes and behavioural characteristics of adolescents which although were based on the American population of the first decade of the twentieth century applies equally well to Indians during the last decade of the century.

Hall [1] applied Darwin's theory of evolution to human development and stated that human beings recapitulate the developmental stages of the whole race during their lifetime. He divided human development into five stages as follows:

(1) Birth to 4 years: Infancy
(2) 4-8 years: Childhood
(3) 8-12 years: Later childhood
(4) 12-25 years: Adolescence
(5) 25 years and above: Adulthood
Adolescence

Hall considered this period as the most crucial period of a human's life time when the adolescent begins a new life in which new traits of personality are born. It is a period of great stress and strain [2]. There are great contradiction going on in him or her the main ones of which are given below:

(1) Energy and enthusiasm v/s indifference
(2) Gaity and laughter v/s gleam melancholy
(3) Vanity and beastfulness v/s humiliation
(4) Idealistic altruism v/s selfishness
(5) Sensitivity v/s callousness
(6) Tenderness v/s cruelty

Hall divided the development into various types as follows:

Physical Development

There is a sudden acceleration in the growth of the body of the human being after he reaches the age of 12 years. Adolescence begins in girls a little earlier than in boys with the start of menstruation the body of the girl child assumes the form of womanhood creating great stress and strain. Her height shoots up, her breasts begin to develop, and her seat becomes bulky, all set for giving birth to a child. The body develops a little later, but assumes on an average greater height than the girl. He also develops hair
on his face, armpits and around his sexual organ. His voice becomes harsher and manly.

**Sexual Development**

Both boys and girls develop interest in the opposite sex. Their sexual organs mature and they assume the form of adults. With these sexual development, there is a great urge, sometimes not overt, to have sexual intercourse with the opposite sex.

**Cognitive Development**

The development of intellect accompanies the onset of sexuality. He develops the capacity to reason at every occurrence he meets with and doubts the set principles in society. He passes through school to college where his intellect can grasp many new subjects. It is observed that most of the new theories of knowledge get their birth during the later part of adolescence.

**Moral and Social Development**

The adolescent has a much firmer and more mature grasp of society’s rules and regulations, which he tries to challenge when he find them inconvenient.

**Religious Development**

With the development of moral sensibilities, the adolescent develops religious consciousness. In India, the adolescents learn most of the religious beliefs from their cultural heritage and social environment.
Weakness of Hall's Theory

Hall's belief in the genetic transmission of acquired characteristics is proved wrong scientifically. His insistence on linking human development with recapitulation of cultural history was also found unscientific. His conclusion were not supported by observed facts. He could not systematically integrate the huge material that he collected during his research.

However, it should be stated to Hall's credit that he directed the popular thought to this neglected area.

Sigmund Freud

Freud emphasized the early childhood experiences in the development of personality and adolescence is one of the stages of development. His stages are known as psychosexual development stages. During the oral stage, the mouth is the erotogenic zone of pleasure. Then comes the anal stage when the child enjoys pleasure in the anus. From 3 to 6 years is the prethallic stage of infantile sexuality when the child plays with his or her sexual organs. From 6 to 12 years is the latency period which is comparatively a calm period. In the beginning of adolescence when the boy or girl attains puberty, many changes like physical, mental, emotional and social revive the early childhood conflicts again. This is a period of great stress and strain. The adolescent makes a transition from auto-erotism and childish concern with
parents as love object to adult sexuality and to the choice of heterosexual love objects.

Anna Freud

The daughter of Sigmund Freud, Anna modified psychoanalytic position on adolescence. She agrees that early childhood experiences have deep impression on the development of personality later on. She believes that there is a great difference between the problems that teenager must cope with and the dilemmas that confront the small child of three years of age. She also believed that the ego of the early infantile period is undeveloped and indeterminant, impressionable and plastic under the influence of id. In the prepubertal period on the contrary it is rigid and firmly consolidated. The infantile ego can suddenly revolt against the outside world and also can ally itself with the id to obtain instinctual gratification, but if the ego of the adolescent does so, it becomes involved in conflict with the super-ego.

