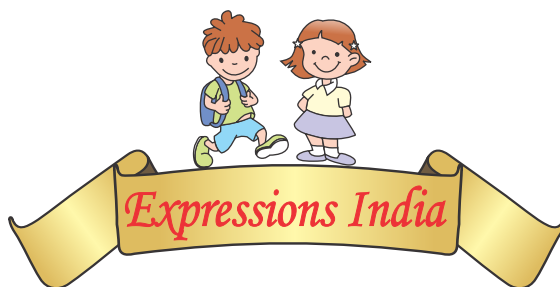


Indian Journal of **School Health** *& Wellbeing*

•Health Services • Life Skills Education •Healthy School Environment



The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program

Healthy Schools Healthy India

*Education is not preparation for life..
Education is life itself
- John Dewey*

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EDITORS' MESSAGE

Mental health concerns differ at different stages of the human development life-span and so do the ways in which these concerns and issues are experienced and dealt with. The previous volume of this journal focused on the mental health issues in childhood and transition to adolescence. The present volume, in continuation with the previous one, would focus on adolescence, transition to adulthood, and life in colleges and higher education institutions. It intends to inform, update, and introduce various perspectives and practices that can be of help in the maintenance and promotion of mental health in educational institutions, which may include schools and colleges. Moreover, with the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act and the Right to Education Act 2009, there is a need to document the experiences of students with disabilities in institutional life as well.

Some of the suggested focal areas are:

- Issues emerging from family expectations
- Career aspirations and pressure
- Emotional and psychological impact of the changes during adolescence
- Issues concerning relationships and sexuality
- Identity, role conflicts, and negotiations
- Issues emerging from social networking and virtual reality
- Dilemma of abiding by the traditions or enjoying explorations and freedom
- Moral, ethical, and spiritual concerns of youth
- Peer pressure, bullying, and ragging
- Student agency and unrest
- Violence and aggression in school and college campuses
- Substance abuse and the emerging youth sub-cultures

These focal areas highlight the vastness and seriousness of the mental health concerns at this crucial juncture of one's life.

Thus, there is a need to extend the mental health services to colleges and universities as well. These services need not be akin to clinical settings, rather, it is important that they become more like an extension of the school mental health services. This would not only enable a positive approach towards mental health for one's growth and development, but also, would enable the counsellors to share, and communicate about a person's mental health and progress.

This volume explores the various dimensions of mental health of adolescents and young adults. In it, there is a sharing of experiences of adolescents, the challenges and tribulations that they face in relationships, the ways in which they approach their work, the various issues, like sexuality and peer-pressure, their relationships with their family members, and also the experiences of being a parent of a special child.

It is intended that this volume of the Indian Journal of School Health and Wellbeing (IJSHW) would enable the parents, scholars, and practitioners to think about mental health of adolescents and young adults in a wider and nuanced way.

Dr. Vikas Baniwal

Post-Doctoral Fellow

Indian Council of Philosophical Research

Namita Ranganathan

Professor

Department of Education

University of Delhi



MESSAGE

I am excited to know that the *Expressions India* is publishing the latest issue of *the Indian Journal of School Health*. Journals in general have been one of the most potential means of sharing research based scientific knowledge and experiences not only with the larger groups of specialists, experts and activists working in the concerned area, but also with all the persons having interest in that area at large. The *Expressions India* has been doing pioneering work since long in the field of Health Education under its banner of “Holistic Health and School Wellness Programme” to enable the school education and teacher education systems to realize the goal of Health Education in Schools. The present publication is a momentous indicator of this initiative I congratulate the Advisory group, Members Editorial Board and the entire team of *Expressions India* on publication of the Journal.

It is a universally accepted fact that the precondition for all development is healthy physical, mental, emotional development, especially in young children, as it supports their cognitive development and enrichment of their holistic health and wellbeing. Which is why, right from the Report of the Bhore Committee (1946), followed by the Reports of all the Education Commissions and Committees have recommended the integration of Health Education in the School Curriculum. The National Curriculum Frameworks 1975, 1988, 2000 and 2005 also have made it a compulsory subject up to secondary stage. But the ground realities have been categorically demonstrating since long that the transaction of this subject area in schools has been far from satisfactory. So far so, that it has not even been treated at par with the core subjects.

The major bottleneck in the way of realization of the objective of Health Education has been the particularistic conceptualization of its transaction process. Even though the National Curriculum Framework 2005 made a paradigm shift and recommended multidimensional pedagogy for transaction of this curricular area, it is being transacted by adopting only scholastic approach. The goal of development of holistic health and wellbeing of young learners cannot be attained by making them gather certain information and rote-learn those. It can be attained only by laying more focus on co-scholastic methodology that ensures active participation of learners and substantially contributes to the development of life skills which enables young children to manage their lives more competently and grow as truly empowered human resource of the nation and of the human society at large. To facilitate this process it is very critical to encourage and empower the teachers, so that they act like facilitators and mentors. It is in this context that the formal school education system needs to look towards taking the support from the initiative like the one taken by Expressions India under its National Life Skills Education & School Wellness Programme aimed at realizing the Goal of HEALTHY SCHOOL HEALTHY INDIA.

I am more than confident that the present issue of the Journal will strengthen this grand endeavour and empower all who are creatively engaged in the promotion of Health Education in Schools. It is urgently needed to employ the transaction methodology well tested through the pioneering pursuits being made by Expressions India. “If there is will, there is way, and if the will is reinforced by enlightened path-breakers, the way would lead to the destination at the earliest”.

Prof. Jawahar Lal Pandey,

*Professor & National Coordinator,
NPEP & Adolescence Education Programme (Retd.)
National Council of Educational Research and Training
Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi*



MESSAGE

For a nation in transformation, education and health care are dynamic indicators of progress. Students can learn well in a healthy and safe environment. Looking into the wide spectrum of comprehensive education the schools need a serious and closer appraisal. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to which India is a signatory, prescribes that, every child has the inherent right to life, survival and development, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for, the treatment of illness and the rehabilitation of health.

The committee on school health (popularly known as the Renuka Ray committee), set up in 1960, recommended that "Health education should be included as part of general education in the primary, middle and secondary school." The report of the committee provided guidelines and recommendations for both content and appropriate inclusion of health at various stages of schooling. In the wake of National Health Policy, 1983, and the National Policy on Education, 1986 (Revised 1992), steps were initiated to look at school health in a more comprehensive manner.

With higher school enrollments and the Right to Education in place, schools have become nodal centers for health education programmes. It has also been noted that schools are the key forums for acquisition of health related knowledge, attitudes and life skills. They are indeed the wealth of the nation, enriching the empowerment of children towards responsible citizens.

Schools have an important role to play in equipping children with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to protect their health. Skills-based health education should be part of the curriculum frame work. Its purpose is to strengthen efforts to implement quality life skill-based health education on a national scale worldwide.

Therefore a strong need is being felt for a Comprehensive School Health journal that scientifically reinforces the vision of Health Promoting Schools and subsequently gets integrated within the education system in India. **The Indian Journal of School Health & Wellbeing** is a step in this direction.

I have the pleasant task of recording my deep appreciation for and thanks to all the Advisory group, Editorial Board and Members of the Executive Editorial for their valuable contribution, ungrudging cooperation and keen interest taken. I must also thank the Members for making available the benefit of their rich experience and knowledge.

I conclude with the note that, there has to be a ground swell of commitment from the parents, teachers, Government authorities, civil society organizations and students so far as the creation of a healthy, safe and cosseted environment in the school is concerned. It has been rightly and very aptly stated, "If there is to be a light at the end of the tunnel, it is our responsibility to hold the torch high enough to provide a beacon of light bright enough and strong enough for our children to follow."

Schools, educators & practisioners are cordially invited to contribute their good practices, research, training & specific programs for publication in this pioneering Journal.

Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, M.D., D.N.B.
Program Director-'Expressions India'
The National Life Skills, Value Education &
School Wellness Program
Sr. Consultant Psychiatrist & Incharge
Instt. of Child Development & Adolescent
Health Moolchand Medcity, New Delhi



GUIDELINES

Submission Guidelines

- All submissions should follow the APA 6th Edition style
- All submissions should have an abstract summarizing the main points.
- The submission should be of 2000 – 3000 words
- The submission should have a clear and informative title
- The submission should be original and should not be in the process of consideration by any other publication at the same time.
- The submission should have rigorous and reliable information and provide a deeper level of understanding.
- Submissions should be engaging and accessible to non-expert readers as well.
- Brief information and line of works of the author should be sent as a separate cover note.
- Initial acceptance of any submission does not guarantee publication. The editorial board shall do the final selection.
- If necessary, the editors may edit the manuscript in order to maintain uniformity of presentation and to enhance readability.

Types of Manuscripts and Word Limits

1. **Original Research Papers:** These should only include original findings from high-quality research studies. The word limit is 5000 excluding references and an abstract (structured format) of not more than 250 words.
2. **Brief Research Communication:** These manuscripts, with not more than 1 table/figure, should contain short reports of original studies or evaluations and service oriented research which points towards a potential area of scientific research or unique first-time reports. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract (structured format) of not more than 150 words.
3. **Case Reports:** These should contain reports of new/interesting/rare cases of clinical significance or with implications for management. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract of not more than 150 words.
4. **Review Articles:** These are systemic and critical assessments of the literature which will be invited. Review articles should include an abstract of not more than 250 words describing the purpose of the review, collection and analysis of data, with the main conclusions. The word limit is 5000 words excluding references and abstract.
5. **Grand Rounds in child psychiatry/ psychopathology/ (Case Conference):** This should highlight one or more of the following: diagnostic processes and discussion, therapeutic difficulties, learning process or content/technique of training. This may be authored by an individual or a team, and may be an actual case conference from an academic department or a simulated one. The word limit is 1500 words.
6. **Viewpoint:** These should be experience-based views and opinions on debatable or controversial issues that affect the profession. The author should have sufficient, credible experience on the subject. The word limit is 3000 words.



7. Commentaries: These papers should address important topics, which may be either multiple or linked to a specific article. The word limit is 3000 words with 1 table/figure.
 8. Literary child Psychology/ Developmental studies/ Psychiatry/ Disability studies/ Education for mental health: Original Contributions are welcome which cover both literature as well as mental health. These can be in the field of poetry, drama, fiction, reviews or any other suitable material. The word limit is 2000 words.
 9. My Voice: In this section multiple perspectives are provided by patients, caregivers and paraprofessionals. It should encompass how it feels to face a difficult diagnosis and what this does to relationships and the quality of life. Personal narratives, if used in this section, should have relevance to general applications or policies. The word limit is 1000 words.
 10. Announcements: Information regarding conferences, meetings, courses, awards and other items likely to be of interest to readers should be submitted with the name and address of the person from whom additional information can be obtained (up to 100 words).
- Specific innovative/new ideas or newly emerging concepts for the sections are actively encouraged.

Sending The Manuscripts to the peer-reviewed and refereed Indian Journal of School Health and Wellbeing (IJSHW)

Entries are to be submitted via e-mail to:

Dr. Jitendra Nagpal – MD, DNB
Program Director “Expressions India”-
The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program
Sr. Consultant Psychiatrist & Incharge
Instt. of Child Development & Adolescent Wellbeing
Moolchand Medcity, New Delhi

Web: www.expressionsindia.org,
Email: contactexpressions.india@gmail.com expressionsindia2005@gmail.com



“National Consultation on University and College Counselling Services in India”: Key Recommendations

Dr. Vikas Baniwal* & Ms. Anshu**

**Post-Doctoral Fellow, ICPR & JNU*

*** Assistant Professor, IP College for Women, University of Delhi*

Background

Youth is considered as the strength of any nation. Youth not only contribute in building the economy of a nation as a human resource, but they also act as agents of social change and leaders of tomorrow. At present, India has the largest youth population in the world. In fact, by 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country with 64 per cent of its population in the working age group (Shivkumar, 2013). Despite population being a prime cause of concern for the nation, many experts believe this 'youth bulge' to be a demographic blessing. This is because, economically speaking, the percentage of population earning is more than the percentage of dependent population. However, there are others who speculate that given the current social inequalities, this demographic blessing may actually turn into a disaster because of deteriorating quality of education, inadequate infrastructure for health, non-existing social support networks, dearth of job opportunities '—(Chatterjee & Karunakara, 2016). If the young members of the society are not given adequate direction, support, and opportunities, they may engage in destructive rather than constructive activities. The growing discontentment in youth may be discerned from their growing suicide rates. “India has one of the world's highest rate of suicides among people aged between 15 years and 29 years accounting 40/1,00,000 population and a third of all suicides in the country” (Samapthirao, 2016, p. 142)(Mukunth, 2014). Increasing rates of substance abuse in youth and increasing rate of suicides due to substance abuse among youth are becoming cause of concern for the government as well (Bhowmick, 2014). Increasing instances of violence among youngsters is also making

headlines. Given this scenario, experts are of opinion that if concerted policy level changes are not made in the area of human resource management and planning at this stage, very soon the country might be facing “backlash from the growing numbers of disgruntled and unemployed or unemployable youth” '—(Chatterjee & Karunakara, 2016).

In the context of the holistic development of youth, health and education emerge as two paramount focus areas. However, if one reflects on the existing policies of health and education in India, the understanding and vision of both health and education is rather limited and myopic. When we speak of health, it is the preventive medical model that occupies the centre-stage and the promotion of well-being takes a back-seat. When we speak of education, the focus is on education for career-building rather than education for living a healthy fulfilling life. Thus, it is not surprising that the issues related to mental health and well-being remain unaddressed in health policies and the concerns related to values education, soft skill development, creativity and innovation are ignored in education policies.

In this age- marked by competition, conflict, and pressure- it has become imperative for us as a nation to create support systems to nurture the young members of the society. It is of the utmost importance that the governmental agencies take the growing psychological problems and mental health concerns of the youth seriously and deploy professional services to provide adequate support to bring about holistic growth of the young members of our society. It is also the need of the hour that the policy makers expand their vision of health and education to include the idea of mental



health and well-being so that we are able to address the psycho-social concerns of youth within the ambit of our education and health policies. In order to advocate for the above stated issues and to establish a firm need for the policy level change, 'Expressions India' along with their academic partner 'Association of Indian School Counsellors and Allied Professionals (AISCAP)' organized a 'National Consultation on University and College Counselling Services in India-Emerging needs, challenges and good practices' on 7th June 2016 at India International Centre (New Delhi).

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the consultation was to develop a comprehensive list of recommendations and demands that could be shared with the governmental agencies to bring about the envisioned changes in the arena of counselling services in higher education in India. The key objective of this national consultation was to bring together professionals, educators, counsellors, academicians, researchers, students and university administrators together on a single platform to delineate and prioritize the mental health concerns students in higher education are experiencing. Apart from discussing the concerns and prioritizing the intervention areas, the experts from different fields shared the leading practices that their institutions have adopted with regard to counselling youth in the institutions of higher education.

Participants

This advocacy initiative that took form of a national consultation led to a unique gathering of experts from the disciplines of medicine, psychology and education. The program was organized under the leadership of Dr. Jitendra Nagpal who is a senior consultant psychiatrist at VIMHANS and Moolchand Medcity. He has keen interest in the area of adolescence and childhood mental health and disorders. Dr. Nagpal has been serving in the capacity of Program Director at Expressions India and is associated with National Adolescence Education Program as Technical Coordinator. The honourable chief guest of the program was Prof (Dr.) Kavita Sharma who is a well-known academician, presently acting in the

capacity of President, South Asian University, New-Delhi. She served as the principal of Hindu College, University of Delhi for about ten years and also acted as the Director of India International Centre for about six years. Prof (Dr.) Saroj Yadav who is currently serving as Dean (Academics) at NCERT was the guest of honour for the program. The other expert resource persons and panellists in the inaugural session were Prof. Jawahar Lal Pandey (Former Head of NCERT and Founder of National Adolescence Education Program, Delhi), Prof. (Dr.) Namita Ranganathan (Professor, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi) and Prof. (Dr.) Rajni Kant (Director, Ramnagar Campus, University of Jammu). All these experts have been associated with higher education and mental health issues and brought their wealth of experience to the national consultation.

Different thematic sessions of the national consultation were chaired by senior experts from different universities. The consultation benefitted from the presence of Prof (Dr.) Neerja Chadha (Director-School of Continuing Education & Professor, Child Development at IGNOU, New-Delhi), Prof. (Dr.) Marshal Mukesh Sahani (Dean-Students Welfare, Amity University, Noida) and Dr. Neera Pant (Associate Professor, Psychology, Gargi College, University of Delhi) as chairpersons. Other noted academicians who participated as panellists in the discussion were Prof. Rajani Dhingra (Dean-Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Jammu) and Prof. Naved Iqbal (Head-Department of Psychology, Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi). The consultation was greatly enriched by the inputs from the mental health practitioners associated with different academic institutions and they included Ms. Bhuma Krishnana (Chief Counsellor, Jamia Milia Islamia), Dr. Harminder Gijral (Head Consortium, Amity Centre for Guidance and Counselling), Ms. Rupa Murghai (Counsellor, Indian Institute of Technology), Ms Karuna Chandrashekhara (Counsellor, Centre for Individual and Group Excellence, Ashoka University), Ms. Swati Munjal (Director-Admissions, BML Munjal University, Gurgaon) and Mr. Kush Kulshreshtha (Principal, Vibrant Group of Academics, Surat). Ms. Ayesha Banerjee (Editor-HT Education, The Hindustan



Times) and Ms. Pushpinder Kaur (Director & GM-CE, Employment News Publications) added great value to the discussion as media experts.

Though the consultation took place in Delhi, there was adequate representation of the experts, students and the universities from different parts of the country. Academic institutions, both from the government and private sectors, were well-represented. Participants included both seasoned and experienced practitioners, academicians and researchers as well as young, dynamic and creative students, scholars, counsellors and teaching aspirants. The scholars, university and school teachers and students who participated in the national consultation were from different colleges and departments of the University of Delhi, IGNOU, Jamia Milia Islamia, Ambedkar University and Amity University. Many mental health practitioners and counsellors were also present from Expressions India, VIMHANS and Moolchand Medcity. Some counsellors and teachers from different schools of Delhi also participated in the consultation.

Key Outcomes

At the macro-level, all the resource persons and experts, based on their field experience and perspective, highlighted the need for providing counselling support to youth enrolled in the institutes of higher education all over the country. They all emphasized that providing psychological support through academic institutions is crucial and thus, setting up of guidance and counselling centres and rolling-out of counselling services through trained professionals should be given top-most priority in the upcoming education policy. All the experts expressed their concerns over the increasing rate of suicides, psychological disorders, gender-based violence and drug abuse problems among the youth in the country and indicated that might be an indication that youth is already cracking-up. The experts also underscored a need for self-reflection and introspection to uncover the reasons for our collective failure as a society in providing adequate nurturing environment to the future generation. This section presents in detail the overarching themes, specific concerns, key learnings and concrete suggestions

that emerged through the national consultation.

Counselling services in Universities and Colleges: Existing issues and challenges

Lack of infrastructure and trained professionals

It was noted by most participants in the consultation that the existing counselling services being offered by the universities and colleges are inadequate and insufficient. Not only counselling centres are non-existent in many government universities and colleges but also even where such centres exist, there is a dearth of trained professionals to extend these services. Even when there is a counsellor engaged by the institution, the availability is a problem. Usually, irrespective of the number of students, institutions engage only one or two counsellors, that too on a part-time basis, which clearly does not meet the requirements of the whole institution. Many participants, particularly from government institutions, also admitted that they do not even have adequate infrastructure to set up a counselling centre in their institution.

The scenario at private universities, however, is quite different. Most private universities are developing or already have a state of the art counselling and guidance centres that cater to the needs of the students, faculty members and non-teaching staff members as well. Not only there is investment in the infrastructure but also trained professionals are being engaged on a full-time basis to offer their services. This indicates that the significance of addressing the mental health concerns is being understood and appreciated by the private universities.

