CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An individual with unlimited capacities and enthusiasm, ruderless, turbulent and emotionally overconfident, but with strange diffidence is known to be an Adolescent. Adolescence as a stage intervening between childhood and adulthood is considered to be a very critical period in the life of an individual. It refers to a period of developments and adjustments. In fact, it is a period of revolutionary changes in the child which are physical as well as psychological.

The incidents of this period greatly affect the whole personality of the individual. That is why it has been called the most crucial period in the developmental process. The term "Adolescence" means "a period of adjustments which a youngster makes in a transition from the childhood irresponsibility and dependence to mature responsibility and self direction" (Kuhlen, 1952). Adolescence as a collective phenomenon is nearly universal and it has attracted more of attention in present times for study, exploration and analysis etc.

The issue relating to identity formation is very much relevant to the various levels of growth and development process of the total adolescence period. In other words this issue
assumes significance in another context also i.e. the three stages within the adolescence period itself i.e. early, mid and late adolescence. This is roughly the age period from 14 to 20 years. Becoming aware of one's identity and developing a sense of stable identity is a process that naturally extends over a period of some years. Since this issue is a crucial one during adolescence, its study at different growth levels becomes relevant and important.

The adolescent or adult with a strong sense of Ego Identity sees himself or herself as a separate, distinct individual. Any developmental influence that contributes to a perception of oneself as separate and distinct from others, as reasonably consistent and integrated and as having continuity contributes to an overall sense of Ego Identity. A well defined sense of identity is at least partially dependent on the capacity to conceptualize oneself in abstract terms, at times almost like a spectator - "to take one's own thought an object and reason about it".

The most important task of the adolescent according to Erikson is to discover "Who I am". This is the time when this basic question "Who I am" is asked with unrelenting force and insistence and reference groups and available roles are most scanned in an attempt to derive a meaningful answer. The answer depends on the social and cultural involvements
which contribute to the unique nature of the individual. It is because of this that understanding of the adolescents and their identity becomes imperative.

Building up of a positive, consistent and stable self concept and the formation of stable sense of Ego Identity may run parallel to each other. Ego Identity is related to a sense of self awareness and correspondence between the self concept of a person and what others think of him. As Erikson (1959) himself admitted "the identity covers much of what has been called the self by a variety of workers, be it in the form of self concept, self-system or in that of fluctuating self experience".

In fact Self seems a key concept in any speculation of Ego Identity. It refers to a person's idea of himself. It is a developmental form of an individual consisting of interrelated attitudes towards one's self.

Self concept has various aspects of which 'perceived or actual' and 'the ideal' are the two important ones. The perceived self concept is the concept of what one is. It reflects one's role, the relationships with others and the reactions that others have towards one. The ideal self concept is the picture that people have of what they would like to be. These two aspects of self concept have physical and psychological dimensions and though separate in the beginning, they fuse as childhood progresses.
As has already been seen, a very significant aspect of personality in the life of adolescents is achieving an integrated sense of identity and role establishment. But before this is achieved, lot of adjustments with the environment are to be made. If the environment is hostile, fearful and full of tensions, maladjustment may occur. It is then not possible for the Ego to function adequately. The role of conscious, rational ego is the most crucial to a person's healthy adjustment. Better adjustment therefore is contributory to the development of a strong sense of Ego Identity.

The socio-psychological characteristics that become typical of adolescents are greatly determined by their family background and the family structure. An important component of family structure is the socio-economic status that it has in the social hierarchy. The self identity that a child develops by is greatly affected by the educational, professional and economic level of the family that he belongs to. These aspects of the family status influence his attitudes and his value system. The sense of identity that he develops, therefore, is more or less in consonance with the familial patterns of thought and behaviour which in turn have emerged under a strong impact of the above stated background factors.

The preceding discussion makes it sufficiently clear that the search for an individual identity is particularly
prominent during adolescence, and the young person at this stage of development is vitally concerned with the question of how to connect roles and skills cultivated earlier with demands of tomorrow. A study of these variables i.e. self concept, adjustment and socio-economic status is thus relevant in an explanation of the development of a stable and consistent ego formation leading to a stable and consistent sense of identity of the same. Hence the plan for the present study.

Statement of the Problem:

The problem under investigation may be stated as below:

"A Cross Sectional Study of Ego Identity of Adolescents in Relation to Self Concept, Adjustment and Socio-Economic Status".

Operational Definitions of the Terms Used:

The operational definitions of the terms in the statement of the problem and as they are used in the present study are as given below:

Adolescence:

It refers to the period of development which is transitory between childhood and adulthood and ranges from 13 to 20 years.
Ego-Identity:

Ego-Identity means a sense of self sameness and continuity between the past, present and future sense of self and correspondence between the self-concept of a person and what others think of him.

