CHAPTER III

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS DURING ADOLESCENCE.

Adolescence is a period of human growth. It is an important stage of development because it is the last stage before adulthood and therefore offers to both teachers and parents the last opportunity to educate a child for adult responsibilities. Since adolescence is viewed as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood this transition involves not only physiological changes, emotional changes, social changes but also mental and intellectual changes. These changes are not sudden in nature although it is during adolescence that the emotionally and socially immature child approaches adult level of physical and intellectual growth. It is now recognized that culture plays an important role in the life and problems of adolescents.

It is a period some parents find very hard to deal with because unconsciously they may not want their children to grow up and become independent. In these sense, some adolescent problems may be much a result of older people's inability to deal with youngsters as of any period posed solely by the adolescent themselves.

Studies of the physical growth of boys and girls show that there is increased growth just before the onset of pubescence. Since pubescence appears in girls earlier than in boys, the accelerated rate of growth in height occurs earlier among girls. This is noticed in a group of girls and boys in the school. These girls at the age of twelve, thirteen or fourteen will be on the average as tall as or taller than the boys of the same age. There is also increased rate of growth in weight just prior to the onset of pubescence.

Accompanying this growth, important changes in body proportion also takes place. There is rapid growth of legs and arms, followed by rapid growth of the trunk of the body. The hands, feet and nose also play an important part in adolescent development. The earliest indications of the development of the girl during the pre-adolescent stage is the development of the breasts. By the end of adolescence, physical growth is complete and intellectual growth very nearly so. Only severe deprivation can prevent a human organism from reaching adult size and growing into expected mental maturity. The real problems of adolescence are therefore emotional, social, moral and economic.

Pronounced physical changes take place in the beginning of adolescence. The most important changes involve the sex glands. The beginning of adolescence is marked in the case of girls by the first menstruation. This is the period
of puberty. Girls show a variation in the age of first menstruation from ten to seventeen.4 In a warmer country like India girls begin menstruation at age eleven but there is wide range of difference among normal individuals in the average age of maturing.5 During adolescence there are many physical changes in both girls and boys, and their concern over bodily growth increases. This is a period when the school programme needs to provide for divergent interest. There is an increase in the pupils concern over self; there is a fear of being different, there is a fear of not being accepted. The adolescent at this stage age has a sensitivity to the opinion of both adult and peers.6

Any period of change is likely to be a period fraught with problems, and since the adolescent period is concerned with growth and development as well as changed interests and aspirations, it is accompanied by many potential difficulties. The complexity of our economic and social order has introduced problems that did not exist at an earlier period.7

Adolescent girls are greatly disturbed by defective physical features. Girls are disturbed by such physical defects as extreme tallness or shortness, excessive stoutness or thinness, underdeveloped or overdeveloped breasts, pimples and acne and any feature in which a girl believes she is different from other girls of her age. Physical features exert a powerful influence on adolescent attitudes and behaviour. Girls desire those physical attributes that will make them attractive to boys. Girls are proud of their femininity and want their face to be free from acne or other skin blemish.

Girls as a group outpace the boys in their physical development. The physical changes have important psychological repercussion as adolescents adjust themselves to their changing bodies and to the upsurge in their sexual behaviour and capacities. The period when physical changes are at their peak in adolescence is frequently called the awkward age. It takes time for adolescents to get used to the changes in their body proportions. The girl with a shapely bosom is very selfconscious about it. She thinks boys are staring at her and she is sometimes right.


Beginning around the tenth year girls start to look more feminine. There is development of the "secondary sex characteristics" studies of girls have revealed a maturation sequence in the development of the secondary sex characteristics. The pattern most frequently observed is as follows—

(i) Increase in width and roundness of the hips, caused partly by the enlargement of the pelvic bone and partly by the development of the subcutaneous fat.

(ii) Beginning of breast development.

(iii) Appearance of pubic hair.

(iv) The menarche.

(v) Appearance of axillary hair and a slight down on the upper lip.

(vi) Change in voice from a high pitched, childish tone to a low pitched more melodious tone.

(vii) Broadening of the shoulders.

(viii) Arms and legs take on a definite shape.