Problems related to awareness of mental health issues and social stigma

As highlighted by the experts, probably one of the biggest reasons that youngsters not seek help and support regarding their mental health problems is lack of awareness. Unlike physical health issues, which are well-understood, psychological problems are misunderstood as regular ups and downs of life and are ignored. Sadness, despair, aggression, suicidal thoughts, relationship problems, hopelessness are all mistakenly viewed



as part and parcel of the adult life. Awareness of mental disorders such as depression, schizophrenia, OCD, phobias, personality problems etc. is almost non-existing, even among university students and teachers. Due to the lack of awareness, despite engaging with students closely, teachers miss out on even the most apparent warning signs and are unable to sense the psychological problems that a student might be facing.

Another issue that emerges out of ignorance about mental health issues is stigma. Due to their misguided and erroneous beliefs, people look down upon and stigmatize people who experience psychological issues. As a result, people are reluctant to admit that they might be having psychological problems and are ashamed in seeking professional help. As a result, even in those institutions where counselling services exist, many students do not come forward to seek help, rather they keep on suffering in silence. Even when these problems spin out of control among students and the matters are brought to the attention of the parents, their response is usually not constructive. They either deny the problem or get aggressive at the very thought of seeking professional support.

Lack of political will and institutional support

Promotion of mental health & well-being and education for character building has never been the top priority for the policy makers. Prevention of disease and education for career building has been the key concerns. As a result, institutions do not prioritize counselling and guidance services. The funds at hand are usually directed towards updating the computer labs instead of establishing the counselling centre for example. Training in life skills and soft skills is also falling way below in the priority list of the policy makers as well as the institutions. The policies of the government and the practices of the institutions are themselves reflective of the social mind-set which is characterized by lack of awareness and stigma towards mental health issues. Experts agreed unanimously that this mind-set needs change as it cripples the possibilities of a future where mental health and well-being would be the top-most priority.

Counselling services in Universities and Colleges: Emerging focus areas and priorities

As per the feedback received from the participants, key concerns highlighted by the panellists and opportunities sensed by the subject matter experts during the consultation, following key areas of interventions emerged as priorities for rolling out the counselling services for youth:

Career guidance and counselling: It emerged as the need of the hour during the consultation. Especially keeping in view that the counselling services would be provided by the institutions of higher education, it is but natural for students to approach counsellors for help in making career related choices. Experts emphasized that youth from underprivileged and marginalized backgrounds sometimes find it difficult to make informed choices due to lack of exposure and information about available options. It was emphasized during the consultation that the counsellors may play a key role helping students identify their true potentialities and guide them towards a better person-subject-job fitment which is likely to strengthen the human resources of the nation.

Understanding and managing relationships: Youngsters these days are undoubtedly enmeshed in complicated relationships, be it with their family, friends, or romantic partners. Due to the changing values, culture and belief systems; the younger generation is experiencing constant conflict with the older generation and their communication is breaking down. As a result, family relationships are getting strained. Friendship patterns are also changing drastically. Youngsters are entering romantic relationships at an early age and thus, they are sometimes not able to handle the emergent stress. Thus, experts feel that relationship counselling is an important area of intervention.

Stress Management & Time Management: Due to excessive competition and pressure to excel, more and more youngsters are finding themselves burdened and depressed. Many find this stress overwhelming and start crumbling under the



excessive work-load. This is especially true for the students who have enrolled in demanding professional courses in the most reputed universities of the country. It is increasingly being felt that the students are likely to fare much better if they are able to manage their stress and time better. Psychologists and counsellors could provide valuable support to students in this regard.

Anger management: With the increasing instances of violent outbursts, road rage, bullying, hate-crimes and violence among youth making to the headlines, it is more than clear that the anger management and violence prevention is emerging as an important area of intervention. It is important for counsellors to introduce programs that make youth more composed, reflective and tolerant towards the 'other' so that they are better positioned to handle their negative emotions and frustrations.

Drug abuse and alcoholism: Dependence on drugs and alcohol is jeopardizing the careers and futures of many students in institutes of higher education. The problem of substance abuse is also at the heart of many other social evils and crimes and thus, requires immediate attention from all stakeholders including mental health professionals. These professionals are especially equipped to identify the cases and provide attention and care so that the addicts could be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the system. Counsellors can also organize a range of awareness building programs as preventive measures.

Issues related to gender, sexuality and violence: The growing rate of violent crimes against women is also a cause for concern. The number of rapes, gang rapes, acid attacks, and hate crimes are growing at an astounding rate especially among youngsters. It is because of the patriarchal mind-set and the cultural images that get propagated through media that the subjugation and objectification of women and their bodies seem so acceptable to both young men and women. In order to create a more peaceful, unbiased and safe institutions for youth, the patriarchal mind-set of both young men and women needs to be challenged. As expressed by the experts during the consultation, there is a need to create programs to sensitize youth with issues related to gender, identity, patriarchy and sexuality so that they become more sensitive and open-

minded. Counsellors could be particularly trained to deal with sensitive issues such as coping with sexual abuse and trauma.

Managing Diversity and Inclusion: Often students move from remote areas and rural areas to metropolitan cities to pursue higher education. This change not only tantamount to a shift in geography or a movement away from home, rather, this shift is more of a cultural transition. Sometimes, youngsters do not feel equipped to manage this transition in a healthy manner. They find themselves as misfits in terms of language, clothing, inter-personal skills etc. There may also be a clash of culture, norms and values. They may also face prejudices, labelling and discrimination at the hands of the students who represent the dominant culture. As a result, students from diverse backgrounds may feel marginalized, targeted and isolated. In this context, it is the responsibility of the institutions to create an inclusive learning environment where diversity is embraced. This can be achieved by counsellors by organizing sensitization and diversity management programs. The experts also advocated for the rights of students with special needs and highlighted that the counselling services in higher education should look into their concerns on priority.

Life skills and soft skills training: Apart from training the students on the technical aspects, it is becoming increasingly essential to equip them with life skills and soft skills so that they are able to cope with the challenges of day to day living and work in a healthy manner. All the experts underscored the need for organizing regular skill based programs for students. These programs should aim at developing the communication skills, leadership skills, team-building skills, personality development, negotiation and conflict management etc. Psychologists, counsellors and life skill trainers are uniquely positioned to cater to these requirements in the institutions of higher education.

Counselling services in Universities and Colleges: Key Recommendations

Taking inputs from the leading practices in the field, learning from the field experience of the experts and drawing insights from the future vision



of the experts, following recommendations have been culled out from the proceedings and discussions of the national consultation:

Increasing outreach of mental health services: It was strongly felt by the experts that each and every institute of higher education should have a counselling centre to cater to the needs of students. Universities that operate out of remote campuses should also ensure that the counselling support is available there. Universities operating through distance learning mode may also provide online counselling support to students in addition to setting up nodal counselling centres. Given the lack of infrastructure, resources and institutional support, this large scale development is only possible through policy intervention and thus, all the participants in the national consultation advocated for mental health being included as one of the top priorities in new education policy. The participants also strongly advocated that the government should make it mandatory for all the institutions of higher education to set up formal counselling centres on the line of ruling that makes it mandatory for each school to appoint counsellors for students.

Increasing the number of institutions and programs for training mental health professionals: As expressed by all the experts during consultation, there is a paucity of trained counsellors, clinical psychologists and life-skill trainers all over the country. It is imperative that the ministry of Human Resource Development should work towards establishing more institutes offering a range of courses related to mental health so that the demand supply gap with respect to mental health professionals could be bridged without any further delay. There should also be provisions of regular in-service training and skill upgradation programs for already practicing professionals. The counsellors should be trained to be sensitive to the socio-political context of the youth so that they are able to address the concerns emerging out of different socio-political realities that greatly influence youth. Use of technology in counselling may also be promoted to increase the outreach of the professionals especially for youth in the rural areas where there may not be physical presence of

trained counsellors.

Building awareness and creating mental health literacy programs: Since lack of awareness and stigma are the biggest roadblocks in people seeking help for mental health problems, these issues should be tackled on priority. The institutions of higher education in collaboration with relevant departments should work towards developing and implementing mental health awareness programs. This could be achieved through organizing mental health awareness week/day, developing and screening documentary films and videos on mental health issues, designing and distributing pamphlets on common psychological disorders and their symptoms, organizing interactive sessions with experts from the field, showcasing street plays and short skits etc. Though some universities and institutions are already engaged in such activities, they need to be systematized, regularized and should be brought in the ambit of the counselling centres

In addition, modules on mental health literacy and common psychological disorders should be built into the curriculum at the level of the university and colleges so that the superstitions and myths surrounding these problems could be busted. This step is also likely to empower both the students and teachers to identify the issues and seek support at the right time. With help of these modules and programs, the institutions should work towards fostering a culture where mental health problems could be discussed openly without any fear of judgement or stigmatization.

Advocating for mental health issues: The mental health professionals and experts from schools, colleges and hospitals should get together with students and teachers from institutes of higher education to create advocacy groups fighting for policy level changes in the area of mental health. These groups would be uniquely positioned to bring about the much needed change due to their collaboration. One such example of advocacy effort that is being carried out by different colleges of Delhi University in collaboration with Expressions India was presented during the national consultation. The project is named 'Initiative for Mental Health and Awareness in



India (IMHAI)' and is being carried forward by youth crusaders from the field of psychology. The experts expressed a need for many more such initiatives to mobilize the change. Media and social media could be used to make these advocacy initiatives more potent.

Teacher training on basic counselling skills: It was highlighted by numerous panellists during the discussion that most of the students feel comfortable seeking support and guidance from teachers for their problems rather than approaching the counsellors. Often teachers are also the first ones to sense the irregularities in the behaviour of students at the time of the crisis. Keeping in view the extensive interaction students have with teachers on a regular basis, experts suggested that the teachers should be trained on basic counselling skills so that they are able to address the concerns of the students with greater efficacy. Therefore, well-trained teachers are in a unique position to enhance the outreach of mental health services in universities and colleges. It was also felt during the consultation that teacher training on counselling skills also makes a lot of sense for the time being given the unavailability of trained counsellors particularly in remote areas. The training on mental health fundamentals and basic counselling skills could be easily imparted by introducing dedicated modules in orientation and refresher courses that are mandatory for all teachers to attend. In this regard, it is important to mention that the experts cautioned that teachers should not be considered as substitute for trained counsellors as they may not be able to bring mental health expertise which is needed in an institution.

Mentorship programs by teachers: In order to further extend out-reach of the counselling services, trained teachers could be vested with the responsibility to act as mentors for a small group of students. As mentors, the teachers should take keen interest in holistic growth of the students and provide them support in both professional and personal problems. The mentorship programs, if implemented properly, could be a great support system for students staying away from home in cities where there is minimal support. The mentorship programs are being implemented in

universities all over the world and are proving to be very effective.

Training students as mental health ambassadors: Due to fear of being labelled, often students do not seek out professional support for their problems either from counsellors or teachers; they feel much more comfortable talking about their concerns with their peer group. Hence, the students in the institution itself, when trained adequately, can provide emotional and psychological support to their peers. Also, considering the huge number of students enrolled in the institutions of higher education, despite best of the efforts, it may not be possible for counsellors to be there for each and every student, while students could be there for their peers in personal capacity. Thus, during the consultation, the experts suggested that the counsellors should work towards identifying and training high potential students from the institution itself to act in capacity of mental health ambassadors. The role of the ambassadors would be to create awareness about mental health issues through formal and informal channels, flag high priority cases and refer them to college counsellors/teachers for formal intervention and provide basic counselling support to their peer group. These students could also be engaged to roll-out buddy schemes in college to facilitate integration of new students, foreign students, marginalized students or students with special needs. The counsellor can also work towards creating peer-support groups for various issues such as alcoholism, drug-abuse, gender based violence etc. to create spaces where students can learn from experience of each other. These schemes could particularly prove effective in addressing problems of students residing in hostels. By engaging students as experts, the institution can create ownership among students and motivate them to take mental health issues more seriously.

Engaging parents and family members in counselling initiatives: Often the identity of youth and their parents is enmeshed in Indian context. While the youth benefit from familial support at one level, they also suffer due to familial pressure and emotional abuse at other level. Given this



context, many experts emphasized during the consultation that adopting an individualistic approach to counselling in a collectivist culture like ours may not prove effective. They added that counselling in India is likely to be much more useful when carried out using systems approach with special focus on family as a unit. Thus, it is advisable that orientation programs be conducted not only for the students but their parents as well so that they understand the institutional culture and course requirements and provide adequate support to their wards. Workshop addressing inter-generational issues and communication problems could also be organized by the counsellors for parents from time to time. Counsellors can organize special sessions for family members to broaden their mind-set and create awareness with respect to mental health issues. Counsellors can also create collaborative therapeutic alliance with parents to address the high risk cases to prevent substance abuse, high risk behaviour, aggression and suicides.

Adopting a preventive approach to mental health and well-being: Experts felt that once the counselling centres are in place in institutes of higher education, the centres should be driven by a vision of promoting health and well-being rather than just 'disease' management. Thus, workshops and training programs focussed on developing life skills and fostering positive psychological capital should be organized regularly to promote well-being. Sessions on yoga, meditation and breathing techniques may also be organized periodically to promote both physical and psychological health.

Conclusion

The 'National Consultation on Counselling Services in Higher Education in India' proved to be an effective exercise. During the consultation, a lot of ideas were discussed, concrete suggestions were made, concerns were shared and leading practices

were highlighted with regard to providing counselling services in institutions of higher education in India. These discussions led to formulation of a set of recommendations discussed in this concept note, which would be shared with Government of India and UGC for further action. Fortunately, this advocacy initiative does not conclude here. As the next step, an international summit on establishing effective linkages between school and college counselling services in India is being planned by 'Expressions India' in the month of November this year.

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Research Articles



Expression of Social Inclusion and Exclusion in Adolescent Friendships

Ms. Aakanksha Bhatia

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi

ABSTRACT Though most of the schools are directed to follow an inclusive policy, but interactions with adolescents reflect the social inequalities prevalent in our society. Contrary to popular understanding, social exclusion begins during formative years. While one may think that studying social exclusion is more illuminating and promises a better understanding of disadvantaged groups and the basis of their exclusion, it is also essential to understand that this concept is so evocative, multifaceted and ambiguous that it can be defined in various ways and may hold different interpretations for different people. In our study, we developed a questionnaire using proxemics to understand the levels of friendship one shares with peers of different social class and caste. The sample consists of 60 female students of Grade 8th to 12th from Dhanbad Public School in the state of Jharkhand. The analysis showed that adolescents with similar socio-economic status and caste preferred each other over peers from different socio-economic status and caste. The exclusion mainly accounted for differences in socio-economic status and caste hierarchies. Participants belonging to upper caste groups were more likely to exclude peers from backward classes from their private and personal domains. Interestingly, inclusion of peers from lower caste groups in social and public spaces have been observed irrespective of social caste or class. A thematic analysis of their responses was also done to corroborate the results and account for any confounding variables. The results have been further discussed in the light of current theorization in the given area.

Keywords: Inclusion, exclusion, inequalities, friendship, adolescence

1. INTRODUCTION

Social categorization is a perceptive phenomenon to instinctively and supposedly classify people belonging to various groups with a similar set of characteristics, both personal and social. Caste, socio-economic status, religion, geographical location, language, etc. have all been a handy tool in the multifaceted enactment of this process. As much as the human societies have been reliant upon social categorization, it has also been an effective medium to channelize social inequality. Humans have a propensity to include or get included with people or groups which are similar to our socio-cultural standing in the society. People or groups that we perceive as “unequal” or “different” are generally excluded. Awareness about “my”

group commences at a young age and all those who do not fit in the criteria of 'in-group' are categorized as 'out-group'. Our focus is to determine the role played by caste and social class in the paradigmatic formation of in-groups and out-groups of the adolescents.

Social inclusion and exclusion are conceptually interdependent terms which are fastidiously making their way in the policy discourse of lower-middle-income economies like India. Since both the terms are synergetic, it is essential to understand social inclusion in the framework of exclusion. Thorat and Newman (2012) conceives exclusion as revolving around societal institutions that exclude on the basis of group identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion and gender.



The discourse of social inclusion and exclusion in the educational context have been connoted differently by different scholars. Some of them have restricted the conceptual boundaries to disability whereas others have recognized social inclusion of marginalized children who are at a disadvantage due to structures of caste, patriarchy, ethnic hierarchy, and class hierarchies as well (Singh, 2014).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, upholds compulsory and free education in mainstream schools for all children irrespective of their disability or marginalized status in society. Apart from children with special needs, educationally deprived groups such as Dalits (scheduled castes), Adivasis (scheduled tribes), religious minorities and girls are given special emphasis under the policy making and implementation (Singh, 2014). According to Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2008), most of the schools in the country have approximated universal enrolment. While the enrolment statistics seem to be highly encouraging, a major challenge is to retain the enrolled students in the schools. Nambissan (2006) points out that even though the entry point at schools are inclusive, the institutional processes and ethos are in stark conflict with the discourse of inclusion. Lack of affordability, flexibility in curriculum, toilet facilities, being bullied in classroom, and not getting adequate attention from the teachers further aggravate the situation. According to Mascarenhas (2014), inclusive education is bound to fail if teachers or principals are not qualified and if children with disabilities or children belonging to marginalized sections of society are treated as a burden and passive participants in classroom.

Nambissan (2006) stresses that the quantification of inclusion should not be dependent upon indices like enrolment, attendance and completion rates as being understood in current policy documents. Inclusive education should be regarded as a far more complex process that places social groups differently in relation to valued resources like knowledge, skills, cultural attributes, future opportunities and life chances, sense of dignity and

self-worth (Kabeer, 2000).

Acknowledging the imperativeness to embolden the agenda of social inclusion in schools, our paper focus on the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion among peer groups. For our study, we conceptualized social exclusion as a way of relational aggression in which a child is exposed to physical, social or psychological harm due to their economic or social status. It entails a fundamental disconnection and lack of participation with peer groups. While belonging and connectedness are essential at any age, research suggests that adolescents are extremely sensitive to peer rejection thus indicating a significant threat to their mental health. Adolescence marks increased independence from parents and increased dependence on peers. Since identity development is highly reliant on peer groups, adolescent friendships become very salient. Maintaining peer relations can be fraught with complication due to the fluidity of in-group and out-group rules (Leets & Wolf, 2005).

Neurological profile for adolescents suggest that their brain areas for emotions such as Anterior Cingulate Cortex become highly activated in response to peer rejection whereas they show significantly less activation in the brain regions which govern emotional regulation such as Ventrolateral Prefrontal Cortex in response to peer rejection in comparison with younger children (Bolling, et al., 2011). DeWall, Deckman, Pond & Bonser (2011) observed lower immune function, reduced sleep quality, reduced ability to calm oneself in times of distress, reduced self esteem, feelings of anxiety, depression and aggression in children who have faced social exclusion from a peer group. This suggests that social exclusion during adolescence may be particularly distressing and that they may have significant difficulty in managing their distress.

Against this backdrop, we have attempted to study the underlying dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion by bringing to light the peer preferences during adolescence. We wanted to study whether the adolescents prefer their friends for various day to day activities on the basis of their social status in the society. Considering this to be a finding, we also



wanted to look profoundly into the patterns of peer interactions in various spaces and spheres of life, thus indicating inclusion and exclusion through the choices made.

2. METHOD

2.1. CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

As per the 2011 census, Dhanbad ranks second in terms of population and 20th in terms of area in the state of Jharkhand. In terms of population per sq.km. Dhanbad is the most densely populated district in the state with 1,316 persons per sq. as against the state's 414. The economy of the district mainly depends on cultivation or related work. More than 23% of the total workers are engaged in Primary sector. In 2006, Indian government categorized Dhanbad as one of the 250 most backward districts of India. Dhanbad receives funds from the Backward Regions Fund Programme (BRGF). However, there is a marked trend towards growth and urbanization due to increased non-agricultural openings and immigration of rural people to urban centers (Gazetteer of India : Bihar, Chapter VIII Economic Trends, 1964).