The adolescent now understands his sexual urge but feels guilty about it. His conflict is internalised. He slowly learns to achieve a balance between the control and satisfaction of his sexual impulses. A number of defence mechanisms are developed to help the individual to resolve his conflicts.
Asceticism

Anna Freud believes that some adolescents demonstrate interest in the lives of saints to lead a life of self-denial defending their austerities with a zeal. By imitating their behaviour, he tries to show his love and respect for them.

The adolescent sometimes takes the extreme course by giving up all pleasures for a time. It is believed that repression of his sexual drives for thousands of years, man has actually developed an inborn pre-disposition for self-control. The extreme asceticism of some adolescents is an indication of a phylogenetic inheritance.

According to Anna Freud, intellectual development during adolescence is chiefly the overt sign of a new and unusual defensive strategy, a new means of controlling impulses. The adolescents often perform intellectual fears. She also believed that the range of abstract interests and of the problems which the young boys and girls try to solve is very wide. They would argue the case for free love or marriage and the family life. These flourishes of intelligence serve the interest of defence. The issues of debating represent opposing sides of his inner disguised and raised to a lofty intellectual plans. By casting his own internal struggle in the form of an abstract argument, the adolescent could
manage to gain some distance from it, rather than having to face his renewed feelings of hostility for his father.

The fact that adolescents in general seem brighter than younger children is essentially owing to the enormous surge of libido at puberty. Freud suggested that sexuality in one form or another plays a highly significant role in motivating all intellectual curiosity.

Anna believes that a new feeling emerges in the adolescent during adolescence. His love is fickle and unstable. He often changes his friends. She thought that the reason for this instability is involved in the notion of conflict and defence. The youthful rebellion is caused by the resurgence of infantile sexuality. At puberty, all the old oedipal wishes reawaken. The adolescent behaves much as he had done during early childhood. In short, Anna Freud concedes a lesser role to adolescence than did Stanley Hall.

**Erik H. Erikson**

His theory is known as psychosocial theory of personality. He also considers adolescence as a stage of crisis. He feels that the adolescent suffers from identity crisis. He lays more stress on social features rather than biological ones. He gives more importance to parents, siblings, peers and the society in the development of human beings. He has spelt out 8 stages of development as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Psychosocial Crisis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Infancy</td>
<td>Trust v/s mistrust</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Early childhood</td>
<td>Autonomy v/s doubt</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Play age</td>
<td>Initiative v/s guilt</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. School age</td>
<td>Industry v/s inferiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Adolescence</td>
<td>Identity v/s role confusion</td>
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<td>6. Young adulthood</td>
<td>Intimacy v/s social isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Adulthood</td>
<td>Generativity v/s self-absorption</td>
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<td>8. Mature age</td>
<td>Integrity v/s despair</td>
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During adolescence, boys and girls acquire the sense of identity which involves mastery of the problems of childhood and preparation to face problems of adult life. The sense of identity is very useful in searching employment and also a suitable life-partner in marriage. Erikson does not distinguish between personal growth and communal change. The development of the sense of identity has become a social issue which is more important for developing countries which are still passing through transitional period. Identity depends upon becoming an important citizen who is an accountable part of a larger whole.

There is a conflict during adolescence because at one extreme, the adolescent strives towards an integration of inner and outer direction and at the other extreme, there is diffusion, leading to a sense of instability in the midst of many warring inner and outer demands.
Psychological and anatomical changes in adolescents necessitate an awareness of new demands which suddenly shake their confidence which should be gradually developed by peers. The changes because of maturity during adolescence upset the balance in the id-ego-super integration. The temporarily dormant psycho-sexual drives of childhood demand full attention of the youth. The adolescent gets interested in persons of the opposite sex for the satisfaction of his or her biological needs. The oedipus complex of childhood finds the youth in a different social matrix. He seeks more friends outside his family for the expression of his urges.