There are several important changes taking place in the skin at puberty and during the remaining years of adolescence. The soft, delicate, transparent skin of the child gradually becomes thick and coarse as the individual matures sexually. The pores of the skin also enlarge during adolescence. The sweat glands function at puberty and the


11. Ibid.
The characteristic order of axillary perspiration is detected first at puberty. Increased secretion from these glands occur during the pre-menstrual and menstrual portions of the menstrual cycle.

The 'sebaceous' or oil producing glands, become especially large and active at puberty. They are closely associated with skin disturbance during adolescence. There is a disproportion between the size and activity of these glands and the size of the gland ducts that begin at puberty, so they frequently become plugged with dried oil and turn black as a result of oxidation of the dried oil upon exposure to air. These plugged gland ducts are generally referred to as blackheads. The glands continue to function, even though the opening has been blocked and raised pimples then appear on the surface of the skin.\textsuperscript{12}

Traces of facial hair appear on the upper lip. When the development of the pubic hair is nearly completed, axillary hair begins to appear. Body hair is the last to develop during puberty. Girls have far less hair in their arms and legs than do boys. The effect of the secondary sex characteristic on a girl, is closely related to how important they are to her. As Parker has pointed out, secondary sex characteristics are the girl's badge of feminity, the basis of her physical attractiveness and she yearns for their

perfection. Her inability to achieve her ideal of perfection in these is the source of most of her problems during the age. 13

During adolescence normal young person advance on many intellectual fronts. They gain in intellectual capacity and power. They increase in their ability to grasp relationship and to solve problems of increasing complexity and difficulty. They acquire a greater capacity to deal with abstract ideas. They gain in breadth of knowledge, depth of understanding, judgement and common sense. 14 From an investigation it was found that instead of increase of immediate memory, reasoning, general information, manipulation of verbal concept increase upto the age of eighteen and nineteen. 15

A significant characteristic of the adolescent years is the fact that the interest and activities of young people in the secondary school tend to become more specialized that they differ from the activities of childhood. Secondary School students are willing to select different curricula in terms of their own ambition, likes or as a result of

parental pressures. The out of school interest and activities also are likely to differ from those experienced during early childhood years. Hence the mental growth pattern of young people are influenced by differing environmental situations. This variation is reflected in their performance in tests of intelligence. Although general adaptability to mentally stimulating situations may continue to show itself in adolescent behaviour, special mental abilities become much more evident than they were during the childhood years. The mental reactions of the adolescent do not change completely. The potentiality to develop certain special abilities has always being present. During adolescence, increasing mental growth and appropriate environmental conditions encourage the development of these abilities. For the adolescent the ability to concentrate in a task at hand is related to the personal interest in the activity. Sometimes the secondary school teacher does not understand why an adolescent girl may have so many interests and worries that she cannot concentrate in school study as the teacher expects. Environmental conditions interfere with concentration. One may be fortunate enough to have a room of her own and can study without disturbance. But one who is required to share a room with other members of the family can hardly concentrate in her work if the co-sharer is not considerate. Some adolescents, however, may be accustomed to distraction.

There is a general notion that diseased tonsils, lack of energy, malnutrition and other such single factors were direct cause of mental deficiency. The different studies conducted related to those problems have shown that no such direct relationship exists. A summary of studies concerned with the relationship between mental development and certain physical impairments indicates that these factors bear little relationship to each other.  

Memory is a special mental trait which every human being exhibit to a considerable extent. Unlike children, adolescents require motivation to memorize. Unless personal interest or desire acts as a motivating force, adolescents dislike memorization of scientific or mathematical formulas, grammatical rules or other similar study tasks.

From the early days of testing there has been argument as to the point at which mental growth stopped and at which deterioration set in. It was first believed that a person had developed by the age of eighteen all the mental power he was ever going to have, and that from then on any apparent increase was due merely to experience in using the ability he had. Recent research has cast doubt upon this assumption.


assumption. It now seems probable that growth continues up to at least fifty and even later among those whose ability was superior.