Besides being known as the 'Coal capital of India', Dhanbad is a perfect blend of various cultures as it is a melting point for people with varying economic and social backgrounds, different religions and socio-cultural values. Since a long time, Dhanbad has been home to lot of Marwari, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Malayali, Telugu, Bengali, Bihari communities. Rapid development and urbanization will subsequently lead the city to be reckoned as one of the efficacious cities of India.

2.2 Sample

The upper caste (Forward class) students were identified as the 'General' category (GC) and the lower caste (backward class) students were identified as 'Reserved Category' (RC). These two terms are provided by the state. The latter term 'RC' includes Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). However, the terms 'Forward class' and 'Backward class' are commonly spoken by the locals. We have used both

the set of terms interchangeably in our paper.

For the current paper, we have taken data from 60 female students residing in the hostel of Dhanbad Public School, Dhanbad. All students were from grade VIII-XII. 26 students belonged to 'Forward Class' whereas 34 belonged to 'Backward class'. It was a geographically diverse group as the students belonged to West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Most of the participants were upper or lower caste Hindus.

2.3 PROCEDURE

For this paper, we developed a questionnaire using proxemics to identify the patterns of interpersonal peer relationships. E.T. Hall (1966) coined the term Proxemics in 1963 which denotes "The study of how human beings communicate through their use of space". Though Proxemics study inter-spatial behaviour which is often concerned with territoriality, we used this concept to study social distance among the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions pertaining to the participants' various facets of life: Private domain (4), Personal domain (10), Social domain (7), Public domain (1), No contact domain (2), and Hostile domain (3).

The items looked like "I will share my transport to school with _____", "I can trust _____ with all my secrets", "I can share my tiffin with _____." Some items were reverse in nature – "I will not go for swimming with _____".

Participants were asked to nominate one of their class mates/friends for every item which pertained to their daily life activities. Since this paper focuses on understanding the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion based on the preferences and choices pertaining to the socio-economic status of the nominees, it wasn't mandatory for the participants to select someone from their class. They were allowed to nominate their friends from the same school irrespective of their grade, section and gender. They were requested to state the reason for choosing the particular peer. After the questionnaire was administered, the data was subject to quantitative and thematic analysis.



1. RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the number of nominations by Participants belonging to Upper and Lower Caste Groups in favour of peers from Upper and Lower Caste Groups

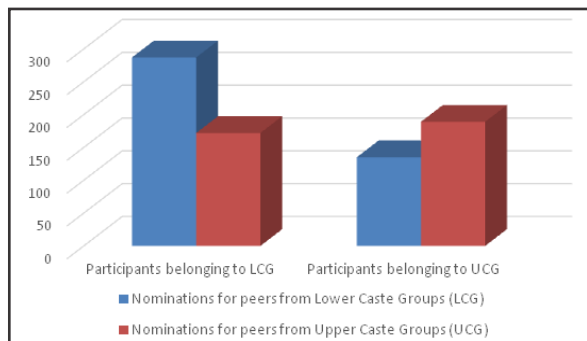
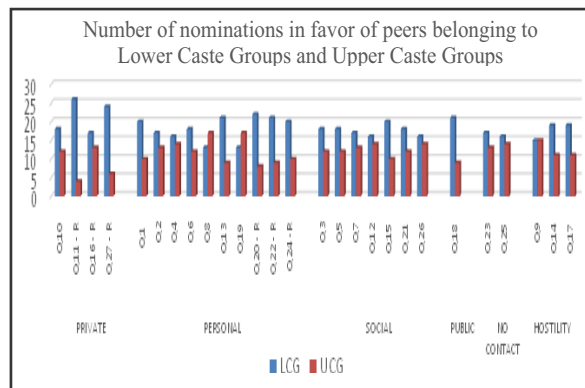


Figure 2 shows the number of nominations in favour of Upper and Lower Caste Groups



(*) DENOTES REVERSE ITEMS

Table 1 shows the Thematic Analysis of the responses of the participants from Upper and Lower Caste Groups

THEMES	Participants belonging to Lower Caste Groups (LCG)	Participants belonging to Upper Caste Groups (UCG)
Outlook on Academic Advantage	While a few LCG participants felt that UCG friends can offer an intellectually stimulating company, most of them believed in doing academic/sports related activities with friends belonging to backward class. They felt that backward class friends are at the same level of competition and they enjoyed their work with same class friends only.	UCG participants believed that backward class friends have an advantage over academics in terms of the relaxation in percentages, reservations and opportunities. They felt that doing activities related to academia or sports with friends from backward classes will also put them at an advantageous position.
Concerns related with hygiene	Apart from LCG participants preferring UCG friends over LCG friends for activities like swimming, drinking water from their bottle or sharing their clothes, about half of them also stated that they feel that their friends belonging to backward class do not maintain hygiene.	Most of the UCG participants out rightly expressed their concerns over sharing water, swimming pool, and clothes with the LCG. They believed that LCG friends do not maintain proper hygiene. It was interesting to note that they did not express any issue in sharing their food with their backward class friends in school. They were also willing to go to their homes for a meal with their family.



Expression of Relational Aggression	It was interesting to note that backward class participants also conveyed repressed aggression for their fellow backward class peers. More than forward class, they considered backward class as their competition.	On one hand, participants belonging to UCG nominated their backward class friends for sharing their prizes and on the other hand, most of them were also willing to display their aggression on backward class peers and would feel happy if the teacher reprimands them.
Dependency for Trust and Support	Majority of the LCG participants reported that they rely on their friends from forward class with their secrets and during emergency situations. Some of them considered them to be more responsible whereas others felt that the power of their 'forward class' status will prevent them from landing into any trouble.	Participants from UCG did not express much of a variation in preferring peers from forward or backward classes. They believed in helping everyone and when required receiving the same help in return. However, more than half of the UCG have still preferred peers from forward classes.
Compensatory Mechanism	Most of the LCG participants expressed solidarity with the peers belonging to backward classes for general activities relating to their personal, social and public domains. Their preference was skewed towards peers from backward classes.	Majority of the participants from UCG excluded peers from backward classes from their private and personal domains. However, they chose backward classes more in their Social and Public domains to compensate for the exclusion that they did.

4. DISCUSSION

The focus of the current paper was to understand the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion in adolescent friendships. While our country continues to struggle with discrimination, marginalization, and deprivation on account of one's position in the social hierarchy; inculcating the values of inclusiveness has become the need of the hour. We wanted to study peer preferences and patterns of interpersonal relationships emerging against a backdrop of one's social class and caste. The findings reiterate the fact that schools are a microcosm of society where we can effectively study the social phenomena taking place in the society. It also points out to the fact that social relationships among peers are driven by the subtleties of social inclusion and exclusion.

Figure 1 indicates overall preference of peers by participants belonging to lower and upper castes. After taking into account the reverse items, it was found that participants belonging to upper castes preferred peers from upper castes whereas lower

caste participants preferred peers from lower castes.

However, Figure 2 deeply explores the complexities of social inclusion and exclusion. It showed that the participants exhibited higher preference to include peers from forward classes in their private and personal domains whereas the pattern reversed when it came to social and public domains. Peers from backward classes were preferred more in social and public domains. The data also highlights the hostile and bigoted attitudes towards peers belonging to backward classes. However, the domain 'no contact' emitted neutral responses.

Thematic analysis of the reasons given by the participants for their peer preferences indicate predisposed and dogmatic attitudes towards backward classes. Participants, irrespective of their own class and caste, preferred to include peers belonging to forward classes in their private and personal domains. This can be attributed to the unsubstantiated association of upper caste groups



with positive characteristics like maintaining good hygiene, trustworthiness, dependability and support. This is clearly reflective of the imbibed attitudes and thinking which is discriminatory in nature. Forward classes are still considered 'pure' and 'dependable'. The power that their caste status, irrespective of their financial status, exerts is overarching. A participant stated that *"I will call Saurav Prasad in case of emergency because his family has a good name and contact in society and he should be able to help me out."* Even though lot of people from backward classes are socially successful, the general notion of lower castes being "weak" persists.

Peers from backward classes are considered 'unhygienic' (or 'impure') and they were not given preference when it came to sharing secrets, sharing clothes, swimming together in the same pool, drinking water from the same bottle, or approaching in an emergency situation. A participant wrote that *"I will not drink water from the bottle of Tanya Murmu as I find her way of drinking very unhygienic."* We received similar kind of responses for most of the peers belonging to backward classes. Though not in its literal sense of being as extreme as untouchability, one can still prominently observe the perpetuation of 'purity and pollution' as described by Dumont (1959). Thorat (2002) pointed out that while the practice of untouchability and socially excluding the Scheduled Caste children by making them sit separately from other students was disappearing, the prejudiced demeanor against them persisted in the form of lack of friendships between Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes. Disappointedly, even our results showed that such behavior is still disseminated in adolescent interactions which subsequently lead them to maintain caste distance, thus excluding the peers belonging to lower caste groups in their private and personal domains.

Kaul (2001) found that while discrimination was not expressed openly in classroom, the friendly attitudes changed to hostile outside the school. Contrary to our findings, she found no signs of social inter-mingling outside the school. Interestingly, our data indicated that participants from both upper and lower groups preferred peers from lower caste groups more than upper caste

groups in their social and public domains. A participant stated, *"I will go for a movie with Rani Kumari (name changed) because I can't share my food and water with her and she will feel left out."* Such responses showed that adolescents are aware that they are marginalizing and socially excluding their fellow peers, thus making them want to compensate for the exclusion. There is also a willingness to accept and include peers from lower castes in their life, but due to their unprimed attitude towards backward classes they confine the inclusion of peers from backward classes to their social and public spheres.

Our results also suggests that the boundaries of social exclusion are malleable. When it comes to one's academia and extra-curricular activities, peers from backward classes were preferred. As per the qualitative responses, most of the participants felt that peers from backward classes have an added advantage in terms of relaxation in percentages and other opportunities. Instead of evaluating their peers on an intellectual criteria, some participants have even misconceived everyone from the lower caste groups to be "intelligent" and "winner" just on the basis of their 'reserved category'. This led them to perceive peers from backward classes as their toughest competition as well as the ones with whom they would like to do their academic and extra-curricular activities.

However, this acceptance and inclusion of peers from lower caste groups bring along underlying relational aggression against them. Their fellow peers from lower caste groups reap negativity for those who excel in academics and have a better social standing. Some participants from upper caste groups have also expressed anger towards the peers of lower castes on account of "unfair competition" and "skewed distribution of opportunities." A XIIth grade participant from upper class stated *"I will hit Anuja Banka as I don't like her attitude. She doesn't study but will still get a good college."* It, thus, becomes imperative to not only implement policies related to reservation but also counsel the children regarding the need for such policies. We strongly recommend intervention in terms of creating awareness and inculcating positive attitudes towards inclusive-



ness in classroom setting. The opinionated and inequitable attitude and practices have been internalized by the adolescents towards the lower caste peer groups, thus affecting the school ethos and classroom social networking on everyday basis. Killen (2007) suggests that children from a preadolescent age are aware that social exclusion is wrong, thus talking to them about including everyone, feelings when social exclusion is encountered and strategies to manage social exclusion could be really beneficial.

5. CONCLUSION

Through this study, we conclude that though there is social inclusion of children from lower caste groups, it is only restricted to the social and public domains. The boundaries of inclusion grow rigid as we approach the domains of one's private and personal lives. Education has not been able to perpetuate awareness against or built a value system that can combat prevalent social exclusion and discrimination at grass roots level. The situation can only be challenged and transformed by bringing in intervention which disseminate inclusiveness and new set of values.

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Educational Resilience: A Study of Students belonging to the Economically Weaker Section

Ms. Deepti

Ph.D. Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

Abstract

Indian educational scene has undergone many transformations in recent times. Government of India by a Constitutional Act in 2002, (86th Amendment Act) added a new Article 21A and the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009) provides a platform to reach out with specific provisions for disadvantaged groups, such as child labourers, migrant children, children with special needs. As educational coverage rates have been increasing, greater proportions of socially disadvantaged students and those who were previously excluded, have been brought into the education system. However, while this has promoted access to education on the one hand, it has also generated significant challenges for 'equity' and 'quality' of education, on the other. Twenty-five percent reservation policy had provided opportunity for the children to step inside the private unaided school, but as they enter, with different cultural, social and academic capital, they face different challenges in the school. It is important to point out at this juncture that students belonging to the economically weaker sections live and study in different contexts, and therefore have different educational needs as compared to their socially advantaged peers. Further, while it is well documented that these students tend to perform relatively poorly at school, several studies have shown that in most countries there is a group of students who are academically successful despite their challenging backgrounds. Their struggle to 'bounce back' in educational achievements despite adversity will provide an in-depth understanding of the situation and provide methods to meet these challenges in the educational settings. The present research explores factors that build up educational resilience among students belonging to the economically weaker sections. Their educational resilience is observed in the school and also know their personal experiences, stories, and factors drawn from other sources which they feel have contributed to their development, success and making them educationally resilient.

Keywords: Resilience, Educational Resilience, Economically Weaker Section (EWS), adolescents

Introduction

The rapid development in the science and technology had affected the different spheres of the person's life. Directly as well as indirectly the physical and mental health of the person is drastically affected by the present changing scenario. Previously, the research and service delivery were deficits-based (approach) which focused on factors related to psychopathology and maladaptive functioning. But in recent years it has

shifted its focus from what is clinically wrong, to the promotion of well-being and the creation of a satisfying life - one that is filled with meaning, pleasure, engagement, positive relationships and accomplishment. This shift in emphasis is visible in contemporary research and theorization in Positive Psychology, Education for Mental Health and Social Inclusion.

Social inclusion, the buzz word in Indian context is of importance. Considering the age old concept of



caste system, many people are still suffering from inhuman attitudes and atrocities. Inequality in India has been the topic of concern since Independence. In India, with the rapid industrialization, the economic inequality has also emerged apart from caste inequality. This debate has been categorized into vertical inequalities and horizontal inequalities. In the present paper I have explored the vertical inequality that is based on the income and its relation with the educational outcomes. Historically, the occupation and caste were interrelated but with recent developments the disparities have been more in the class context. Considering the Article 21A and the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), the government had presented its concern for the children who are deprived of education for their proper development. This Act, had provided a platform for specific provisions for disadvantaged groups, such as child laborers, migrant children, children with special needs, or those who have a disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factors. Another landmark in this direction was upholding the constitutional validity of the RTE Act (2009) by the Supreme Court in April 2012, giving a minimum of 25% of seats for children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups (EWS) in all private unaided primary schools. In particular, Section 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act stipulates that the 25% reservation be implemented while admitting students to Class 1 (Tucker & Sahgal, 2012, p. 2).

It is important to point out at this juncture that students belonging to the Economically Weaker Sections live and study in different contexts. Many of them living in poverty amidst the deplorable living conditions have many social barriers. Their social, cultural, and academic capital are different from their peers. They suffer from barriers pertaining to language as even their local language doesn't conform and is different from the language used by their peers in the school. So, their peers who have “codes” (Bernstein, year) and “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, year) certainly have benefit over the students from EWS. Therefore, educational needs of students coming from EWS category are different as compared to their more

socially advantaged peers. In India, particularly, the beliefs of teachers and principals also affect the development of the children coming from the EWS. They believe that - these children do not possess the right environment at home or 'home status' to enable them to perform well in school and so they are weak in studies and continue to remain thus. (“*weak hain toh weak hi rehte hain*”) (Singh, 2011, p.33).

Further, while it is well documented that these students tend to perform relatively poorly at school, several studies have shown that in most countries there is a group of students who are academically successful despite their challenging backgrounds (OECD, 2011; Borman & Overman, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2006). Such students are said to be resilient.

Understanding Resilience

Resilience refers to the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences, and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with risks (Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003; Rutter, 1985). A key requirement of resilience is the presence of both risks and promotive factors that either help bring about a positive outcome or reduce or avoid a negative outcome.

In the present study, I explore how resilience builds up; what it really means in the lives of students; how it manifests in schools, especially in students from the economically weaker sections. Accordingly, the central focus of the present study is on exploring the phenomenon of educational resilience in students from the economically weaker sections, particularly in terms of how it builds up and identifying the factors that influence its development.

Understanding Educational Resilience

Educational resilience is defined as — “the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences.” (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997, p. 4). Educational resilience can be thought of as a continuous interaction between an individual and



the adverse characteristics of his or her environment. The term educational resilience as defined by Wang and her colleagues (1994), was found to be very comprehensive and appropriate for the present study.

Economically Weaker Section

According to the Right to Education Act (2009), Section 2, Clause (e) spells out that the child belonging to the 'weaker section' refers to "a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification." The present study complies with this definition.

The present study

There are very few researches that focus on EWS students and their successes. Their struggle to achieve educational success can play a very important role in enhancing our understanding about the factors and conditions that could make a positive difference to the lives of children belonging to marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups and communities. Understanding the processes involved in the development of educational resilience could provide the basis for the design of policies aimed at breaking the intergenerational cycle of poor academic achievement, poor job prospects and poverty.

Design of the Study

The design of the study is largely descriptive in nature with a distinct qualitative thrust as well. It was planned in two phases. Phase I was conceptualized as the Macro-Phase and Phase-II as the Micro-Phase. The focus of Phase I was to understand the nature and form of representation of the behavioral patterns of students who show educational resilience as they unfold and manifest in their personality and different aspects of school life. In Phase I, socio-demographic questionnaire, non-participant observation schedule and teacher's checklist were used for identification of students showing educational resilience. Phase II aimed to know the personal experiences, anecdotes, aspirations, ways of dealing with difficulties and any other significant factors, which students, who

were identified as being resilient from Phase I, mentioned as having contributed to the development of resilience in them. Interview schedules for students, parents, teachers and significant support providers, semi-projective tasks and academic record were used as tools in the Phase II.

Description of the School

The site of the study was the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School situated in Piplani, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Bhopal. The school, previously run by Ladies Club BHEL, Bhopal, was started in the form of a *Balwadi* in the year 1969. In 1972, it was adopted by the Sri Sathya Sai Organization. Presently, it follows the Madhya Pradesh State Board Examination. Due to the belief of the founder of the school in single gender education, the sections for boys and girls are separate. At present, there are 810 students and 35 teachers in the school. Of these, 80% belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category. This school was chosen for the study since its percentage of students coming from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) is very high. More than 75% of the students come from the Piplani, BHEL slum area. The school believes in enrolling students from the nearby areas which in this case are the Piplani slums.

Participants

The sample of participants for Phase I of the study was drawn from the morning shift of the school. Students from classes VIII-XI of both the boys' and girls' sections were observed. (Total no. of students -240). In Phase-II of the study, fourteen students were identified from the results of Phase I.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was done in two phases: Phase-I included non-participant observations and administration of the socio-demographic questionnaire to the participants. For a period of three to five days, the researcher performed non-participant observation in each section and each class. Each interview was conducted individually. The interview was conducted in a way that allowed student participants to broadly describe their own



perceptions of how home, school and peer group contributed to their academic success, despite the challenges and adversities that they faced.

Findings

The findings are divided into Phase I and Phase II. In Phase I the findings are discussed under subthemes that had emerged in due course of the analysis.

In Phase I of the study, all students of the classes studied had a few students from the economically weaker section who were identified as having some of the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics that typify educational resilience. These included high levels of motivation, clarity of goals, task commitment, dealing with adversity realistically, achievement orientation, internal locus of control, valuing education as a means of mobility, and a hard working attitude.

The forms and degrees of challenge and risk emanating from family factors and economic constraints varied across the participants, each one of them was seen to have dealt with them with courage and determination. Some of them made personal adjustments, others accepted the difficulties and factored them into their everyday lives, some kept their motivation high which sustained them and a few others worked very hard to accommodate all the demands and pressures.

A common feature observed across candidates was that they all had big dreams for the future. They aspired to get well-paid jobs, fulfill their dreams and wanted to assume middle class professions so that they could elevate their family status and make their parents proud.