Many late maturing adolescents are faced with continued identify diffusion concerning their own potentialities and their prospective place within their culture group. He may sometimes solve his dilemma by becoming a deviate or delinquent. Choosing the identity opposite to the one the society suggests in preference to remaining a non-entity creates a crisis for him.

Adolescence represents a socially authorised delay of adulthood as a psychological safety device. Adolescence is a period of extended childhood and provides a psycho-social moratorium just as latency furnishes a psycho-sexual moratorium which is a period of delay granted to somebody who is not ready to meet obligation or forced on somebody who should give himself time to do so.
Major Dimensions of Identity

(1) Time-perspective v/s time diffusion
(2) Self-certainty v/s apathy
(3) Role experimentation v/s negative identity
(4) Anticipation of achievement v/s work paralysis
(5) Sexual identity v/s bisexual diffusion
(6) Leadership polarization v/s authority diffusion
(7) Ideological polarization v/s diffusion of ideals

During adolescence, the individual has an opportunity to work on the seven dimensions mentioned above and to utilize the many facets of his moratorium. If unfortunately the moratorium fails due to wrong decision of the adolescent or due to strong feelings of failure, ambivalence occurs in behavioural as well as in verbal and cognitive activities. The adolescents are often seen talking endlessly with the members of the opposite or the same sex and age to search for an identity.

Erikson believed that the adolescent has a great capacity for phantary matched by ego mechanisms that permit him to go into dangerous regions of phantary or social experiment and to catch himself at the last moment and divert himself in company, in acting, in literature or in music. The social experimentation of the adolescent includes attitudes of adult significance, occupational behaviour, preparation for intimacy and the selection of partners, etc.
Henry Stack Sullivan

In the beginning Sullivan was a Freudian, but later on he became a neo-Freudian emphasizing importance of the relationship of the individual to the society. He divided adolescence into three parts, (i) pre-adolescence, (ii) early adolescence, and (iii) late adolescence.

Sullivan emphasized inter-personal needs rather than libido as the driving force in life which is quite different from the views of the psychologist school. He regarded adolescence as a period of stress and strain like Hall, but his interpretation of youths' turmoil is different from Hall's. Hall believed that adolescence was tumultuous because it represented a stage that was ambiguous in an evolutionary sense which is midway between primitive and civilized society, but Sullivan believed that adolescence is tumultuous not because it recapitulates a transitional stage in human history nor because it recalls the conflicts of an earlier period, but because it represents a number of new and perplexing challenges. He emphasized puberty as the culprit because it stirs up feelings that the youth has never experienced before.

Hall did not recognize the importance of infantile sexuality like Freud, he distinguished between the sex-sensitivity of an infant and a pubescent youngster. The adolescent is endowed with the capacity beyond the competence of a young
child, the ability to experience sexual intercourse and orgasm.

Sullivan believed that during the adolescence, a new interpersonal need - lustful satisfaction develops due to physiological changes in the body of both the sexes. This need must be integrated with other needs like that of security and being free of anxiety. As it is not properly integrated due to certain cultural restrictions causing all sorts of collisions between needs. These collisions create problems for the adolescents. The adolescent is driven by his own newly emerging sexual needs towards physical contact but to achieve a relationship that is both physically and emotionally intimate may prove difficult. Adolescents make friendship with persons of their own sex during pre-adolescence, but they are expected of the same type of intimate friendship with persons of the opposite sex in post-adolescence. There are intricacies of integrating the sexual need with other crucial needs in life. In India, problems are created by parents who do not like their sons and daughters to make friendship with persons of the opposite sex. The anxiety connected with sexuality during adolescence is internal but it affects the relationships with others. Sullivan felt that in late adolescence, biological, social and emotional aspects of development are interrelated and inseparable with each other. Late
adolescence extends from the patterning of preferred genital activity through unnumbered educative steps of the establishment of a fully mature human being as permitted by available opportunity.