A study of the development of imagination and critical thinking during childhood and adolescence is made difficult by the lack of good instruments and techniques for measuring these mental functions. Yet teachers and parents recognize change in the imaginative abilities with age. The imagination of adolescents is reflected in their poems, stories, drawings, music and constructive activities. Vernon has offered evidence that children are unable to fully understand and interpret a series of pictures prior to age eleven. The interpretation given to a picture by a pre-adolescent will be determined not only by his mental development but also by previous experiences he has had with elements presented in the picture. If pupils are to be taught to think, they must first be taught to recognize problems, and must, secondly, learn sound methods for solution of such problems.


Mental growth and development is usually accompanied by increased social and intellectual demands and the need for assuming more responsibility and making decisions. This presents some difficult problems for adolescents who are no prepared through lack of guidance and experience to make choices and assume responsibilities. The competitive nature of our society is reflected in the procedures in our school and the attitudes present in the homes. Passing examination, securing satisfactory marks in school and going to college are the common aspirations of pupils in the upper grade of our society. School success is held as the important criterion of real success. Thus, many types of problem behaviour and personal and social maladjustment are traceable to failure in schools.

During the high school years there is marked growth in mental power. A teacher should therefore change the nature of her assignment as the pupils mature. The power is there waiting only for the right stimulus. A teacher can do much through her daily assignment and her classwork to stimulate eager interest and to promote intellectual growth.

Adolescent emotional experiences constitute an extremely important accompaniment of the growing-up process. Stanley Hall referred to the adolescent age as the period...

of "storm and stress". The word 'storm' suggests that anger with its accompaniment of temper outbursts is one of the dominant, if not the dominant, emotion at this age. "Storm" means anything which in a relatively extreme form tends to disrupt normal functioning; it refers to a generally upset condition which leads to deterioration of functioning, both physical and mental.\(^{22}\)

Most investigators of adolescent emotions agree that adolescence is a period of heightened emotionality. There is however no evidence that adolescence is such an emotionally disturbed time that unhappiness is either universal or persistent.\(^{23}\)

There is evidence that heightened emotionality is limited to a small portion of the adolescent span. It generally occurs during periods of developmental change. This is limited to the first or second year of adolescence. The more sudden and pronounced the physical changes, the greater the disturbance to body homeostasis and, in turn, the greater the likelihood of heightened emotionality.\(^{24}\)


slows down, heightened emotionality normally subsides. Heightened emotionality generally reaches its peak between the ages of eleven and twelve years. Thirteen and fourteen-year-olds are often irritable and get excited easily. Not all adolescents are subject to storm and stress. During adolescence those who deviate markedly from the norm for sexual maturing for their sex groups are the ones most likely to experience heightened emotionality of a severe and prolonged type. This is not because of the maturing itself but because of the many personal and social problems deviate sexual maturing brings. 25

The most common ways in which heightened emotionality is shown are nervous habits such as sucking the thumb, tongue protrusion and biting the lips. 26 Movement of hands and legs, roaming about and raising the eyebrows are also signs of restlessness. Of all the different nervous habits, nail biting is the most common in adolescence. Girls, as a rule, give up nail biting sooner than boys, not because of less emotional tension but rather to an early social consciousness. 27 Heightened emotionality makes the individual quarrelsome and the height of parent adolescent conflict.

26. Ibid., p. 78
comes during the early part of puberty at which time heightened emotionality is pronounced. One of the common accompaniments of heightened emotionality is the tendency to have a finicky appetite and to pick at food. Girls suffer more from food aversion and finicky appetite than boys. Many adolescents to escape from the anxieties and frustrations of daily life withdraw into the world of day dreams. They temporarily can be free from emotional stress by day dreaming.

There are a number of common causes of feelings of insecurity and uncertainty on the part of the adolescent. These feelings predispose them to heightened emotionality. They are mainly due to environmental and social factors.