Findings of Phase II are discussed below in the form of themes:

Nature and Form of Educational Resilience

There was a sharp sense of judgment of the challenging life situations in all these students and they had a willingness to tackle these situations realistically without blaming it on their families. Their problem-solving and decision-making skills were quite developed. They all seemed to have a never-give-up attitude, which was appreciated by their families and teachers.

High educational aspirations and goals were shown by almost all the students. This has been identified as a factor in educational resilience in earlier researches (Turner, Laria, Shapiro, & Perez, 1993; Waxman, Huang and Padron, 1997; Alva, 1991; Alva and Padilla, 1995).

While the need for achievement was very high in students selected for level II, but, almost all the other participants too showed achievement needs in both scholastic and non-scholastic areas. The work of Werner and Smith (1992); Hestiyanti (2006) and Bernard (1997) in the past has also focused on the relationship between achievement and life challenges.

Lived Experience of the participants

The family experiences of many of the participants drew their attention towards the need for social justice and protection of the rights of those who were socially disadvantaged. While all of them felt strongly about this, some of them were more vociferous about it. Their need for social justice and mobility also found articulation in their career orientations.

Positive expectations for the future from parents, especially, from the mother, and the girls students' themselves in terms of the identity that they wished to build were seen as factors accounting for the development of educational resilience, confirming previous findings of the study by Benner and Mistry (2007).

Experiences related to School and Classroom Environment

Resilient students, even though they encounter difficult life circumstances or traumatic events are seen to overcome the adverse impact of these. The environment of the school and the classroom are known to be important aspects, which influence students' learning, academic performance and motivation. Thus, educational resilience may be seen as the power to withstand challenges in the classroom and thrive despite it. Usually, those who consider school as a safe place enjoy educational challenges and do not experience problems with others at school. Hence, they may attain significant levels of educational achievement in schools



and be considered educationally resilient. The motivational climate in the class and encouragement by the teachers was well documented in the interviews of students.

Teacher Support

Teachers were identified as positive forces in the development of educational resilience. Most participants shared that in the school, teachers were the only persons who could provide them positive support and become role models for them. They also felt that coming from a lower socio-economic background, they were in the most critical need of support providers who could help them to feel safe and protected. In most cases, these persons were their teachers. What also emerged was that the teaching approach of the school encouraged students to explore their own beliefs, attitudes, and values. Thus the focus was not only on studies but also on self-development.

Role of Significant Persons in the Development of Educational Resilience

In the present study, the role of the significant person on the life of the participants has not only found to be deep; it has led to the development of educational resilience in many of them. These social support providers were the significant persons in their life who instilled in them both directly as well as indirectly, the passion for getting good marks and aspiring for good jobs.

School Policies, Practices, Beliefs and Educational Resilience

The educational policy followed by Sri Sathya Sai School entails a life-long process of transformation, and aims to strengthen the sacred connections between the individual, the family, the society, and all living beings.

Most of the participants as well as teachers identified the school's practices and beliefs as being most helpful and instrumental their having developed resilience. According to the teachers and school management, it has been the policy of the school since its inception to work for bringing the children residing in the nearby slum areas to the school as a service to society. From 1972 onwards, the school has been enrolling children belonging to

the lower socio-economic strata, much before the RTE Act (2009) was passed. Many of the parents and teachers believed that this initiative of the school was the most important factor enabling students to reach the school.

Contributions of the Study

The present study highlights the role played by the community, family, and school in the development of educational resilience among the students belonging to EWS category. A significant contribution of the study has been to focus on the lived experiences of participants and to know how they contribute to the development of resilience. The study has also highlighted and drawn attention to the trials and tribulations that children and adolescents face on account of the societal norms that prevail within the lower socioeconomic strata.

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Development of a Secular Identity in Religious Denomination Schools: A Case-Study

Ms. Manika Sandhu

Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Educational Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia

Abstract

The period of adolescence is difficult to describe, especially so in the Indian context that is characterized by disparity and diversity, which leads to a variety of experiences for adolescents. These experiences are influenced by several factors that include caste, class, religion, gender and geographical location. Contemporary research on adolescence and the growing up years highlight how our understanding of adolescence has been dominated by an American Eurocentric view. Hence, there is a need to understand the experience of adolescence within its relevant socio cultural context. Through this study an effort is made to understand the experience of adolescence located in the school ethos. Further, since adolescence is a time of change, it offers the adolescents with the impetus to reevaluate themselves in the light of these changes and develop their own identity; thus the dimension of identity development is also explored in the present study. Additionally, school and its religious affiliations are important factors that impact the construction of an adolescent's identity. Therefore, the central focus of this study is to understand the role of religion and the construction of identity of the adolescents as it takes place in a Sikh Minority school.

Keywords: Adolescence, School Ethos, Identity, Religion

Adolescence as a Unique Stage

Adolescence presents itself as an important period of transition in an individual's life. Adolescents are influenced by several factors that include caste, class, religion, gender and geographical location. Further, the lived realities that characterize every adolescent's life also pose difficulties in universalizing the adolescent experience or considering it a monolith. Despite, the ambiguity in the conceptualization of the nature of adolescence, there seems to be consensus that adolescence begins with the biological changes of puberty and ends when the individual assumes adult roles and responsibilities (Dusek, 1987).

It is important to bring to light that though adolescence begins with biological changes, which can be seen as universal, the experience of adolescence evolves in a cultural milieu. Thus, aspects like nature of adolescence, its duration as a

developmental stage, may differ across different cultures (Dusek, 1987).

Contemporary research on adolescence and the growing up years highlight how our understanding of adolescence has been dominated by an American Eurocentric view. In reality however, there are markedly different “adolescences” in other parts of the world. (Brown & Larson, 2002)

Moreover, the Indian adolescent until recently had been perceived as one homogenous group having similar issues and characteristics, however, they can be differentiated based on gender, class, caste, geographical location and religion (UNFPA, 2000).

Similar ideas related to the complex nature of Indian adolescence are also echoed in T. S. Sarawathi's works. She argues that the form that adolescence takes within a culture as well as across cultures presents a kaleidoscope representing



diversity (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Additionally, in the Indian context, several cross sectional and longitudinal studies point towards a gendered and a class based nature of adolescence. Considering the above points, it can be posited that there is a need to understand the experience of adolescence within the relevant socio cultural context. Through this study an effort has been made to understand the experience of adolescence and their construction of identity located within the ethos of a Sikh minority school.

Adolescent's Construction of Identity

Adolescence is a time of change starting from pubertal biological and physical changes, to psychological, cognitive as well as social changes. These changes provide the adolescents with the opportunities and the impetus to reevaluate themselves and hence develop their own identity.

Identity can be understood as finding answers to the question: Who am I? ; defining one's sense of self in terms of the feelings and ideas that one holds about oneself. It is a person's self developed, internal and ever changing organization of attitude and beliefs (Dusek, 1987). For Kakar (1978) identity is the process of synthesis between the inner and the outer social reality and a feeling of continuity and consistency of the self.

Erikson (1968) states that identity development takes place at the end of adolescence when the adolescent embraces the identifications of the past and makes a coherent sense of self. Although identity development is a lifespan process of exploration, it is during adolescence that it becomes a pressing concern.

However, recent researches attempt to move beyond a psychological perspective of ego identity to a more sociological perspective on identity. Thus stating that apart from being a definition of one's own self, identity can also be defined as being related to people's sense of belonging and how they situate themselves in a wider socio cultural context (Marshall, 1998).

An individual not only identifies with one single grand identity, but grapples with different identities. It is the totality of all these identifications that makes a complex identity (Sen,

2002). In the Indian context factors such as caste, class and gender play a very important role to produce one's identity (Sarup, 1996). Moreover, since our everyday lives revolve around many identities each of them being interconnected so some identities are often complimentary and others competing, but each of these defines in totality who we are. Identity thus can be understood as being dynamic and fluid and a constantly evolving process of becoming rather than simply 'being' (Dillon, 1999).

Since, it has been argued above that identity is complex and multidimensional in nature, having a number of dimensions to it. In the light of this argument I would like to elaborate on two dimensions of identity, in the next sections; Religious identity and identity with respect to school and its ethos.

Religious Identity

The concept of religious identity was first given by Hans Mol (1976, 1979) and later extended by Seul (1999). Religious identity can be understood as an individual's identification with a religious tradition. Religion provides the strongest kind of identity to an individual. The religious norms and values are communicated through texts and books and since they operate at the transcendental level, so exert greater influence on the individual.

Another conception of religious identity has been expounded by Berger and Luckman (1991). For them religious identity is acquired as early as the process of primary socialization. Thus the sense of religious identity tends to develop in the early years of one's life.

In the Indian context, study by Gupta (2008) shows that religious identity of Hindu and Muslim children is developed through the process of socialization by the family. Religious symbols, rituals, festivals and other religious practices that are present in the sphere of the child help to reinforce and internalize the religious identity.

Since schools, especially ones affiliated to a religion, provide sites for development of a religious identity in the Indian adolescent, so it is important to consider this dimension as well. The next section attempts to discuss studies that present



how schooling can have an impact on the identity of the student.

Role of School in Identity Construction

School plays a very important role in the life of an adolescent. It is a place where maximum alert wakeful hours of an adolescent are spent. The life at school and the interaction therein shapes the identity of the students. Each school has its own culture and ethos, which influences the lives of its students. The school culture can include anything from its infrastructure, teacher student relationships, school artifacts, language/s spoken, to the numerous practices taking place at the school. All these have an impact on the student, directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly. This culture that the school presents to the students has an important role to play in the student's construction of a sense of self (McLeod & Yates, 2006).

The process of schooling also plays an important role in the formal and informal socialization of the students. Thus, a major part of the adolescent's sense of identity may be attributed to the experiences and time spent at school. The school which was chosen for the present study was a Sikh minority school. In order to understand the impact that it can have on the development of religious identity, it is important to first take into account the background in which the minority schools operate.

Minority schools have been prevalent in India for quite some time now. The range includes the Christian Convents and Missionary schools, the Islamic Maqtabas and Madrassas and the Sikh minority schools. The setting up of these minorities' schools has been legitimized by the constitution. Article 29 and 30 has been placed in the Indian constitution, to safeguard the rights of the minorities in India.

Thus, it is imperative to understand that in the process of promoting one's culture, what impact these minority schools have on the identity development of the students.

Since in this study we are considering schools that are affiliated to a particular religion, so in such schools the identification of students with religion may be different and thus it is important to consider

the role of religion in such schools.

In a study done by Parul Bhandari (2014) in a girl's convent school in Delhi it was found that the minority school faced a challenge when it came to imparting of religious education. The school faced a dilemma while emphasizing its religious identity and at the same time not overstepping on children's religious identity.

Though, the school intended to treat everyone equally, however, through the practices at school the religious affiliation of the school did impact the ethos of the school. This study has significant implications, primarily the need to understand the role of religious minority schools in the construction of identity of adolescents.

Thus in summary, adolescence as a phase doesn't take place in vacuum. It is influenced by a number of factors which must be taken into account in order to understand the most important challenge that an adolescent faces- the development of identity. The present research was undertaken to study the unique interplay of religion, identity and experiences of adolescence, as evolving within the specific setting of the school.

The study had the following research objectives:

- To study the experience of growing up in a Sikh Minority school
- To study the role of religion in the identity development of Sikh/Non-Sikh adolescents.
- To study the role that the school plays in the development of a religious identity.

Overview of the Study

As mentioned above for the purpose of the present study a Sikh minority school was selected. This school was established in 1991 under the auspices of a Sikh Education Society. It is CBSE affiliated and has classes from 1-12.

A purposive sample was drawn, consisting of both boys and girls, belonging to different religions, studying in the chosen minority school. In order to study the development of identity over the span of the adolescent years, the sample group of participants was drawn from classes, 9, 10 and 11. The age range was 14-17 years.



Table 1: Profile of Participants

Religion	Number of Participants
Sikh	64
Non Sikh	24
Total	88

In the first phase of data collection, a focused group discussion was conducted with 8 students (4 boys, 4 girls) of classes 8, 10 and 11. The major objective of the FGD was to know through the students, the role that the school played in the development of a religious identity. Apart from this, a self reporting measure was used. The nature of questions was open ended; a few situational questions as well as word association type items were also included in the questionnaire. The areas covered in the questionnaire were self, social, school, family and religion

After the administering of the questionnaire, the responses were analyzed by extracting the frequently occurring themes. These themes were then analyzed and inferences were drawn from them. In addition, significant narratives of the respondents in the questionnaires were also identified, collated and analyzed.

Discussion of Findings

Experience of Growing up

One of the major objectives of this study was to explore the adolescent experience as it unfolds within the socio-cultural milieu. The findings from the data revealed that most of the adolescents, regardless of grade, gender and religion reported being both happy and satisfied with the experience of growing up. However, at the same time there seemed to be a duality when it came to their experience. Many adolescents reported being happy and satisfied as result of the underlying changes and getting more responsibilities but at the same time they also reported experiencing conflicts and challenges due to pressure of studies and apprehensions about the future.

In addition, the study revealed that this phase was characterized by learning and exploring new things

and engaging in various areas of interest. Yet at the same time most of the adolescents reported having conflicts, which revolved around worry about the future, having pressure of academics and being concerned about their career.

Construction of Religious Identity

Religious identity may refer to a person's identification with a faith. It usually develops in tandem with family influences. In the present study it was seen that both Non Sikh and Sikh adolescents reported being religious and engaging in the religious practices of Sikhism regularly. The important sources from which they learnt about religion were the family and grandparents in particular. Many Sikh participants also reported learning about their religion from school. Thus the family's religious affiliation had a key role to play in the lives of adolescents. In fact the family's religious affiliation, religious practices they engaged in and expectations from their children molded the religious identity of the adolescents.

Another significant finding of this study was that the Sikh students had a very strong sense of religious identity. Religiosity for Sikh students was understood in the form of external manifestations, rules, rituals, practices and rites of religion. Most Sikh students displayed pride about Sikhism. Their religiosity revolved around preserving their identity through the religious symbols: maintain long hair, more for boys than for girls, five K's and visiting the Gurudwara. Thus we see that they had distinct traditional leanings in terms of maintaining their religious identity yet at the same time they were modern in their outlook when it came to adolescent experiences. Interestingly no conflict was reported in the students in terms of mandating this strong sense of religious identity and at the same time having adolescent experiences.

Another important finding of the study was that Non Sikh adolescents reported having more religious tolerance; their responses stated that all religions were the same. Further what was also observed was that though they knew about Sikhism and respected the school, their Sikh friends and the Sikh practices, but at the same time



they maintained their own separate religious identity. There was no conflict that could be visibly seen in terms of development of a religious identity due to different religious affiliations of parents and school.

Identity Construction in a Religious Minority School

The school plays a very important role in development of an identity. This was also explored in the study. It must be first noted that the study revealed both Sikh and Non Sikh students equally recognized the school's affiliation to Sikhism. However, the data showed distinct experiences for both Sikh and Non Sikh students

The Sikh students had a sense of homecoming or belongingness since the same religion was being practiced in their homes. There was thus no scope for conflict. It was also observed that the school ethos had an impact on the Sikh students, which was reflected in them having a strong sense of religious identity.

Non Sikh students also liked the school, they knew the affiliation and some reported that Sikhs got preferential treatment but there was no evidence of conflict in their religious identity. While they engaged in the same practices as the Sikh students, yet there was no reported conflict in their own religious identity or that which the school promoted. They remained rooted in the former. This may be attributed to the school not imposing strict adherence to Sikhism for all.

Educational Implications

The present study has generated a number of implications that would be of interest to educators, schools and parents. It should be however noted that these implications are by no means exhaustive. They are intended to stimulate thinking and research in the study of adolescence especially within the ethnic/religious minority schools.

The study contributed to the way of understanding the nature of adolescence as evolving in its own unique socio-cultural milieu. In this case, since the sample of adolescent was from within a Sikh minority school, it contributed to the discourse of growing up in an ethnic minority school, and the

impact that the school ethos has on the identity development of the students. Though, more such studies are required in this area.

It is important to note that though there were religious activities at school and the affiliation of the school towards Sikhism was quite obvious to both Sikh and non Sikh students, yet the school didn't impose its religious identity on the students; there was freedom to practice other religions. The school, apart from engaging in Sikh religious festivals and practices, also celebrated Christian and Hindu festivals. Assemblies were held on national integration, secularism and the rich heritage of India. With Sikh dance forms like *Gidra* and *Bhangra*, there was also learning of western dance, mono acting and debates in English. This amalgamation of Sikh religious practices at school and other practices helped students have a more modern outlook.

Though the Sikh students had a discernable Sikh identity, at the same time the non Sikh students were seen to retain their own sense of religious identity. This becomes a lesson for other ethnic minority schools, that in the name of maintaining their minority culture they must not impose their religious affiliation on others.

Another important implication is that the school must not take a moralistic stand on adolescence. Adolescent is a time of exploration, when boys and girls experiment with different roles, interests and lifestyles. It is a time of change and so the school must not moralize in the name of religion and use water tight labels of right and wrong.

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Importance of Resilience through Leisure Satisfaction to overcome Academic Stress

Dr. Suparna Jain*, Ms. Aditi Upreti**, Ms. Ekta Chopra**, Ms. Kartika Ladwal** and Ms. Rashmi Marwaha**

* Assistant Professor, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi

** Student, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi

Abstract : Academic concerns are repeatedly reported to be one of the most common sources of stress amongst college students. It is harming their mental health and increasing the incidence of suicides among the youth. Though previous research has devised ways to reduce stress, they mostly focus on time management and social support.

The present study was conducted to devise innovative ways of reducing academic stress and increasing levels of resilience. The sample comprised 608 female undergraduate students from University of Delhi. A mixed methodology was employed. Qualitative data was collected by asking an open-ended question from all the participants, in which they were asked to describe the most stressful event(s) of their lives in the previous 6 months. For quantitative data, two standardised tools were used: to assess the level of stress, Perceived Stress Scale and to measure the resilience among the participants, Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale. Various leisure satisfiers were identified which were found to be negatively correlated with levels of academic stress and were positively correlated with academic satisfaction. By employing Analysis of Variance, the effectiveness of leisure satisfaction to reduce stress and increase resilience was assessed. The benefits of these various leisure satisfiers among undergraduates have been elaborated in the paper.

Keywords: Resilience, adolescence, academic stress, social support

Introduction

Academic problems have been repeatedly reported to be one of the most common sources of stress for college students (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987; Frazier and Schauben, 1994; Ross et al., 1999; Garrett, 2001; Phinney and Haas, 2003). Lately, a study of 500 youths from five universities in NCR, including Delhi University and JNU, has found that academics-related anxiety has become major concerns among students today. Nearly 17.8% of the participants have had thoughts about self-harm and suicide, while an alarming 64.6% have experienced depression symptoms. At least 20% of the respondents have indulged in alcohol, tobacco and other substance abuse as well (Gohain, 2015).

There is an impending need to promote life skills among college students for coping with stressful life events and prevention of suicide (Gohain, 2015). Research has revealed that the methods to reduce stress by students often include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and engagement in leisure pursuits (Blake & Vandiver, 1988; Mattlin, Wethington, & Kessler, 1990). Leisure satisfaction is defined as the positive feeling of contentment one perceives as a result of meeting personal needs through leisure activities (Seigenthaler, 1997).

Although relationships among some leisure domains and perceived stress have been studied in previous researches, however, relationships



between leisure satisfaction and academic stress of college students have not been addressed directly. The only scientific research that specifically related leisure satisfaction to academic stress was that of Ragheb and McKinney (1993), who established a negative association between academic stress and leisure satisfaction.

In the present study, the effectiveness of leisure satisfaction on reducing stress and increasing resilience would be assessed in terms of pursuing one's passion, aspiring to be like a role model and spending time on social networking applications.