**Anthropological Theory of Adolescence**

Anthropologists studied adolescence from a different angle when psycho-analysts developed their theories based on infantile sexuality. Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict were in the forefront in this regard. In view of their extensive research, they contradicted the psycho-analysts, since the latters' theories did not hold good in other cultures where much more sexuality was permissible. Their contention was that if behaviour differs from culture to culture, biological theories of growth like those of psycho-analysts will not be tenable. According to anthropologists, behaviour is determined by environment obtaining in specific culture. There is a great difference between the developed societies and primitive societies of the world and this difference affects the development of behaviour of children. There is a great different in the continuity or psychological development in highly developed societies in comparison to primitive societies where the process of development is gradual and less disruptive than in the developed societies. Ruth Benedict specified the following three areas of life in which differences of cultural conditioning exist.
(1) **Sex Role:**

Children in developed societies were ignorant of specifics of sexual behaviour. They knew very little about conception, child birth, menstruation, etc., but as soon as they get married, they are expected to know everything as adults. In primitive cultures, children from an early age are trained to acquire their sex roles without any social taboos and inhibitions.

(2) **Responsibility:**

Another important area in which differences exist is the responsibility given to children. In western as well as Indian culture, children are allowed to enjoy irresponsibility till the end of adolescence, but as soon as they get a job and leave home, they are expected to be totally responsible for their behaviour.

(3) **Dominance:**

In developed cultures, children are expected to switch from a totally submissive and dependent role, some times within a year, to assume a totally dominant role of controlling the life of their whole family without making adequate preparation. This puts a great strain on the life of the individual. In her study of growing up of Samoan people, Meal found that adolescence did not present any stress or strain, but was an orderly developing of a slowly maturing interests and
activities. The girls' minds were perplexed by no conflicts, troubled by no ambitions.

Learning Theory of Adolescence

Learning theorists like Albert Bandura, Sears and McCandless developed social learning theories of human development. Their main contentions are as follows:

1. Behaviour is acquired in the continuous process of interaction in the environment. Principles of learning explain changes in behaviour.

2. Learning theory is not a stage theory. The development is continuous and is less rigid and relies on theoretical constructs than the stage theories.

3. The learning theorists believe that children learn by direct and indirect teaching that encourages them to conform to the standards of behaviour expected in their culture.

4. Anti-social aggressive behaviour in adolescents is not the result of any hormone changes of puberty but is a result of socialization process that begins very early in childhood and continues throughout development. Socialization is the process whereby individuals learn and internalize the norms of their own culture. This is mainly done by imitating the models that the adolescents have in their mind during their personal experience and observation. The acquisition of
behaviour depends on a number of variables such as how well the individual observes and notes the behaviour of his models, how accurately he remembers it and how capable he is of physically reproducing it and how motivated he is.

Children may model their behaviour not only on their parents, but on anybody from among his peers, teachers, political or religious personality or historical hero for some behaviour. Bijon and Baer are learning theorists who have used the concept of operant conditioning for the modification of human behaviour. Albert Baudura and his associates have relied mainly on observational learning rather than on operant conditioning model in the development of human behaviour. Baudura feels that the prototype adolescent, subject to the turmoil, anxieties, sexual tensions, compulsive conformity and acute identity crisis represents only ten per cent of the adolescent population - the ten per cent dramatized in movies, literature and mass media.

McCandless [4] has developed a learning theory which emphasizes that behaviour of human beings is governed by drives. He agrees that differential development of boys and girls create sex-differences. In addition, there are other influences, namely frustration, aggression, anxiety, curiosity and independence. It is not yet clear whether
these drives are learned or acquired automatically from the impact of the environment, but all of them serve to energize the individual and also help him to select and direct his behaviour.

Kurt Lewin
Kurt Lewin was a cognitive field theorist. He called his theory, a field theory because it is best characterized as a method of analysing causal relations and of building scientific constructs. According to Lewin, behaviour depends on two types of factors: (i) personal factors which include age, intelligence, specific talents and sex, and (ii) environmental factors which include family relationship, neighbourhood, peers and authorities.