Improper amounts or unbalanced combinations of nutrients are likely to predispose the individual to emotional tension. Prolonged malnutrition from insufficient diet or from poor choice of foods leads to emotional disturbances. Many of the feelings of personal inadequacy that


give rise to heightened emotionality stems from social expectations. Many adolescents set goal far beyond their capacities. When they cannot reach these goals they lower their goals thus adding to their feelings of inadequacy. The social group expects the adolescents to achieve mature behaviour in their relationship to members of the opposite sex. Problems relating to correct social behaviour and getting along with members of the opposite sex also lead to nervous tension and emotional excitement. Many adolescents find it difficult to adjust to high school work which leads to emotional disturbance and also dropping out of school. Also many adolescents think about their future and this pre-disposes them to emotional tension. Unfavourable family relationship also makes the adolescents suffer from emotional disturbances leading to constant friction between parents and adolescents. Financial obstacles that makes it impossible for adolescents to have good dress and recreation makes the adolescent emotionally upset. Social pressures have got a great effect on the adolescent's expression of emotion. Because of the high social value placed on personal appearance, the adolescent suffer from anxiety if appearance does not conformed to social expectations. Since different social classes have different expectations they have greater influence on the adolescent's emotion than that of a child because

is a child less influenced by social pressures than an adolescent.

With growth into adolescence fears of social nature become very important. There are certain variations in fears. The nature of fear expressed and experienced by girls are different from those seen among boys because girls put higher value on their personal safety.

Worry is a type of fear that comes mainly from imaginary causes. The main source of worry among girls comes from their appearance if it does not come up to their expectation. For high school students worries about their progress in studies, boy-girl relationship, quarrels with family members and failure to achieve popularity are found to be predominant.

Anxiety, like worry, is a form of fear. Because anxiety is an uncomfortable state, the individual tries to avoid it but often cannot do so. Most of the adolescent anxiety is socially oriented. When girls experience anxiety, they usually react to it by withdrawing into daydreams, boys, by contrast, react to anxiety by rebelliousness and acts that have a 'nuisance value.'


Annoyance is another form of anger which is of less intensity than anger. Annoyances vary due to differences in environmental conditions and social experiences. Adolescents are also annoyed by socio-economic status, by the behavior of other adults and also by dress they dislike to wear.

Frustrations are forms of anger which result from interference with the satisfaction of some needs. Common frustrations among adolescents are physique that is not sex appropriate, poor health which is a handicap to participation in activities popular with the peer group, mental ability that is inadequate to reach the goals adolescents set for themselves. Because the social group does not tolerate aggressiveness in girls, girls are less aggressive and more conforming than boys. Regardless of social class background, adolescent girls tend to react more passively to frustrating situations than boys. 33

Jealousy occurs when a person feels insecure. The stimulus to jealousy is always social in origin. Jealousy is a frequent emotion in the early part of adolescence. Among girls, there is a tendency for jealousy to be stronger during the pre-school years and among boys, at puberty. The high value placed on social acceptance is at the root of much of the jealousy the adolescent experiences outside the home. Girls express jealousy of age mates who are popular among boys.

33 Ibid., p. 33
Envy is similar to jealousy but differs from jealousy in one major respect that is this emotion is aroused due to the material possession of the individual. An adolescent girl is envious of one of her friends whose home and clothes are superior to her. Envy sometimes leads to stealing to possess the material possession the adolescent envies in others. Typically, girls steal clothing, cosmetics and costume jewellery while boys are more likely to steal cars. 34

Curiosity in adolescence is limited in scope than it is in childhood. In adolescence interest in sex is a source of new curiosity. The adolescent is also curious about scientific phenomena, world affairs and moral issues. These are far less universal in their appeal than sex.

Mental happiness is a state of emotion arising out of some situations. In case of happiness in adolescence it is brought by well adjustment to environment, feeling of superiority, release of pent up emotional energy and getting rid of an embarrassing or humiliating situation.

The pleasant emotional state of the mind may be called affection which is rather a tender attachment for a person or an object animate or inanimate. It differs from love.  

because love is a stronger emotional state than affection and is directed towards a member of the opposite sex having some sexual desire whereas affections are built up through pleasant association. In adolescence the situations that create affection differ from those in childhood and in intensity. However some adolescents cannot show affection because of underestimation of self, dependence on others' approval, anxiety and conflict.