Leisure Satisfiers: Passion, Role Model and Social media applications

Passion is a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which one invests time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). Research has revealed various benefits of inculcating passion. For instance, in a study with elderly individuals, Rousseau and Vallerand (2003) showed that passion positively predicted positive indices of psychological well-being (life satisfaction, meaning in life, and vitality) but negatively predicted negative indices (anxiety and depression). Research with young adults and teenagers using different measures of psychological well-being has yielded similar findings. Passion is positively related to life satisfaction and vitality (Vallerand et al., 2007, Studies 1 and 2; Vallerand et al., 2008, Study 2).

Role models, according to Shapiro, Haseltine & Rowe (1978) are individuals whose behaviours, styles and attributes are emulated by others. Murrell and Zagenczyk (2006) offer a more intricate definition of a role model and define one as a "cognitive construction based on the attributes of people in social roles that an individual perceives to be similar to in terms of attitudes, behaviours, goals, or status position to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes." The role models' behaviours are examined for guidance as to what is appropriate for success, for the level aspired to by the user, and relevance for the particular culture and context

within which users are building their identity (Singh, Vinnicombe & James, 2003). Role models have been shown as a way to inculcate professional values, attitudes, and behaviours in students and young professionals (Paice et al., 2005).

Social media applications are gaining immense popularity. It seems that the human preference for novelty first described by Lord Kames (Home, 1823) plays into the attractiveness of social media. Previous research has had mixed findings in terms of the consequences of social media on individual and society. However, in the present research the focus is on the positive impact of these applications for undergraduate students.

Method

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the present exploratory study. Focus group discussion was carried among the researchers, based on which common leisure satisfiers among undergraduate girls were extracted. On this basis, demographic profile was developed to be administered on the participants.

Two standardised tools were also used to assess the level of Stress and Resilience among the participants. To collect qualitative data, an open ended question was asked from the entire sample, asking them to describe the most stressful events of their life in past 6 months. Quantitative data was analysed by employing descriptive and inferential statistics and content analysis was carried out for interpreting the qualitative data.

Tools Used

Demographic Profile: It comprised of quantitative questions on perceived satisfaction with academic performance; **Passion:** its presence, type, extent of time devoted in its pursuance; **Role Model:** its presence, type, extent to which one wants to become like him/her, extent to which it is propagated amongst others and **Social media applications:** types, extent of active usage in terms of updates, followers, friends and so on.

The Perceived Stress Scale: The Perceived Stress Scale is a self-report Visual Analog Scale (VAS), a global measure of perceived stress (Hill, Aldag, Chatterton, & Zinaman, 2005, p. 681). The VAS is



a unidimensional instrument quantifying intensity of stress. A horizontal line 100 millimetres long with anchors at either end (none, extreme) is used where scores are recorded to the nearest millimetre. Revill, Robinson, Rosen, and Hogg (1976) reported test-retest reliability ranges from .95 to .99 for most visual analog scales.

Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor and Davidson 2003): The CD-RISC is a 25-item scale that measures the ability to cope with stress and adversity. Respondents rate items on a scale from 0 ("not true at all") to 4 ("true nearly all the time"). The reliability coefficient in the Indian context of the CD-RISC is 0.89. The internal consistency alpha values of the 4 factors found based on the factor analysis done in the Indian context are: $\alpha = 0.80$ for factor 1, $\alpha = 0.75$ for factor 2, $\alpha = 0.74$ for factor 3 and $\alpha = 0.69$ for factor 4. Furthermore, all factors are significantly highly correlated with each other and with total resilience score (Singh, K. & Yu, X, 2010). The scale comprises of four factors/dimensions: Hardiness, Resourcefulness, Purpose and Optimism.

Sample: The sample comprised of 608 undergraduate female students from a women's college, University of Delhi. They were selected using random sampling, incorporating 20% of students from each course.

Results and Discussion:

Various stressors related to academics were expressed by the participants while responding to the open ended question on the most stressful events of past six months. Content analysis displayed various themes such as academic pressure and examination, difficulties with time management, uncertainty of career, admission to higher education institutes, internal assessment, assignment overload and so on (Table 1).

Further the impact of perceived satisfaction with academic performance on the students' psyche was assessed through employing ANOVA. It was found that the participants who were not satisfied with their academic performance were significantly higher on levels of stress, were suffering from low levels of resilience as they were low on all the four dimensions of resilience in comparison to the ones

who reported to be satisfied with one's academic performance (Table 3).

The leisure satisfiers which were found significantly and positively correlated with academic performance as well as perceived satisfaction were use of social media, pursuing passion and following a role model (Table 2).

The participants using social media applications such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Watsapp and so on were found to be higher on overall resilience and its three dimensions (Table 3). The qualitative data analysis through content analysis was separately done for the two groups of participants; first, those who use these applications and second, those who do not use them.

The ones who were not using these applications were commonly facing stressors such as loneliness, lack of confidence, lack of social support, burdened by expectations, homesickness for the ones staying away from home (Table 1). Observation of these themes somehow reveals a lack of social contact for the ones who are not using these applications. Previous research has provided evidence that strong, intimate social relationships online tend to be also strong, intimate social relationships offline (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Dutton, Helsper, and Gerber, 2009; Hampton, 2009). Research has also found that people who tend to communicate more online also tend to do so offline (Quan-Haase, 2008; Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). However, it was also observed that the ones who were overly active (more than an hour a day) on these applications were the ones who reported to be lacking a passion in life, having problems managing time and facing multiple real life issues which they seem to be ignoring by being active in the virtual world (Table 1).

Another leisure satisfier that has been found to be promoting resilience is pursuing a passion in life. The common passions revealed by the participants were dancing (13%), music (11%), travelling (10%), reading and writing (10%), holding leadership positions (9%), creative endeavours (6%) and the rest were interested in others such as sports and photography. It was found through

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analysis of variance that the ones having a passion were significantly higher on overall resilience as well as its dimensions of optimism and resourcefulness (Table 3). Passion holders might be more optimistic towards life as they are indulging into an activity which they admire, making them view world as a just place allowing one to explore one's talent. Also they might appear more resourceful as they are investing their time and energy in reaching a passionate goal. Previous research on passion does reveal that passion can positively affect a number of outcomes such as flow and positive emotions, psychological well-being, physical health, relationships, and performance (Vallerand, 2010).

Along with social media applications and passion, following a role model also emerged as a leisure satisfier. The common role models for the participants were parents, intellectuals, media celebrities, political leaders, social activists, teachers, siblings, other family members. Using analysis of variance, it was found that the ones having a role model were higher on overall resilience and all its four dimensions (Table 3). Another interesting finding was that the ones who had socially revealed following the role model were higher on overall resilience and its dimension of hardiness, resourcefulness and optimism. It could be because they might believe to be viewed as competent and focussed.

Conclusion and Implications

Overall, the findings of the present study provide an insight about the causes of growing academic stress among undergraduates and more importantly the ways of reducing it. It has emerged that various leisure satisfiers can help reduce stress and increase the level of resilience among students. Few benefitting leisure satisfiers that surfaced in the present study were optimal usage (an hour a day) of social media, pursuing a passion and following a role model. Future research can study the impact of other leisure satisfiers such as writing blogs, exercising, creating/inventing/discovering and so on.

Tables

Table 1: Themes that emerged through content analysis of qualitative data based on the open ended question on most common stressors.

Common Academic Stressors
Academic pressure and examinations (50%)
Time management (19%)
Admissions to higher educational institutions (11%)
Uncertainty of career (11%)
Internal assessment (2.8%)
Assignment/Practical work overload (2.7%)
Board exams/ Results (2.6%)
Course structure/CBCS (.80%)
Lack of interest in studies/course (.70%)
Self-expectations and fear of failure (.50%)
Preparing for entrance exams (.49%)
Common Stressors Among Those Not Using Social Media
Loneliness (24.6%)
Lack of confidence (7.9%)
Lack of social support (17.2%)
Burden of expectations (28.5%)
Homesickness (14.5%)
Common Stressors Among High (more Than 1 Hour/day) Social Media Users
Lack of passion in life (17.6%)
Time management problem (11.6%)
Real life difficulties (25.3%)



Table 2: Correlations of Academics (performance and perceived satisfaction) with various Leisure Satisfiers

Variables	Use of social media	Pursuing a passion	Following a role model	Extent to which one is willing to become like the role model
Aggregate in Academics	.112**	.058*	.030	.007
Perceived Academic Satisfaction	.128**	.000	.117**	.081*

*.05 level of significance

**.01 level of significance

Table 3: F values depicting differences between participants in the level of stress, resilience and its 4 dimensions based on variables such as academic performance, perceived academic satisfaction, use of social media, pursuing a passion, following a role model and socially revealing about the role model

Variables		F values					
		Stress	Hardiness	Optimism	Resourcefulness	Purpose	Total resilience
Academic performance		1.323	1.157	1.048	1.666	1.809	1.846
Perceived Academic satisfaction		5.439**	3.352**	4.936**	4.143**	2.388*	5.112**
Leisure satisfiers							
1	Use of social media	3.616	5.355*	5.155*	4.295*	3.655	3.924*
2	Pursuing a passion	0.133	1.937	2.937*	4.831**	1.304	3.420*
3	Following a role model	1.617	4.097**	3.524*	5.513**	3.199*	5.826**
Socially revealing the role model		0.552	3.966**	4.813**	4.272**	3.361*	5.904**

*.05 level of significance

**.01 level of significance

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Peer Pressure: A Reflection on Adolescent Peer Cultures

Dr. Kavita Vasudev

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Institute of Home Economics

ABSTRACT : Adolescence is a period of intense bonding with peers; in addition to being a phase of excessive psychological and social changes. The need for belongingness, care, affection and conformity is the basic necessity for an adolescent from his/her peer group. Strong, positive, and effective relationships with peers fulfil the need for support, love, competition, criticism, and the like. In contrast, the same relationship when negative, turns into a nerve-wrecking relation filled with guilt, embarrassment, and pressure from peers.

To get their approval, adolescents tend to give in to pressures from their peers, which can take both positive and negative forms. Positive peer pressure can be seen in an adolescents' good academic performance, healthy competitions, participation in extra-curricular activities, imbibing good habits, and values. Contrary to this, the negative pressure from peers is evident from adolescents' involving themselves in acts or actions that they feel might not be what is expected from them, like low academic performance, and aggression.

In light of the above, the paper strives to gain an insight into why peers are inevitable for adolescents and the reasons behind following their peers. The specific objectives identified for the study were to understand the importance of peer group interaction and dynamics during adolescence, the concept of peer pressure, and its varied forms. In addition to adolescents' views on friendships and pressure that peers exert on them, experts from the field of adolescent studies, psychologists and psychiatrists were consulted to cognize their perspectives on adolescent peer culture and group conformity.

The findings of the study showed that adolescents select their peers on the basis of self-determined criteria. In general, peers are considered as important entities by adolescents. However, peers are also perceived as sources of tension and unhappiness. The experts' opinions highlight that friendship and peer group conformity is significant during adolescence and hence, peer acceptance has been identified as a powerful indicator of adolescents' long-term psychological adjustment.

Peer pressure, from the study, was identified to have both positive and negative dimensions. Positive pressure from peers is seen to be more than negative pressure as family ties still remain strong in the Indian context, which help adolescents find support and solace in times of need.

Keywords: peer-pressure, adolescence, sub-culture, peer-culture

Introduction

The present article is an attempt to understand the concept of peer pressure and its varied manifestations during adolescence. It seeks to analyse the importance of peer culture during adolescence. The study is descriptive in nature and the attempt is to reflect upon the occurrence of pressure from peers as it unfolds in the Indian

setup. The research took into account the perspectives of psychologists, school teachers, and counsellors to understand the thrust area of the study and school students studying in classes 6th to 10th formed the purview of the study.

Conceptualising Adolescence

Adolescence generally refers to the teenage years



between 10 and 19 and can be considered as the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood (WHO, 1997). In studying adolescent development, adolescence can be defined biologically - as the physical transition marked by the onset of puberty and the termination of physical growth, cognitively - as the changes in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally, or socially - as a period of preparation for adult roles.

Conceptualizing adolescence as a life-stage is of immense significance due to the various issues and debates that the stage is fraught with. Among the key debates and issues raised by many psychologists and sociologists are, whether it is a period of 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) or 'challenge and potential' (Maslow, Rogers), whether it is a 'myth or reality' (Saraswathi, 1999) for those in the child-adult continuity in the Human Development cycle, whether as a life stage it is an artefact of an industrial society, whether there are elements of universalism to it or whether it is a contextually embedded phenomenon suggesting the co-existence of several adolescences.

Historically speaking, in the biological and psychological realms, the beginning of the scientific study of adolescence was marked by the work of G. Stanley Hall (1904). The most influential of Hall's concepts was his view of adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress'. He depicted adolescence as a tumultuous period. The beginning of adolescence, according to this view, involves major physical transitions that include growth spurts, sexual maturation, hormonal changes, and, as the most recent neurological research shows, brain development in the prefrontal area that is critical for impulse control. A middle adolescent is often physically mature enough to perform adult functions like work and childbearing, but lacks the psychological maturity, social status, and financial resources to perform these functions responsibly. This disjunction between biology and society has the potential to create a difficult transitional period for adolescents. Consistent with these arguments, adolescence represents a period in the life-span in which problem behaviours including criminal behaviour may rise sharply, as do symptoms of

depression. All these, thus, render it as a period of storm and stress.

In contrast to Hall's view, adolescence is now viewed as a stage replete with challenge and potential (Maslow, Rogers). This perspective has emerged from humanistic psychology. Among the major challenges are those of career and vocational choices, relationships, education and schooling, employment and psycho-social well-being. Coping with familial and societal values, which they are socialized into, as against those of the self, which emerge through personal experience, often pose a serious challenge to most adolescents. They usually face conflicts, dilemmas, difficult choices, often have to move away from the family, form new peer groups and adjust to new institutions where they have to live and study. In humanistic psychology, the belief is that, if the psycho-social environment is supportive, then adolescents are able to deal with these demands and convert them into negotiable challenges into which they invest their boundless energy and move ahead. There is thus no storm and stress. What develops instead is the potential to surge ahead. However, this behoves that the adults around are accommodating and supportive and perceive adolescents as a repository of potential, granting them the freedom to take risks, experiment, make mistakes, etc.

Saraswathi (1999), one of the most eminent contemporary researchers on adolescence in India, holds that, while in many societies adolescence is a distinct milestone, in Indian society, adolescence is the invention of a technological, industrial society that is marked by a discontinuity between childhood and adulthood. She argues that even though puberty marks the beginning of a distinct phase, it does not hold good in the Indian context as puberty might not necessarily be succeeded by the immediate phase of adolescence. In her subsequent writings (2003), she highlights intra-regional variations emanating from societal realities of caste, gender and religion, giving rise to multiple adolescences. Thus, Saraswathi (1999) holds that the nature of the adolescent experience is very variable and while for the middle and upper classes it may be a reality, for many others – girls and lower strata in particular, it is often a myth and may have



only biological proportions. Likewise, for rural India, it is marked more by absence than presence on account of cultural factors and the assumed continuity between childhood and adulthood.

The conceptualization of adolescence as a life stage is further influenced by studies which focus on the shrinking span of childhood and the early advent of adolescence. In a study by Anandalakshmy (1991), it was concluded that the span of childhood was directly related to the economic standing of the family; the poorer the family, the earlier the childhood ended. Saraswathi's work (1999; 2002) discussed earlier, also testifies to this. Ranganathan (2000) drew attention to the fact that all over the world, there is a trend of the age of puberty for both girls and boys getting accelerated, which may be termed as "a secular trend" (p. 213). This trend transcends the barriers of class, caste, religion, and nationality, leading to the shortening of childhood everywhere and signalling early entry into adolescence and adulthood. All this makes adolescence a very interesting life stage to study.

Adolescence, hence, can be a time of both discovery and disorientation. The transitional period can bring up issues of independence and self-identity. Peer groups, romantic interests and external appearance tend to naturally increase in importance for some time during a teen's journey toward adulthood. This leads us to a more important phase of the adolescent stage – the peer group relations.

Adolescent Peer Culture

A very important relationship that emerges during the adolescent years is that of friendship. Friendships hold a special place for adolescents as they are more egalitarian and are based on choice and commitment. Adolescents choose friends who are like them and influence each other to become more alike. Friendships are intimate, involve more intense feelings, and are the most honest and open as compared to other relationships. There is trust, no pretensions, and no necessity for being on guard against betrayal of shared secrets. Confiding in a friend helps young people explore their own feelings, define their identity and validate their self-worth. Friendships provide a safe place to

venture opinions, admit weaknesses and get help with problems. With the approach of the middle years of adolescence, friendships typically become more intimate, emotionally interdependent, and more centered on the personalities of the participants than in the earlier years.

In terms of defining characteristics, a peer group may be conceived as a small group of similarly aged, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities (Castrogiovanni, 2001). Peers have an important place in the life of an adolescent as the role played by them during the trials and tribulations of adolescence is very critical for optimizing psychological and social development. It is a known fact that adolescents are more dependent on peer relationships than are younger children. This is because ties to parents become progressively loose as adolescents gain greater independence (Berk, 2001).

In Indian society, peer relations are often discussed in the context of cultural restrictions related to interactions with the opposite sex, especially for girls after puberty, and also in terms of extended and extensive family relations with plenty of scope for within-family peer relations with siblings, cousins, and even uncles or aunts of the same age (Verma and Saraswathi, 2002). Peers tend to become a part of the adolescent's family, participating in the family festivals, marriages, and other chores.

Relationships with peers during the adolescent years come closer to serving as prototypes for adult relationships in social networks, at work, and in interactions with members of the opposite sex. Miller (1991), cited in Kuchibholta (1995), examined the role of friendship in adolescents' lives and found that experiences of friendship are very facilitative on issues of identity development. Since adolescents must get ready to meet society's demands for social independence, for relationships with other individuals, marriage, and adulthood, they need the support and guidance of their peers. Through the study it emerged that peers are sources of fun, joy, togetherness and support. However, they can also act as sources of unhappiness and tension if they show inappropriate behavior.

Castrogiovanni (2001) has very aptly summarized



the potential of the peer group in terms of what it provides for the adolescent: an uncritical space for experimentation, sharing, vicarious learning and emotional bonding. He specifically highlights that peer groups offer opportunities to learn how to interact with others, instrumental and emotional support, building and maintaining of friendships, support in defining identity, interests, abilities, and personality, and autonomy, without the control of parents and other adults. This is consistent with the findings of the study which reflect that peers share their secrets with their friends, understand each other better and experience a safe and secure environment around them.

Many Western researches have focused on adolescent peer culture (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, & Prescott, 1977; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Ladd, 1999 etc.). However, in the Indian context, research on adolescent peer group has been relatively more recent. The focus has been on understanding the nature of peer relationships that exist during these years and the influence that they have on adolescents. It has been observed that, from the very beginning, peer group interactions help adolescents to conduct themselves better in social situations, develop age-relevant skills and interests, and share feelings and problems with others. In addition, being with peers of both sexes provides the basis for forming adult relationships in education, work and marriage (Sharma, 2006). As part of socialization, children are also taught the importance of having and maintaining friends by their parents and significant others. In due course, they do not feel that they can talk to their parents or teachers as freely when problems arise as they can confide in their peers. Basically, during adolescence, peer relations become more intense and extensive, and family relations are altered as adolescents begin to encounter many new demands and expectations in social situations. The desire for close friends increases, as adolescents turn to their peers for support, formerly provided by the family. They share affection, thoughts, concerns and common interests with their friends, and desire peers who are loyal, trustworthy, intimate and who demonstrate potential for positive regard, admiration and similarity.

The peer group, thus, serves as an anchoring base, provides solidarity and unconditional acceptance. For many, risk, danger and adventure needs as well as, friends and peers become the most significant reference group (Sinha, 1988; Arora et.al., 1985; Muni & Chowdhury, 1997; Pahuja, 1999; Ranganathan, 2000; Sharma, 2006).