Self-Concept:

Self-concept can be generally understood as a person's ideas, feelings and attitudes about himself. In other words, it refers to how one perceives oneself.

Socio-Economic Status:

It is the level indicative of the educational, occupational and economic position of a family which determines its status in the social hierarchy.

Adjustment:

For the present study, the definition of adjustment given by Shaffer(1961) has been kept in view which is "Adjustment is the process by which a living organism maintain a balance between its needs and circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs".

Aims and Objectives of the Study:

The study was conducted with the following objectives in view:-
1. To study the Ego-Identity development of the adolescents from Class IX - XII.

2. To study the relationship of Ego-Identity with Socio-Economic status of the adolescents.

3. To examine the relationship of Ego-Identity with Adjustment of the Adolescent students.

4. To study the relationship of Ego-Identity of the adolescents with their Self-Concept.

5. To see whether the independent variables of Socio-Economic status, Adjustment and Self-Concept are significant predictors of Ego-Identity.

6. To see whether Class IX-XII students differ significantly on Ego-Identity.

7. To study the differences amongst Class IX-XII students on Socio-Economic Status, Adjustment and Self-Concept.

8. To ascertain whether government and public school students differ significantly on Ego-Identity.

9. To study the differences amongst government and public school students on the independent variables of Socio-Economic Status, Adjustment and Self-Concept.
10. To see whether significant differences exist between boys and girls on Ego-Identity.

11. To study the differences amongst boys and girls on the independent variables of Socio-Economic status, Adjustment and Self-Concept.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. There is a development of Ego-Identity amongst the adolescent students from Class IX - XII.

2. Significant relationship exists between Ego-Identity and Socio-Economic status.

3. Ego-Identity is significantly related to Adjustment.

4. There is significant relationship between Ego-Identity and Self-Concept.

5. Socio-Economic status, Adjustment and Self-Concept conjointly contribute significantly to the development of Ego-Identity amongst adolescents.

6. There are significant differences in the Ego-Identity of adolescent students in Class IX-XII.
7. Significant differences exist in Class IX - XII students in Socio-Economic status, Adjustment and Self-Concept.

8. Government and public school students differ significantly on Ego-Identity.

9. Students of government and public schools differ significantly on Socio-Economic status, Adjustment and Self-Concept.

10. There exists significant difference amongst boys and girls on Ego-Identity.

11. There are significant differences in Socio-Economic Status, Adjustment and Self-Concept of adolescent boys and girls in class IX - XII.

**Need of the Study:**

A central theme of the developmental process is achieving identity and this issue is crucial during the adolescent period. The well known rebelliousness of the adolescent has an important relationship to his search for identity. Along with the issue of identity development, "self" seems a key concept in any speculation on Ego-Identity. It refers to a persons' idea of himself. It is a developmental form of an individual consisting of inter-related attitudes that an individual has acquired in relation to his capacities, objects, persons, family groups,
social values, goals and institutions which define and regulate his relatedness to them in concrete situations and activities.

No one is born with self nor is selfhood merely a matter of "internal maturation". Selfhood has to be achieved. It can be achieved only in a social milieu with the surrounding culture essentially into the process of developing a unique self, within a setting common to many (Gale, 1969).

Achieving an adequate, stable and consistent idea of the self like a cogent sense of ego-identity is part of the developmental process. As the child gains in maturity with his physical and psycho-social development, his ideas about 'self' and 'self-identity' also tend to become stabilised.

Building up of a positive, consistent and stable self-concept and the formation of a stable sense of ego-identity may run parallel to each other. And since adolescence is the period when there are the crucial tasks which adolescent has to accomplish a closer examination of these processes becomes relevant.

The two tasks stated above i.e. identity formation and Self-Concept may be affected and influenced by a number of factors and forces. Of these, family is an important variable. Being a significant part of the total social system, it affects personality in many ways. The way an individual develops and
what socio-psychological characteristics become typical of him is greatly determined by his family set up. The family structure depends greatly upon its social and economic background and this exerts an important influence upon the growth pattern of a child.

Another significant aspect of personality in the life of adolescent is achieving an integrated sense of identity and role establishment. Before this is achieved, lots of adjustments with the environment are to be made. A hostile fearful and tense environment may lead to maladjustments. Besides, there may be something within the individual himself that may hamper his adequate adjustment to the situations around. An investigation into these and their impact on Ego-Identity development needs deeper study and analysis and hence the present study.

Delimitations of the Study:

The study has been delimited in respect to the following:

The sample for the study has been confined to the schools of Chandigarh and of these only government and public schools have been included. The focus of the study being adolescents, students belonging to class levels IX - XII were included. The study has further been delimited in respect of the independent variables. Of the various factors that may be meaningfully related to Ego-Identity, only three i.e. Socio-Economic-status,
Adjustment and Self-Concept were selected for an elaborate investigation.