Emotions have their good and bad features. The bad, however, so outweight the good that control of the emotions become necessary. "Control" means learning to approach a situation with a rational attitude. Emotional control means control of the overt expression of emotions that are socially unacceptable. Achieving emotional control is an indication of emotional maturity. In order to develop emotional control, adolescents should be given opportunity to participate in activities leading towards the acceptance of responsibility. This participation will foster a spirit of fair play and co-operation, habits of confidence, and a large consideration of the rights of others. These are essential pre-requisites for emotional control.

Since the adolescent years are a period of social development and adjustment, with the oncoming of it the adolescents become acutely aware of social relationship pressures. There is general agreement among the various
studies that adolescence is accompanied by an increased interest in peer approval. The nature of the interest is influenced by the experiences and social contacts they have to come across during early childhood, childhood and pre-adolescence. Children become conscious of sex difference before they enter school and their attitudes towards members of the opposite sex. This of course has a close relation to their training and experiences.

The normal adolescent is very conscious of group conformity. There is at this stage a desire to follow the group and to avoid being marked as different. This attitude of conformity stands out above almost everything else at this period of life. Discrepancies in rate of growth may be a source of psychological tension for the less mature individual. This tension is reflected in social attitudes and outlook. Also the early maturing adolescent is faced with various social problems. Girls who mature early are out of line with their associates in development. Problems of social conformity are more prevalent among these "misfits" and become a source of tension and difficulty for them. 35

The variety of social contacts increases with age, requiring new social skills as new and additional social demands are made upon the adolescent. Social contacts are

made with boys and girls from varying home backgrounds. The adolescent must learn to work with and co-operate with classmates in many social activities and also adjust to an increasing number of teachers, and other educational demands involving a greater complexity and flexibility in social skills. Daydreaming or antisocial tendencies are likely to arise when there is failure in the socialization process.

Social adjustment depends upon many factors such as age, intelligence, achievement, sex, family background and socio-economic status. These factors are inter-related and complex. When the adolescent is well adjusted among peer group, the individual is happy and gets encouragement to develop potentialities. But disturbance in social relations hamper the healthy development of personality.36

During adolescence increased barriers to free social intercourse develop. Along with the development of social consciousness, the consciousness of difference in religion and social class increase. These become important in the choice of friends. Deviated personalities appear as the adolescent makes wider social contacts. The adolescent's physiological development, new contacts and enlarged mental life create a new self, and this new self seeks an expression that needs sympathetic guidance if it is to develop along the desirable lines.

Adolescent's sexual adjustment is a personal and social problem that appears early in adolescence and continues as an important force during this period. During adolescence interest in members of the opposite sex appears. Heterosexuality can be properly established only by social contacts with members of the opposite sex, and in these contacts two environmental conditions are essential; first, members of the opposite sex must be in sufficient number, of appropriate age and of attractive personal qualities; secondly encouraging attitude is necessary on the part of the parents and others concerned with the adolescent's guidance and welfare. Unfortunately most parents encourage only unhealthy attitude towards heterosexual problems as a means of protecting their children and even make fun of the self-consciousness and crudeness that accompany early heterosexual relationship. An environment in which the sexes are segregated leads to the development of a feeling of self-inadequacy amongst the adolescents in situations where there are members of the opposite sex. 

During adolescence, infatuations are common and parents and teachers look upon it with fear and anxiety. The undesirable feature of infatuation is that it deprives the adolescents concerned of the opportunity for normal

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healthy development of broad social contacts with members of both the sexes, which are important during this period of life. Infatuation is more frequently found among girls than among boys. A wide range of contacts and experiences on the part of one or both members is one of the most effective ways of meeting the problem.

The problems of sex should be dealt honestly and frankly by parents and teachers. The goals of guidance should be the development of normal and wholesome attitudes of boys and girls towards sex so that they will find satisfaction in their homes and marriage relations later on. There is need for guidance for understanding and dealing with sex problems.

The above findings are mainly taken from the researches made by western psychologists, which give us a clear picture of development of the different aspects of the adolescent girls. From our observations we have found that the same types of growth is seen among the Indian girls also. There are however some variations in the pattern of the changes due to environmental conditions, but the general pattern of growth in all aspects is found to be similar.