It was seen in the present study that adolescents select their peers on self-determined criteria. These criteria include peers having certain personality traits (being clever, knowledgeable, talented, humorous, trustworthy, loyal, kind, open-minded to name a few), qualities and habits (not telling lies, being polite, having patience etc.) and life attitudes that are desirable and having a good nature (affection, support, encouragement etc.). Dube (1991) and Devadas & Jaya (1991) both cited in Nurjahan (2005) in their respective researches described adolescence as a period of intense socializing. In their view, social relationships attain heightened significance during adolescence which is anyway a crucial stage in personality formation, wherein a unique pattern of characteristics develop in the person. Traits such as cooperativeness, helpfulness, unselfishness, courtesy, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, friendliness, self-reliance, consideration, self-control, even temper, initiative, resourcefulness and dependability were seen to enhance the social acceptability of adolescents. The implication thus was that peer groups induce the development of a number of personality traits in adolescence.

The experts in the study also highlighted the potency of the peer group in adolescents' lives. In their view, peers form the basis of appreciation, criticism, support, encouragement, identification, apprehension and hence, cast a very dominant influence on adolescents' lives. Adolescents tend to discover their real selves when with their peers as there are no pretensions and inhibitions. Peers help them to crystallize their thoughts, ideas and interests. Moreover, friendship and peer group conformity become necessary because adolescents derive a sense of belongingness, affirmation, security and emotional fulfilment through their friendship relations.

The need to establish a unique and autonomous



identity different from that of their parents is one of the driving forces behind adolescents' seeking membership to cliques and crowds. An additional benefit of belonging in various crowds and cliques is the opportunity to explore different value systems and lifestyles in the process of forming one's identity. Adolescents' social-cognitive maturation enables them to seek groups that can meet their emerging social and cognitive needs as well as their emerging values and beliefs (Jersild, 1954; Hurlock, 1955; Mussen, 1979; Dusek, 1991; Rice, 1996).

However, merely being with others does not solve the problem; frequently the young person may feel most alone in a crowd (Mussen, 1979). Since peers play such an important role in the lives of most adolescents, peer acceptance becomes an important adolescent concern. In fact, peer acceptance has been identified as a powerful indicator of adolescents' long-term psychological adjustment.

Many factors may affect an adolescent's acceptance or rejection by peers. These include intelligence and ability, physical attractiveness, special talents, social class, socio-economic status, and ethnic group membership (Conger, 1977).

Adolescents of both sexes who are accepted by their peers are perceived as liking other people and being tolerant, flexible, and sympathetic; being lively, cheerful, good-natured, and having a sense of humour; acting naturally and self-confidently without being conceited; and possessing initiative, enthusiasm, drive and plans for group activity (Conger, 1977). In contrast, the adolescent who is ill-at-ease and lacking in self-confidence, and who tends to react to discomfiture by timidity, nervousness or withdrawal, is likely to be neglected by peers. Rejected children display serious academic and behavioral problems characterized by high rates of conflict, hostility, hyperactivity, inattentiveness, and impulsive behavior. They are also deficient in several social-cognitive skills (Rubin and Daniels-Bierness, 1983; Waas, 1988; Crick and Ladd, 1993).

Peer Group Conformity and Peer Pressure

The above discussion takes us to another important

dimension of peer group patterns during adolescence: peer group conformity. Conformity refers to the degree to which the individual follows the behavior patterns, fads, fashions and standards deemed appropriate to the group. According to the social learning theory, conformity to peer behaviors would depend on, and vary according to peer reinforcement, increasing and decreasing with the increase and decrease in reinforcement for conformity behavior (Dusek, 1991).

Arora, Verma, and Agarwal (1985), in their study on conformity found that early adolescents adhere more to their parents whereas late adolescents favour their peers. Reddy, Rao, Sandeep, and Padmakar (1979) in a study on conformity behaviour found that as age increased, non-conformity became more pronounced; males were more non-conforming than females and the lower and higher income groups expressed greater levels of non-conformity than the middle income group.

Conforming to a group requires an adolescent to give in to the pressures of peers. In one study of junior and senior high school students, adolescents reported that they felt greatest pressure to conform to the most obvious behaviours of their peers: dressing and grooming, participating in social activities, and forming relationships. Peer pressure to engage in pro-adult behaviour, such as getting good grades and cooperating with parents was also strong (Berk, 2001).

Peer Pressure

The term peer pressure describes the effect that a group of friends or age-mates can exert on an individual. It is the pressure on the adolescents to conform to the values held by the peer group and behave in ways considered appropriate by them (NCERT, 2009). It is the influence and compulsion that adolescents feel and experience from their peers. These peers, whom adolescents look up to for approval and support, are considered as inevitable and necessary (Steinberg, 1996). According to Kaplan (1993), peer pressure influences adolescents' wardrobes, their music, leisure activities, and their choice of friends. She also states that peers offer independence from the family, acceptance, a sense of personal worth, and support in times of confusion, models for



appropriate conduct in a complex world, and social identity. Thus, there is a natural affinity during adolescence to be one with them. Peer pressure can range from positive influences such as improved academic and co-curricular achievement on the one hand, to negative influences, such as drug and alcohol use, on the other.

Although peer pressure exists for all age groups, it gets greatly exacerbated during pre-adolescence and adolescence. Some experts from the present study opined that pressure from peers can start as early as the child starts recognizing the importance of acceptance and rejection and cognitively develops the notions of comparison. Developmental psychologists attribute this to the rapid hormonal changes and the concomitant physiological and psychological changes, which in turn trigger off bewilderment, a sense of awe, an identity crisis in terms of creating a child-adult discontinuity and an array of challenges to face during adolescence as a preparation for the adult world. Friends and peers who are undergoing similar experiences offer solace and reprieve which adolescents greatly value. The dependence and need for peers thus becomes paramount, since it is the peers who become a reference point for having exploratory fun on the one hand and consolidating one's role for the future, on the other. The pressure for peer acceptance, conformity and retaining one's membership in the peer group are thus very high. This largely explains adolescents' vulnerability to peer pressure. Vulnerability to peer pressure also emanates from the pull between the desire to be seen as individuals of unique value and the desire to belong to a group where they feel secure and accepted.

This becomes further complicated, given the collectivist family culture in the Indian context (Bhende, 1994; Pathak, 1994). Roland (1988) sees the Indian family's members as being interdependent. The Indian identity evolves around 'we', 'us', and 'ours' rather than 'I', 'me', and 'mine'. Adolescents can thus never shed off familialism. Kakar (1979) elaborately discusses how Indians remain embedded within the family structure, lifelong. Family togetherness is an important mode of socialization and children, from

a very early age, as a consequence develop relational identities, which become more pronounced as they grow older and assume adult roles and responsibilities. Autonomy strivings and the concept of 'independence' as understood in western societies are thus very different from that of Indian culture.

Consequently, during adolescence, the power given to either parental or peer opinion depends to a significant degree on the adolescent's appraisal of its relative value in a specific situation. Generally, peer influence is more likely to be predominant in matters such as tastes in music and entertainment, fashions in clothing and language, patterns of same- and opposite-sex peer interactions etc., while parental influence is more likely to be predominant in areas such as underlying moral and social values and an understanding of the adult world. However, there may be many mismatches between family wishes and peer group beliefs, resulting in the adolescents rejecting their family or general society values, while feeling pressure to conform rigidly to the values of their peer group. Peer pressure is also visible when young people join gangs. To belong to the gang, they must conform to the gang's own style of dress, behaviour, and speech, which is often in contradiction to what they have been traditionally socialized into.

Positive and Negative Peer Pressure

Many authors who work on Adolescent Development and Adjustment Psychology have appended the term peer pressure with labels of being 'positive' or 'negative' (e.g., Farrell, et.al, 2006). As the names suggest, positive peer pressure is that which mediates integrative and self-enriching changes in an individual on account of peer influence. Negative peer pressure, on the other hand, refers to compulsions on account of peers, which may assume the form of harassment, bullying and coercion in the extreme form, or lead adolescents into forms and patterns of behavior and beliefs which are antithetical to their existence.

The ability to develop healthy friendships and peer relationships depends on an adolescent's self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. At its best,



peer pressure can mobilize an adolescent's energy, motivate for success, and encourage him/her to conform to healthy behaviours. Peers can and do act as role models. They often listen to, accept, and understand the frustrations, challenges, and concerns associated with being a teenager. The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy, and moral guidance; a place for experimentation, and a setting for achieving autonomy and independence from parents. Supportive peer interactions offer a unique context for developing social competencies, validating emerging self-identity and promoting positive adjustment (Farrell et.al., 2006).

During the study, it was found that adolescents felt that peers help them to try to excel in their academics, clarify their doubts and also tutor them when in need. The experts also upheld these positive forms and highlighted a few other psychological influences that peers usually have on each other. High self-confidence, becoming more mature, developing a sense of belongingness, learning appropriate social skills, learning to generate positive feelings and attitudes, developing independent thinking, decision making power and learning survival techniques were cited as illustrative examples by the experts.

In a somewhat contrasting lens lies the phenomenon of negative peer pressure. Since, the need for acceptance, approval, and belonging is vital during the teen years, adolescents who feel isolated or rejected by their peers - or in their family- are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, in order to fit within a group. In such situations, peer pressure can impair good judgement, and fuel risk-taking behaviour, drawing an adolescent away from the family and positive influences, and luring him/her into dangerous activities. A powerful negative peer influence can motivate adolescents to make choices, and engage in behaviour that their values might otherwise reject. They risk being grounded, losing their parents' trust, or even try at any cost to fit in with a group of friends they can identify with, and who accept them. They may often change the way they dress, and give up or create new values as well. Negative peer pressure may take on very severe forms of harassment, victimization and

bullying. While these have been the subjects of research in the Western context where they are highly prevalent, there is considerable paucity of research in India. The few clinical studies, which do exist, focus on the treatment and therapy dimensions of the victims. However, there are some studies on aggression as a form of peer pressure, which is defined as "an unprovoked attack or hostile, destructive behaviour" (Kureshi & Hussain, 1982).

Forms of negative peer pressure, through the study, surfaced in the form of teasing, bullying and harassment. It was apparent from the findings that the magnitude of harassment restricted itself to and included verbal and physical abuse which consisted of name calling, relationship labelling, using foul language, teasing, laughing, being made fun of publicly, demeaning, fighting, hitting, pushing, kicking and boxing, a feature seen more among boys. Girls take resource to emotional blackmail, keep secrets from others, snub them, ignore and exclude others from peer group.

However, from the study, it was evident that forms of positive peer pressure that adolescents experienced far outweighed the negative dimensions. Co-operation, team work, sharing, cheering others for competitions, supporting in times of need, guiding them towards the correct path, consoling, helping peers to be more organized and systematic, being enabled to think rationally and developing a sense of discrimination between good and bad, were cited as the tangible manifestations and gains from positive peer pressure.

The main reason that positive peer pressure surfaced more was that adolescents felt that they usually listen to their parents when in a conflicting situation as their parents are more experienced than their peers and would never lead them on the wrong path. In addition, listening to parents means restraining oneself from bad habits and experiences and being able to distinguish between the good and the bad. Since young people in Indian families generally receive a good deal of attention and nurturance from the older generation and maintenance of family integrity is valued higher than an unfolding of individual capacities, the young Indian neither seeks a radical demarcation



from the generation of his parents nor feels compelled to overthrow their authority in order to live life on their own terms (Kakar and Kakar, 2007). Because of the dominant culture of collectivism which permeates Indian society, Peter Blos's (1967) theory which suggests individuation following separation from dependence ties, is usually not possible since family continues to be an all-pervasive institution throughout the adolescent years.

Conclusion

It can be derived from the above discussions that the institution of peer pressure and its varied manifestations get influenced by the contexts they are placed in. In the Indian society, family socialization is of crucial significance as it reflects the socio-cultural, historical and economic aspects of the larger society. The self that develops in the family model of interdependence is the relational self. It is characterized by relatedness and heteronomy. The self that emerges in the family model of independence is the separated self, which involves autonomy and separateness. The self that develops in the family model of psychological interdependence is the autonomous- relational self, manifesting autonomy and relatedness (Kagitcibasi, 2003). Hence, development has to be understood holistically as well as contextually. From the contextual perspective, it is not appropriate to study the adolescents in isolation from their environment. The socio-cultural context affects the meaning of physical development, the expectation for one's gender and the important themes of life.

Tripathi (1988) upheld that the form of collectivism found in Indian society is a mix of individualism and collectivism that is conditioned by many values and contingencies. Contrasting values of basic properties often co-exist and Indians display a high "tolerance of dissonance". The Indian self is so constituted that the typical way in which an Indian responds and reacts is contextual (Sinha & Tripathi, 2003).

Within this contextual setting, there are a common set of developmental tasks identified for adolescents. Peer relationships change during the adolescent years in that the adolescents develop a

better and more mature understanding of others, their involvement with peers becomes increasingly critical to the progress of self-understanding, the peer group helps develop personal identity and new types of peer groups emerge. Since friendships hold an important place for the adolescents, conformity to group and group members becomes essential.

There are distinct patterns in the forms that peer harassment takes place. In terms of positive peer pressure, girls and boys appear to benefit equally from it. According to Verma and Saraswathi (2002), the role of peers is subservient to that of the family in all spheres, except for school-based activities. Indian parents monitor peer choice and peer influence is moderate and mainly confined to overt expressions of peer culture. Peer sociability in collectivist societies like India, which stress group harmony, differs from that in the Western individualistic cultures. In India, peers function in large groups, where group members require high levels of co-operation (Roopnarine et.al., 1994).

Berk (2007) was of the view that parental monitoring during adolescence protects the adolescents' involvement in anti-social activities. Saraswathi (2003) highlighted that family, in the Indian sociological setting, continues to play a major role in socialization, despite the fast pace of social change. Parental involvement and control is very high, especially in the middle class. There is continued prevalence of traditionalism and familialism and is evident in various facets of family life, even among the educated Indian adolescents from both rural and urban settings (Bhende, 1994; Pathak, 1994).

Hence, the study of the adolescent age group and the various concerns and issues that engulf it, brought to light the critical phase of development that it is. While the findings highlight that peer influence and peer pressure do not necessarily have to be negative (as it exists both in its positive and negative forms), peer pressure can lead youth towards unhealthy and unsafe behaviours. To minimize the negative effects of peer pressure, it becomes imperative that adolescents, and parents come together in the quest to prevent occurrences of negative pressure from peers.



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Sexual wellbeing of Adolescents with Autism

Dr. Supriya Singh

Department of Education, University of Delhi

Abstract

Sex education for children and adolescents with autism is essential in school system. NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Report, 2014) clarifies that between 2011 to 2014 many urgent requests from schools and classes with children with disability were made. It was also on behalf of teachers who feared others would take advantage of these students and might frighten them and students would not know how to respond. Schools, both special and with inclusive set-up, must develop policies and procedures to address sex education and prevention methods and related issues. There is need for teachers and care providers to have training to understand and support the students' needs for information, skills, and related health care. This includes understanding the medical aspects of autism and its impact on a student's physical, social and emotional development. When infants have autism, their medical needs may impede some of the touch they would normally receive from family members. This lack of physical contact may impact their understanding of good and bad touch. Some adolescents with autism experience difficulties with understanding of other person's touch and this can cause anxiety and frustration. Adolescents with autism experience sexual desires and interests even when no one is talking to them about their feelings. Teachers and care providers must understand these issues and offer help. Sex education for adolescents with autism should promote maturation and provide an opportunity to develop social skills. Children with autism learn more when sex information is repeated and reinforced both at home and school. This paper shares lived experience of adolescents with autism and their own thoughts about importance of sex education and difficulties they encountered in school and society. People with autism are more objective in their thinking; therefore, tend to relate sharing information with little small talk. The attitudes that adolescents have with regard to the sex education of those with autism, is not apt, and it still does not exist in school curriculum

Keywords: Adolescence, adolescents, sex-education, autism

Within the context of human sexuality, when adolescents with autism have sexual thoughts, feelings, and desires, they are experiencing a normal part of human development. Unfortunately, professionals are not always prepared for adolescents with autism to be so normal. Teachers are first to acknowledge the needs of adolescents with autism. Sex education in schooling is based on preventing aspects of sexuality like sexual abuse, adolescence pregnancy, and disease. This is

critical, but teachers still want to provide information to adolescents with autism, including those with other disabilities, with accurate information and skills to lead them to view it as a natural and healthy part of life. Adolescents with autism have a right to sex education and reproductive health care. They have the same emotional and physical needs and desires as normal people. As young children, they need touch and physical contact; as they grow older, their



interests in love and relationships will emerge. It is often true that adolescents with autism are first identified by their disability and level of disability rather than by their talents, intelligence, and personality. Although adolescents with autism have the need for support in many areas such as social skills, daily living skills, and communication, the need for support in the area of comprehensive sexuality education remains controversial (McGuire & Bayley, 2011). Children with autism struggled with many problems and there is lot of confusion in dealing with them among parents and care givers. Parents got confused when they saw their adolescents with autism growing and confused about sex and gender issues and parents do not find any way to teach them about sex education because even professionals were not aware to provide ways to provide sex education to adolescents with autism. They believe their children's social impairments have made many sex education topics difficult to understand and they perceive that the society did not understand the sexual needs of their children. The need for sex education is often situated within the context of addressing socially inappropriate sexual behavior. Generally, in school system in India they educate adolescents with autism and other children with disability not to show and discuss these issues which are called inappropriate. Some teachers may not be able to educate adolescents with autism due to their own discomfort, because of their misunderstanding of sexuality of adolescents with autism, or because they perceive working with adolescents with autism to be more difficult than the normal people especially in regards to sex education. Inappropriate sexual behavior is a primary concern for parents and educators.

Adolescents with autism typically need formal support for social development due to the inherent social deficits of their disability. It is found that many adolescents with autism face sexual abuse in school and even in home. Difficulties in communicating, lack of knowledge of sexual norms and activities, and isolation may contribute to increased risk of sexual abuse among adolescents with autism. Sex education may provide opportunities for adolescents to be better

able to communicate and understand social behavior and activities. Furthermore if the support systems of adolescents with autism are in open discourse about sexuality it may create a safe and protective environment where abuse is less likely to happen.

The adolescents who share their experiences had very different understanding and feelings about their own sexuality and own self. However, they all wished they had understood themselves better when they were younger if they knew about his or her body and effects of autism on their self. The research identifies a lack of understanding of self, confusion about other people and how relationships function, as core areas of difficulty for children with autism. Adolescents with autism share their thoughts on awareness about sex and related issues that shows how presently available sex education in schools is incomplete and they felt helpless and clueless without a foundation of self-awareness and a basic understanding of how relationships work. Sensory issues around the understanding and interpretation of touch lead to state of confusion about sex related issues often experienced among adolescents with autism.

The adolescents shared their feelings of isolation, difficulty in social interaction, and the effort to develop greater social and self-awareness. Participants in this study also express desire in attaining self-growth and social communication skills by seeking therapies, consulting with others or accessing additional resources. One participant also expressed the desire to learn how to be more helpful towards his partner and to become better at reading socially desired behaviour and responding to her emotional needs.

Increasing exposure to sex issues like sex abuse was another issue discussed by them. Parents of adolescents share their fears about sexual abuse they accept that children with autism are more vulnerable for sexual abuse and they do not know what is happening with them. Girls with autism are more vulnerable to being exploited by others. The primary concern of parents when sharing their experiences related to this issue was that their daughters can be overly trusting of other people in school and other related people around them,



another issue is puberty-related problems, these were the potential sexual vulnerability of their adolescent daughters with autism. Adolescents with autism when sharing thoughts on sex education highlighted fears of sexual exploitation, they feel a strong need of their parents to play a protective role for them, and they feel others may misinterpret their behaviour and they can not understand the intentions and behaviors of others; they want continuation of regular guidance by their parents due to their intrinsic social and communicative impairments.