The concept of life space is very important in his theory. Life space is the psychological field in which behaviour occurs. It represents person and his environment explained by the following formula: \( B = F(PXE) \) where \( B \) is behaviour, \( F \) is function, \( P \) is person and \( E \) is environment. Thus it means that the behaviour is the function of the interaction of the persons with his environment.

Lewin believed that adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood which involves changes in the roles of adolescent. Confusion is created in the mind of the adolescent due to changes in his body and his
environment. When he was a child he knew his roles well as to what he had to do and when he will attain adulthood, he will again understand his responsibilities and limitations and what is prohibited by society or his personal abilities, but in adolescence, he moves from his childhood and finds himself with great unknowns. He is not clear about his roles and responsibilities.

As the child enters adolescence, he undergoes a change in belongingness. He is no more a child and he does not want to be considered a child. He physically moves into new schools and neighbourhood coming in contact with and becoming a part of new groups. This change in belongingness is very important during adolescence as it has been experienced before. Lewin believed that the uncertain character of adolescent's behaviour and conflicts can partly be explained by the lack of cognitive clarity concerning the adults world which he is going to enter. Changes take place in his body also. More or less strange and new body experiences arise and make this part of his life space which is so close and vital to the individual strange and unknown. The time dimension of the life space also becomes an unknown region in adolescence. The adolescent plans his own activities and life becomes his own responsibility. His future plans involve present, immediate and distant future as to satisfy his own values and goals.
As he does not like to be considered a child and as he has not yet attained adulthood, the adolescent's position is similar to what is called in sociology the marginal man who is characterized as a person standing on the boundary between two groups, not belonging to either and uncertain about his belongingness. As a result, he may tend to show unbalanced behaviour either to boisterousness or shyness exhibiting too much tension and a frequent shift between extremes of contradictory behaviour. He is unsure and confused. He is open to new ideas and behaviours because he brings a limited if already developed mechanism with him into adolescence.

An adolescent grows faster, he experiences puberty and begins to feel the necessity for formulating a set of life goals. Such development constitutes one type of discontinuity during adolescence.

Jean Piaget

This Swiss psychologist considered four distinct stages in the development from birth to adolescence. They are:

(1) Sensory motor stage when the child's intellectual capacities are limited and primitive. The child acquires numerous basic skills, the only problems he can tackle are those which can be acted out bodily.

(2) Intuitive stage which starts at about 2 years and ends at 7 years. In this stage, the child learns to speak.
and communicate and reason in a far more efficient fashion.

(3) Concrete operation stage when the child becomes capable of appreciating the constancies.

(4) Formal operational stage when the child develops the ability to ponder and deliberate between various alternatives.

Jean Piaget's belief that capacity for formal operation develops gradually rather than abruptly is very important. According to Piaget, the eruption of this kind of new thinking in the form of general ideas and abstract constructions is actually much less sudden than it would seem. It develops relatively in continuous fashion from the concrete thinking of middle childhood. The turning point occurs at about the age of twelve, after which there is rapid progress in the direction of free reflection no longer directly attached to external reality.

E. Spranger

This German psychologist made significant contribution by proposing a unique theory of adolescence reconciling the views of stage theory and continuum theory of adolescence. Spranger's individual variability theory is based on the basic concept of human uniqueness. According to him, there may be three main patterns of development during adolescence as follows:
(1) **Storm and stress pattern:** This pattern is widely accepted in the society. Adolescents who follow this pattern experience problems during the transition from childhood to adulthood.

(2) **Slow and continuous pattern:** Some adolescents who pass through this transitional period unscathed show slow and continuous development without any turmoil and move quietly and peacefully into adulthood without any visible signs of conflict.

(3) **Dynamic pattern:** This pattern seems to be a cross between the other two, a kind of dynamic pattern. Adolescents who follow this pattern of development participate directly in their own development. The experience crisis but they overcome it by consciously and actively trying to matter them.

The recent researches of Offer (1974-75) provide tentative support to Spranger’s theory who agrees that there are basically three developmental routes through adolescence: (i) continuous growth, (ii) surgent growth, and (iii) tumultuous growth.
References


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