Parents believe that children with autism who are nonverbal exhibit more behavioral difficulties than those who have verbal communication and face more problems. Parent's shares that children with autism who wish to disclose their abuse by his or her behavioral reactions to sexual abuse shows different tantrums so people cannot understand their communication about the abuse, but these behaviors may be misinterpreted by others as merely because of autism. Therefore, the child's sexual exploitation continues and may impacts on his or her socio emotional well-being. Observations has been made about their expressions about difference of sex and sexual exploitation and it was found that children with autism who had to face sex abuse they tried to give non-verbal clues about exploitation through drawings and showing tantrums and fear towards people and things.

Schools, NGO's, and intervention and therapy centers must develop policies and procedures to address sex related issues. School System should involve a consultant or staff member with specific knowledge about autism. This clearly points to the need for teachers and health care providers to have training to understand and support these students' needs for information, skills, and related health care. This includes understanding the medical aspects of autism and its impact on a student's physical and emotional development. When infants have autism, their medical needs may impede some of the touch they would normally receive from family members. This lack of physical contact may affect their sexual development. Some young people experience

difficulties with sexuality when their physical development does not relate to their intellectual and social growth. This can cause anxiety and frustration. Adolescents with autism experience sexual desires and interests even when no one is talking to them about their feelings. Teachers and caregivers providers must understand these issues and offer help.

Parents and caregivers need to start early to educate their children about sex-related issues and to continue the conversation well into their teen years. An important place for them to begin is to examine their own feelings and values about sexuality and about adolescents with autism and sexual norms. Some parents have told that they fear people will take advantage of their child and their child may became the victim of sexual abuse so they avoid going outside and became isolated from the society. This makes them hesitant to provide information on sexuality issues. They say that they worry their child will not find reciprocated love and that someone will break their heart and may use them for inappropriate relationships. This is what causes them to become overly protective.

The fact is that adolescents with autism have the same feelings, needs, and desires as people without disabilities. Still, many myths revolve around the sexuality or lack of sexuality of adolescents with autism and people with disabilities. Children with disabilities, however, first learn that they are disabled before learning to see themselves as human.

A thorough understanding of the medical aspects of autism and the resultant impact on the child's psychosocial development is required before an educator can design an effective sex education curriculum. Adolescents with autism may or may not have overlapping difficulties with learning. Few parents are adequately preparing their children for the socio- emotional and sexual aspects of life. Parents of children with autism tend to be uncertain about the appropriate management of their children's sexual development. They are often concerned with their son's or daughter's behavior, overt signs of sexuality, physical development during puberty, and genital hygiene. Fears of unwanted pregnancy, STDs, and embarrassing or



hurtful situations are persistent realities. Some parents of children with autism also fear that their children will be unable to express their sexual desires and needs appropriately, and will be targets of sexual abuse or exploitation. Parental anxiety often results in overprotection, thus depriving children with autism of their sexual rights and freedom. The problem most frequently mentioned by parents regarding sex education is an inability to answer questions. They are also often uncertain of what children know or should know. They often equate learning with intentions to perform sexual activities. Professionals have found that parents have confused, anxious, and some time rigid in attitude.

Children with autism may learn at slower rates than their normal peers, but their physical maturation typically occurs at the normal stages of development. Their parents need to understand what to expect at different stages of psychosexual development, from infancy onward, in order to understand the appropriateness of their children's sexual behaviors and expression. As children with autism move from infancy to the toddler and preschool years, myriad issues emerge concerning psychosexual development. Toilet training often occurs at a later age and over a longer period of time, thus causing delays in their developing self-control and a sense of self. The sense of self of children with autism is further delayed as a result of an elongated period of dependency on parents or caregivers for personal care and hygiene. This often leads to their inability to differentiate between the private and other parts of their bodies. As a result, children with autism may not firmly understand body since they are not aware even the parts of their bodies. Lack of body awareness may result in children with autism being confused about their sexual selves. This developmental lag in distinguishing the self as separate from parent, caregiver is reflected in the delayed rate at which children develop perceptions of themselves as either boys or girls. At later developmental stages, children with autism are able to self-identify as male or female and to develop sex-role identity. Upon reaching preschool age, children with autism exhibit a heightened level of curiosity about others and about sexual differences between males and

females. Their curiosity is, however, less intense than their normal peers. Children with autism may not be allowed to resolve their curiosity due to prolonged supervision. At this stage of psychosexual development, they often experience problems differentiating between private and public places and actions and therefore may engage in publicly unacceptable sexual behaviors. Children with autism are often unaware of what sexual behaviors are appropriate due to limited social interactions and lack of opportunities to observe behaviors of their normal peers.

As a result of the media and their peers, children with autism confront the school years with an increased awareness of their sexuality. However, during this time, their social activities remain closely supervised, and normal sexual expressions of behavior are often discouraged. Children with autism experience adolescence in the same way as normal children. During adolescence, all children, whether they have disabilities or not, should learn to strengthen their sense of identity and secure a measure of independence. Children with autism establish appropriate behaviors through repetitive learning and modeling. There are several strategies families can adopt to promote healthy sexuality among their children with developmental disabilities. They include: Teaching the difference between public and private. In order to teach children the difference between public and private places and behaviors, parents should demonstrate consistency in their care giving actions. Parents can demonstrate privacy by knocking on their children's doors. Parents should encourage their children to be responsible for their personal care and hygiene when parents know their children need help, they should ask their permission. Such independence also allows children to gain a sense of body ownership. By understanding social norms through increased social interactions and opportunities to observe appropriate conduct, children with autism will learn to determine what behaviors are acceptable in accordance with time and place. Children with autism may develop friendship with the opposite gender through socialization in school. This will enhance their self-esteem. Parents should prepare their children in advance for the onset of puberty and possible



bodily changes. One goal of early female education is to prevent them from fearing the flow of menstrual blood. Menstruation is sometimes very upsetting to females who are not prepared because blood is typically associated with a problem.

Many children with autism are defensive to touch. Touch can be very alarming and overwhelming to them. For many of them, there are two main principles to help establish safe touch. Allowing the person to control the touch is very important for people who are sensitive to touch parents can make understand to their children with autism that which part of their body they do not allow touching others.

School systems, parents, and adolescents with autism must support and put resources into sex education. There must be sex education in curriculum of school and teaching materials that are effective and accessible to teachers willing to educate. Finally, educators must be provided with training on how to teach sex education topics and school must provide required training for educators with regard to teaching sex education topics.

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Lessons from Cross-Cultural Perspective on Human Development and Education in India

Ms. Shefali Sharma

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Delhi

Abstract *The biological and cultural changes accompanying the adolescent years have separated these years as a distinct stage with a set of defined experiences, which one undergoes while growing up. Erikson's (1982) stage theory on lifespan development has led to a theoretical discourse that studies adolescence as a set of tasks to be accomplished within a specific period of time for 'healthy' development. The similarity in conditions of growing up in modern societies shows replication of the above premise, wherein, socio economic conditions and institutional structures lead to individuals following a predetermined trajectory. Adding to this, the pre-defined attitudes of psychological research towards what is desirable and what ideals of human development are, have come to determine which parental and educational practices are right and worth pursuing.*

The cross-cultural research on human development presents a diversity perspective on how adolescence is experienced in varying cultural environments. They can differ significantly from the western models of development and, thus, necessitate re-defining of notions of optimal human development for research in policy formulation in education.

Keywords: Development, adolescence, cross-cultural psychology, diversity

Introduction

The Eurocentric view of adolescence dominates research and practice in human development (Saraswathi, 2003). Cross-cultural studies challenge the premises of such theories, which stand in contrast to the experience of adolescence in cultures significantly different from those of the Western countries. In the following paper, I present both the viewpoints and contrasting characteristics of experience of adolescence in India with that of the West. Such comparisons raise questions about the universal application of principles of human development and the definitions of optimal development. Lastly, I conclude by drawing some relevant lessons, pointed out by cross-cultural research, for education and policy implementation in India.

Western theories on adolescent development

G. Stanley Hall's conception of adolescence was

influenced strongly by Darwin's idea of *ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny* (Santrock, 2007). This led to the study of the biological growth and other physiological changes experienced during teenage years as having some characteristic influences on the behaviour and emotions of an individual, leading to adolescent years being called as the years of 'storm and stress'.

Further work in the field incorporated the psycho-social aspects of human life with biological growth, giving way to one of the most important theories of human development - the theory of psycho-social development by Erik Erickson (Santrock, 2007). He divided the human life into eight stages, each having an overarching purpose of its own (Erickson, 1982). During the adolescent years, the main purpose was to search for a coherent sense of self; characterised by the crisis of identity achievement versus role confusion. According to Erickson (1982), identity crisis is a



time of upheaval where old values or choices are being re-examined and new alternatives are explored, i.e., an active involvement in choosing among alternative options and beliefs (Adams et. al, 1992). Both exploration and commitment are the two processes that contribute to differences in outcome during an Identity crisis. Exploration is the extent to which, or whether, one explores identity alternatives and commitment is the extent of, or whether, one makes a commitment to chosen alternatives. James Marcia's work has further elaborated upon this process by giving four statuses in identity formation wherein the degree of exploration decides an individual's optimal identity achievement. These ideas primarily constitute the Western model of human development which dominates research in the field of adolescence and identity development.

However, this conceptualization of identity achievement is primarily based on masculine ideals of an individualistic society that undermine aspects such as relatedness and interdependence, which are important in identity formation of individuals who construe their own self within a web of relations (Adams et. al, 1992). Cross-cultural studies point out that individualistic conceptualizations of personality research create artificial divides and leads to misrepresentation of groups from other cultures, ethnicity, gender and religions (Saraswathi, 2003). Socialization norms and expectations of collectivist cultures are significantly different from that of West and researches based on Western models provide contrasting views on 'healthy development' that do not do justice to participants from divergent cultural norms.

Cross- cultural conceptualisation of adolescence

Anthropological studies were the first to challenge such unilateral generalisations about human development. Margaret Mead in her classic work 'Coming of age in Samoa', elaborated upon the role of culture in building the experience of adolescence. Her study pointed out the diversity in human development. Through the contrast her study drew with the western pattern of socialization, she gave important insights about the modern society and the expectations it puts on the

adolescents. These insights have led to development of cross cultural studies, which compare adolescence across cultures, time and socio-economic conditions to demonstrate the impact such factors have on the development of an individual.

Schlegel (2003) concludes that that cross-cultural studies done across a number of countries and regions show that all cultures broadly recognize a period between childhood and adulthood and no society pushes their children directly into adulthood. Adolescence is a period when the young prepare for their future lives as adults. The content of this period, however, varies greatly from one culture to another.

In the Indian context, the traditional *Hindu* conceptualization of adolescence as a life stage finds mention in words like *kumara* and *brahmchhari* which refer to the stage of celibacy and apprenticeship or acquisition of knowledge (Brown, Larson and Saraswathi, 2002). These characterise the society's view of and expectation of those in the adolescent years. A belief in the right code of conduct at each stage of development is deeply rooted in the Indian psyche and continues to influence the cultural practices of Indians strongly. According to Kakar (1979, p.7), the primary task in the *bhramcharya* stage of the *Hindu ashrama* theory is primarily directed towards knowing of one's *dharma*, which would consist of acquiring skills in one's caste and in winning an identity based on a caste identity and identification with and emulation of the guru (Kakar, 1979, p.8). The strengths issuing from this stage would then correspond to competence and commitment that are similar to Erickson's stages of industry versus inferiority and identity versus role confusion respectively. The difference lies in the psychosocial development being based on one life cycle and the Hindu view on psycho social fate based on accumulation of virtues through many life cycles. Thus, although identity formation is seen as an important aspect of development during adolescent years in both traditions, the goals and expectations make it a very different experience.

The following discussion elaborates upon some of the characteristics that represent the Indian



experience of adolescence in contrast with the Western model; along with the diversities of this experience arising out of differences across social class and gender in the Indian society.

Adolescence in India

The society in India is extremely diverse. Socio economic disparities are huge and so are the gender differences. The experiences vary across many factors such as region, class, caste, gender, and religion. Psychologists and developmental theorists have described that the experience of adolescence in India is extremely difficult to generalize (Saraswathi, 2000; Brown et. al., 2002; Saraswathi, 2003). In addition, the country at the beginning of 21st century finds itself in a peculiar position. Standing at the crossroads of technological advancement and a global market economy, it is an opportune time to examine how tradition and modernity in socio-political and cultural factors have shaped and continue to influence adolescence in India (Brown et. al., 2002). The following description of adolescence in India by T.S.Saraswathi (Brown et. al., 2002) explains the diversity arising from the transition phase of Indian society - traditional values at one end and technological advancement and globalization at the other.

The traditional conceptualization of adolescence as a life stage of *brahmacharya* or the stage of celibacy, apprenticeship, or acquisition of knowledge characterise the society's expectations from adolescents. Following traditional norms, and remaining close to religious and cultural ties are ideals that continue to influence the parenting practices in the modern times as evidenced by performance of *samskara* ceremonies, marriage rituals, and similar traditional Indian rites of initiation.

Child rearing practices differ significantly in India, where the collectivist nature of family and society emphasize cultivation of interdependence and subjugation to authority figures of the family rather than preparing the child for independent living and autonomy. The manner in which it is manifested is different for both males and females due to the stark differences in role expectations.

For boys, academic achievement and occupational success is closely monitored, especially in middle class homes. Patriarchal and collectivist roles are ritualised and celebrated at each stage of development in order to assure their continuance.

Although peer cultures exist, but, there is emphasis on duties and obligations towards family and family members as well and spending time with peers is discouraged by parents. Overt expression of peer culture is more than its actual influence even in lives of modern and well off adolescents. The time spent with peers is limited, parents monitor peer choice, and peer influence is moderate when it comes to long term decisions such as mate selection and career choice. The caste and religious identity of adolescents also reflect this trend. Adolescent friendship patterns and daily practices show a more secular trend which includes having friends of other castes, religion; involvement with other religious institutes like minority schools, visiting *gurudwaras* by Hindus etc. However, when it comes to marriages, the religious and caste identities play an important role where many adolescents choose to follow traditional expectations rather than exercise modern choices.

The peer culture, which sharply contrasts itself from the parental expectations, is absent for many adolescents in India. Peer culture varies according to socio-economic class differences and gender in India. For adolescent girls, the amount of time spent with friends is significantly low. It is negligible for girls belonging to lower socio-economic classes especially in face of early marriages and early sharing of household responsibilities, which make their life experience continuous and transition from childhood to adulthood almost direct, without any space for adolescence.

Thus, the cultural context of the individual shapes his/her experiences in such a profound manner that any generalizations across cultures becomes questionable. Different communities are structured and function on different premises and, thus, have significantly different social roles and expectations. This influences what individuals



aspire to become and what they choose as part of their identity.

Lessons from cross cultural perspective on human development

The Indian adolescence poses many questions to various universals on adolescents. Firstly, can the experience of adolescence be generalised! The experiences of females belonging to lower socio economic class in India are an example of how the Western conceptualisation of adolescence is an artefact of a post-industrial society and economic structure rather than a human universal experience. In view of the socio-economic constraints, the emphasis on interdependence and following prescribed social roles leaves little scope for emergence of an adolescent culture for such individuals. There can be seen a huge diversity in the experience of adolescence in India ranging from complete absence of adolescence in girls married before puberty, to prolonged adolescence that extends beyond teenagers for education with parental support (Saraswathi, 2000).

Secondly, the Indian adolescent questions the notions on what 'healthy' development signifies. The western models based on western ideals of autonomy are specific to a culture which values independence over interdependence and self-worth over community living. The societal values and cultural ideals decide the pattern and constituents of a developing identity which vary across cultures. In the Indian context, development of self-assertion is construed as selfishness and independence as disobedience in families living with interdependent structures (Saraswathi, 2000, p.217). Thus, while defining what 'healthy' development is, one should be careful to not to neglect the community beliefs and socio-economic realities which lead to emergence of such values in a particular community.

With the advance of globalisation and modern economic lifestyles as well as increasing influence of technology through use of internet and social media, there is a rapid expansion of commonalities of experiences around the globe. However, this Eurocentric image of human life is challenged by research in cultures, like India, which

point towards the differences in basic conceptualisation's about life expectations and developmental goals in such cultures. Research on adolescence points out that the forms that adolescence takes within a given culture, let alone across cultures, are remarkably diverse and distinctive (Schlegel, 2003). The commonalities of experience and challenges brought by the 21st century certainly share some repeated themes in human development, however, adaptations towards them and the manifestations of such challenges in individual lives are shaped by the historical cultural contexts of the society they occur in.

Hence, the experience of adolescence markedly varies not only across nations, but, also among different economic or social groups within a nation. This makes the task of policy makers, educational practitioners, and health and social service personnel- who work with youth- especially difficult. To meet the needs of youth one must forge a policy that aims at a certain level of convergence in opportunities while maintaining their historical and cultural distinctiveness.

Implications for education

For cross-cultural theorists, different kinds of family interaction patterns and child rearing orientations lead to different kinds of selves and competence; and socio-cultural contexts necessitate such particular patterns. Negligence of such differences and the relevance of their existence create a conflict between modern education and traditional culture. Nsamenang (2003, p.223-224) has observed, with regards to modern education in Africa, that "imported systems of education did not incorporate in their curricula the African culture, economic realities, social thought and modes of construing knowledge. Thus, while most indigenous knowledge relied on participatory skill learning and building social competence through interdependence, schools that relied on verbal theoretical instruction and building cognitive competence to the neglect of social competence created home-school conflict. The disjoint education system created the impression that home



was a “culturally deficient” (Nsamenang 2003, p.224) place and that the indigenous culture is an obstacle to development of a 'healthy' modern personality.

Thus, research in cross-cultural psychology is needed to improve such disjoint and conflicting policies and social initiatives in developing countries. Research from cross-cultural psychology presents a world view which is different from Eurocentric ideals on which contemporary developmental psychology is based (Nsamenang, 2003). The diversity is important as it points towards what are, or are not, the universals in human development. For education and for optimal development of youth, it is important that policies and programmes be well-informed and sensitive to the psychological, social, and cultural needs of individuals.

All societies need to socialise their children to be competent in changing lifestyles. With increasing patterns of globalisation, urbanization, technologization there is greater demand for universally valid knowledge, skills and competencies from educational services. However, discarding traditional knowledge and social interaction patterns, or adopting Western individualistic family patterns is counter-productive for its development. There is a need for assimilation of psycho-social needs of adolescents with learning new skills for optimal development. There is a need for assimilation of psycho-social needs of adolescents with learning new skills for optimal development.

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Adolescents & Youth Today

Enriching the Life Skills Paradigm

***Ms. Astha Sharma, **Ms. Aparna Singh *** Ms. Aparjita Dixit**

**Sr. Clinical Psychologist, Inst. of Mental Health and Life Skills Promotion Moolchand Medcity*

***Consultant Psychologist and Life Skills Trainer, Expressions India*

**** Post graduate student, Psychology*

*"Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself f....
progressive and experiential"*

John Dewey

The word 'education' means different things to different people. It could mean upgrading one's skills in the context of performance, strengthening oneself with various qualities, enabling oneself for better decision making and handling conflicts and investing authority through empowering oneself.

So **"Education is a creation of choices, making people aware about those choices and enabling them to make use of those choices"**.

As education systems expand to empower youth, every nation, society and community has to work towards promoting a well being atmosphere. When adolescents acquire knowledge, attitudes, values and life skills, they benefit in a variety of ways. Life skills help adolescents to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Such knowledge and skills can lead to behaviours that prevent disease and injury, foster healthy relationships and enable young people to play leadership roles.

Moreover, the knowledge and life skills education imparted to young ones are likely to be passed on to their own children, thus influencing future generations. We therefore need to effectively address a wide spectrum of issues related to adolescence and youth in a rapidly changing world.

Why is there a need for Life Skills Enrichment?

The host of factors that promote high risk behaviours such as alcoholism, drug abuse aggression, irresponsible sexual behaviours are boredom, rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure and curiosity. The psychological push factors such as the inability to tackle emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future are often the driving force for high risk behaviour.

Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control.

It is based on the assumption that when young people are able to rise above emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti social or high risk behaviours and grow up to be Aware, Responsible and empowered individuals and harmonized citizens of a developing nation.

Alvin Toffler in **"The Third Wave"** stated, "The illiterates of 21st century will not those who can not read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn".

Definitions of Life Skills – the beginning of wisdom

What are life skills? Several definitions are compiled here from UNICEF and WHO to provide



a wide-ranging perspective of the concept. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "**the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life**".

UNICEF defines life skills-based education as basically being a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. The UNICEF definition is based on research evidence that shifts in risk behaviour are unlikely if knowledge, attitudinal and skills based competency is not addressed.

Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life.

Life Skills can be utilized in many content areas, issues, topics or subjects such as in prevention of drug abuse, sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, suicide prevention, etc. UNICEF extends its use further into consumer education, environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood and income generation, among others. In short, it empowers young people to take positive actions to protect themselves and to promote health and positive social relationships.

Components of Life Skills

WHO categorizes a core set of life skills into the following three components:

- a) **Thinking skills** - include self-awareness, social awareness, goal setting, problem solving and decision-making. To be able to think critically, information should be provided in order to make informed decisions and choices. The skills to think critically can also be developed if the teenagers are given the opportunity to look at different perspectives of an issue, the pros and the cons of making one decision over the other and making them realize the negative consequences of making hasty, unplanned decisions.
- b) **Social skills** - include appreciating/ validating others, working with others and understanding

their roles, building positive relationships with friends and family, listening and communicating effectively, taking responsibility and coping with stress. Social skills enable the adolescents to be accepted in society and to accept social norms, which provide foundation for adult social behaviour.

- c) **Negotiation skills** – It means not only negotiating with others but with oneself as well. For effectively negotiating with others, one needs to know what one wants in life, is firm on one's values and beliefs and can therefore say "no" to harmful behaviour and risky temptations.

A cascade strategy for disseminating the training is used in many countries. This is to say that people who take part in training sessions then go on to train others using the same, or a similar, training schedule. This model is advocated in so far as trained trainers can go on to train other teacher trainers, and so increase the availability of training resources. Teachers/ life skills educators should go through training sessions with a trained trainer. Care has to be taken however, to maintain the quality of the training at all levels.

Described in this way, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of adolescents & youth.

These are listed below:

DECISION-MAKING helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options, and what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

PROBLEM SOLVING enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can



cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

CREATIVE THINKING contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

CRITICAL THINKING is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in a way that is appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well being. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

SELF-AWARENESS includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are

stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

EMPATHY is the ability to understand what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves this can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.

COPING WITH STRESS is about recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Or it may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

Life Skills

- Enable adolescents & Youth to behave in healthy ways.
- Adolescents & youth are actively involved in a dynamic teaching and learning process.
- Methods used include working in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role play, games and debates and youth leadership camp.



Perspective Papers



वैयक्तिक जीवन पर बाज़ार का प्रभाव

श्री प्रवीण कुमार

शोधार्थी, केन्द्रीय शिक्षा संसथान, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

आधुनिकरण एवं वैश्वीकरण के दौर में आज सभी वस्तुएं व सेवाएँ बाजार में आसानी से उपलब्ध हो रही हैं। इन वस्तुओं व सेवाओं को अर्जित करने के लिए मनुष्य अपने शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य व मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को भी दाँव पर लगा रहा है। बाजार में उपलब्ध सभी वस्तुओं को प्राप्त करने की आकांक्षा व जीवन को विलासिता पूर्ण जीने की लालसा में मनुष्य बाजार पर निर्भर होता जा रहा है। मनुष्य की इन्हीं आकांक्षाओं व लालसाओं का बाजार लाभ उठाता है और अपने अनुसार मनुष्य को प्रयोग करता है। इस प्रकार मनुष्य की मुख्य पहचान उपभोक्ता के रूप में सीमित हो जाती है जो केवल वस्तुओं और सेवाओं को प्राप्त करने के ही प्रयास में लगा रहता है। इससे उसका जीवन अव्यवस्थित होता है तथा विभिन्न जीवन शैली से सम्बंधित समस्याएँ होने लगती हैं। ऐसे में मनोविज्ञान एवं मनोवैज्ञानिक के औचित्य एवं महत्व पर विचार करना आवश्यक है। इस लेख में लेखक ने नवउदारवादी दौर में बाजार के वैयक्तिक जीवन पर प्रभाव को उजागर करने का प्रयास किया है।

वर्ष 1947 में जब भारत आजाद हुआ तब भारतीय समाज में अधिकांश लोग गरीब, अशिक्षित, और पिछड़े हुए थे। देश को आर्थिक रूप से मजबूत और समृद्ध बनाने के लिए स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के पश्चात् प्रत्येक पांच वर्षों के लिए पंच वर्षीय योजनाओं का प्रावधान बनाया गया। इन योजनाओं में देश को आर्थिक रूप से समृद्ध बनाने के लिए विभिन्न नीतियों में बदलाव किये गए और इन बदलावों में निजीकरण, उदारीकरण एवं भूमंडलीकरण मुख्य थे (योजना आयोग, 1992)। ये सभी बदलाव भारत में 1991 की नई आर्थिक नीति के आने पर स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देते हैं। वर्ष 1991 से पहले निजी क्षेत्र के विनियमन व नियंत्रण के कड़े नियम थे, जिन्हें नई आर्थिक नीति ने उदार किया। नई आर्थिक नीति को लाने के मुख्य उद्देश्य आर्थिक कल्याण और समाज कल्याण थे जो कि निजीकरण, उदारीकरण, व वैश्वीकरण में पूर्ण रूप से गौण हो गए। इसमें केवल उद्योग, आर्थिक लाभ व बाजार ही प्रमुख रह गए। कुछ विद्वानों का यहाँ तक कहना है कि "वर्ष 1991 में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के

दरवाजे वैश्वीकरण के नाम पर दुनिया की पूंजी और बाजार द्वारा बेलगाम लूट के लिए खोल दिए गए (सद्गोपाल, 2013, पृ.2)।

नवउदारवाद हमारे दैनिक जीवन में कुछ इस तरह से दाखिल हो चुका है कि इस विषय का ज्ञान रखने वाले और अज्ञानी दोनों ही इस बात से अनभिज्ञ हैं कि वे बाजार को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं और कहीं न कहीं नवउदारवाद की लहर में 'विकास' की तलाश कर रहे हैं। परंतु बाजार उन्हें केवल वस्तुओं एवं सेवाओं को उपभोग करने वाले के रूप में देखता है। यहाँ मनुष्य को एक उपभोक्ता की तरह से देखा जा रहा है जो अपनी आवश्यकताओं एवं इच्छाओं की पूर्ति के लिए पूर्णतः बाजार पर निर्भर रहे तथा ये निर्भरता मनुष्य की आत्म संतुष्टि, मानसिक शांति, एवं मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को प्रभावित करती रहे। यहाँ मान्यता यह है कि मानव जितने अधिक संसाधन एकत्रित कर लेगा उसकी मानसिक शान्ति एवं जीवन की गुणवत्ता उतनी ही बढ़ जाएगी। इस तरह के व्यक्तित्व को एरिक फ्रोम ने विपणन चरित्र (marketing character) कहा है जो मानव संबंधों को भी वस्तु विनिमय एवं लाभ प्राप्ति के समकक्ष रखता है क्योंकि वह बाजार से आर्थिक लाभ एवं सामंजस्य स्थापित करने के लिए अपने मूल संवेगों, भावनाओं एवं धारणाओं से दूर हो चुका है। ऐसे मानव के लिए उसका अपना स्व, ज्ञान, उर्जा, भावनाएं, योग्यता इत्यादि सभी कुछ बाजार में बिकने वाले असबाब से अधिक कुछ नहीं है। इस विपणन चरित्र को व्यग्रता के साथ धनात्मक और जीवन संतुष्टि के साथ ऋणात्मक रूप से सहसम्बन्धित पाया गया है¹ (Engler, 2013, पृ. 127-128)।

बाजारवाद के कारण मानव उत्थान, मानवीय उन्नति एवं मानवीय प्रगति की भावना हमारे जीवन से विलुप्त होती जा रही है जिससे मानव केवल उपभोक्ता बनता जा रहा है। बाजार इस स्थिति से अधिकतम लाभ बनाता है और मानव को केवल अपने लाभ को कमाने के लिए उपयोग करता है। मनुष्य अपने आप में बाजार द्वारा नियंत्रित होता जा रहा है और बाजार एक ऐसी परिस्थिति तैयार कर रहा है जो मनुष्य के मानसिक



स्वास्थ्य पर गहरा प्रभाव डालती है। इससे मानव अपने जीवन के मौलिक लक्ष्यों एवं अपनी मानवता को भूल रहा है और केवल अपने आप को आर्थिक संपन्न बनाने में लगा है तथा यह समझता है कि अधिक धन प्राप्त करके वह तमाम सुख व समृद्धि पा सकता है। वह अपने सामाजिक संबंधों एवं कर्तव्यों को भी बाजार के अनुरूप ही समझता है जो उसे किसी लेन-देन करने से अधिक नहीं दिखाई देते।

इसी तरह सामाजिक संस्थाएं एवं राष्ट्र भी अपने उद्देश्यों एवं कर्तव्यों, जैसे व्यक्ति निर्माण, समाज कल्याण, राष्ट्र निर्माण, एवं समग्र विकास, को भूल कर राष्ट्र विकास एवं राष्ट्रीय संवृद्धि को केवल राष्ट्रीय आय, प्रति व्यक्ति आय, आदि से मापते हैं। अत्यधिक उत्पादन से लाभ कमाना इन संस्थाओं का मूल उद्देश्य बन कर रह गया है जिसके लिए वे संस्थाएं भी अब निजी हाथों में चली गयी हैं। ये सभी सामाजिक संस्थाएं अब समाज कल्याण को छोड़ कर बाजार का रूप धारण करती जा रही हैं।

निजीकरण के समर्थक राज्य की अपेक्षा बाजार के प्रति ज्यादा आशावादी हैं जिसका मुख्य उद्देश्य समाजिक हित न होकर लाभ केन्द्रित है (हैरी ब्रिजहाउस, पृ. 2007) भारत में भी बाजार की शक्तियां अत्यधिक शक्तिशाली होती जा रही हैं और भारत में आर्थिक उदारीकरण, उपभोक्तावाद और मुक्त बाजार के समर्थक चाहते हैं कि भारत स्वयं को विश्व की पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था के साथ एकीकृत करे (पाठक, 2015, पृ. 15)। इसका अर्थ है कि भारत अपनी उन्नति का मापदंड आर्थिक क्षमता से करे, जिसे बढ़ाने के लिए वह अपने बाजार को वैश्विक पूंजीवाद के लिए खोल दे जिससे सीधा विदेशी पूंजी निवेश बढ़ सके। उदाहरण स्वरूप यहाँ इस तथ्य पर विचार करना उचित होगा कि सन 1991 में आई नई आर्थिक नीति और इसी दशक के दौरान शिक्षा मंत्रालय का नाम बदल कर मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय कर दिया गया (सक्सेना, 2000, पृ.71)। इस दौरान जब मानव को एक संसाधन के रूप में देखा जाने लगा तो न केवल एक व्यक्ति की उत्पादकता बढ़ाने की कोशिश की गयी अपितु "त्वरित आर्थिक सफलता हेतु जिस प्रकार के मजदूरों की फौज की आवश्यकता है (करावल और हेल्सी, 1977, पृ.72) उसके लिए भी प्रावधान करने की शुरुआत हुई। सरकारी विद्यालयों के साथ साथ निजी विद्यालयों का चलन भी इसी दौरान शुरू हुआ एवं इसके पश्चात सरकारी विद्यालयों की स्थिति निरंतर खराब होती गयी। यह निश्चित रूप से कहना कठिन है कि सरकारी विद्यालयों की खराब स्थिति के

कारण निजी विद्यालयों का चलन बढ़ा अथवा निजी विद्यालयों को महत्ता देने के लिए सरकारी विद्यालयों को खराब किया गया।

ऐसे परिप्रक्ष्य में मनुष्य की उस अवधारणा को बल मिला जो कि स्व-केन्द्रित, स्वच्छन्द, आर्थिक सम्पन्नता, एवं उपभोग केन्द्रित है और शिक्षा को अपनी इच्छाओं की पूर्ति का माध्यम समझा जाने लगा। इस प्रकार के मनुष्य के संदर्भ में फ्रोमम ये मानते हैं कि विपणन चरित्र के लिए न केवल वस्तुएं बल्कि व्यक्ति, उसकी शारीरिक शक्ति, उसकी समझ, उसका ज्ञान, उसकी भावनाएं एवं उसकी मुस्कराहट सभी उपयोगी पदार्थ के रूप में परिवर्तित हो जाती है। इस उभोक्ता को चुनने के अवसर दिए जाते हैं और ये अवसर जीवन-विकल्पों के रूप में निरूपित किये जाते हैं। यह पाया गया है कि ऐसा मनुष्य एकाकी, बाह्य पुनर्बलित, स्व केन्द्रित, एवं अन्य से विमुख होता है। एक उपभोक्तावादी समाज की भीड़ की संस्कृति में व्यक्ति स्व-योग्यता खो देता है और स्व एवं अन्य से अनभिज्ञ हो जाता है। इसका परिणाम यह होता है कि व्यक्ति भीड़ के रूप में कट्टरता एवं अधिविचार से ग्रस्त हो सकता है (Flynn, 2006, पृ. 90)2। ऐसे में पूंजीवाद यह उम्मीद करता है कि जब कोई व्यक्ति तनावग्रस्त, चिंताग्रस्त, एवं अपने द्वन्द्वों से अघात हो कर एवं थकान और निराशा से चूर हो जाता है तो पेशेवर मनोविज्ञानिक उन्हें जैसे तैसे कार्य करने के लिए पुनः तैयार करे (Parker, 2007, पृ.4)। बाजार द्वारा दिए गए विकल्पों के विपरीत फ्रोमम (2013) एवं मार्सल (1949) जैसे विचारक मुख्य जीवन-विकल्प के रूप को अपनी पुस्तकों के शीर्षक क्रमशः "ज्व भ्रम वत ज्व ठम" एवं "ठमपदह" दक भ्रमपदह" में प्रतिबिंबित करते हैं।

इस द्वन्द्व में यह चिंतन महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है कि क्या शिक्षा मनुष्य को अपने जीवन के अस्तित्व की खोज के लिए अग्रसर करती है अथवा उपभोग का सामान जुटाने में सहायता करती है। हालाँकि शिक्षा और बाजार दोनों समाज के हिस्से हैं और यदि दोनों समाज के हिस्से हैं तो क्यों आज बाजार, शिक्षा पर प्रभुत्व जमाने के प्रयास करता है? शिक्षा और बाजार के वर्तमान स्वरूप से परिलक्षित होता है कि हम भविष्य में कैसा समाज चाहते हैं। क्या शिक्षा केवल बाजार के लिए मानव संसाधन तैयार करने का यंत्र बन गयी है? यदि ऐसा है तो कहीं ना कहीं शिक्षा मानव के मनोविज्ञान को बाजार के अनुसार तैयार कर रही है और केवल बाजार के उद्देश्यों को पूरा करने के लिए साधन मात्र बन कर रह गयी है। शिक्षा कैसे मनुष्य का निर्माण कर रही है? शिक्षा किस प्रकार से

Scores on a consumer-oriented questionnaire developed to measure Fromm's marketing character correlate positively with anxiety and negatively with life satisfaction (Saunders & Munro, 2001) Still, Fromm's marketing character has become the dominant personality type of our age (Clark, N., 2005) (quoted in Engler, 2013, pp. 127-128).



बाजार के नियंत्रण में अपने निर्धारित उद्देश्यों को प्राप्त कर रही है? अतः क्या शिक्षा को बाजार के अनुसार चलना चाहिए? ये सभी प्रश्न हमारे लिए अत्यधिक सान्दर्भिक एवं महत्वपूर्ण हैं।

भारत में विभिन्न शिक्षा आयोगों और नीतियों, जैसे राधाकृष्णन आयोग (1949), के अनुसार शिक्षा का उद्देश्य सत्य के वैज्ञानिक सत्यापन के साथ-साथ, मूल्यों की महत्ता पर भी ध्यान केन्द्रित करना है। कोठारी आयोग (1964-66) ने भी शिक्षा के महत्वपूर्ण प्रकार्यों में उपयुक्त रूचि, विचार, नेतिकता, दृष्टिकोण, एवं बोद्धिक मूल्यों के विकास को समाहित किया है। परन्तु शिक्षा की राष्ट्रीय नीति (1986) में इस बात पर चिंता प्रकट की गयी है कि आज महत्वपूर्ण एवं आवश्यक मूल्यों का ह्रास हो रहा है जिससे समाज में अनिश्चितता, संदेह व अविश्वास की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो गयी है। बाजार की आवश्यकताओं के हिसाब से शिक्षा अपने मूल उद्देश्यों एवं मूल्यों के विपरीत एक समाज का निर्माण कर रही है जिसमें मानवीय सर्वान्गीण विकास, मानवीय मूल्यों, और मनोसामाजिक संवेदनाओं को अनदेखा किया जा रहा है।

अतः समाज में शिक्षा और बाजार के सम्बन्ध को समझना आवश्यक है क्योंकि एक मानव की आर्थिक परिस्थितियाँ एवं उसका मानसिक स्वास्थ्य एक दूसरे को प्रभावित करते हैं। यहाँ मनुष्य की मानवीयता एवं मानसिक स्वस्थ को शिक्षा में महत्व देने वाले विचारकों की आवश्यकता है जो शिक्षा को एक मानव उत्थान, मानवीय उन्नति एवं मानवीय प्रगति के संदर्भ के रूप में देखते हों। मुख्यतः उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी के अंत से उन्नीस सौ पचास तक जब विकास या समवृद्धि का विचार शुरू हुआ तब शिक्षा व विद्यालय का आधुनिक, कारखाना प्रारूप तैयार हो गया, जो कि टेलर के वैज्ञानिक प्रबंध के सिद्धांत से लिया गया है। इसमें मजदूरों से सामान्य काम से प्रारंभ करके उनको जटिल काम करवाने के लिए तैयार किया जाता है और विद्यालय को एक ऐसा स्थान माना गया जहाँ पर व्यक्ति मूलभूत कौशलों और व्यापार करने के तरीके सीखता है जिसे वह

व्यस्क हो कर प्रयोग करता है 4। लेकिन इस पूरी व्यवस्था में शिक्षा प्रणाली मानव के केवल आर्थिक विकास को ध्यान में रखती है जबकि मानव के शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य, मानसिक स्वास्थ्य मानवीय संबंधों को अनदेखा करती है।

यहाँ हम यह पाते हैं कि हमारा समाज अधिकाधिक पूंजीवादी, औद्योगिक एवं यांत्रिक होता जा रहा है, जिसमें मानवीय मूल्यों से अधिक आर्थिक लाभ का महत्व है। एक पूंजीवादी समाज शोषक और अलगाव की भावना पैदा करता है, और यकीनन यह व्यक्तिगत अनुभव को मनोवैज्ञानिक आधिक्य प्रदान करता है, परन्तु यह व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों को सर्वव्यापित मानता है। चाहे इस व्यक्तिगत अनुभव को मानसिक अथवा संवेदिक प्रक्रिया के रूप में समझा जाए, वह इस तरह संचालित होता है कि जैसे कि वह प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के अंदर व्याप्त हो और जिसे वे स्वयं समझने में असमर्थ हों (पार्कर, 2007, पृ.5)। ऐसे में स्व एवं उसकी अलगाव की भावना केवल एक व्यक्तिगत प्रश्न बन कर रह जाती है जिसका आर्थिक एवं राजनीतिक सम्बन्ध एवं धरातल समाप्त हो जाता है। अपनी इन भावनाओं को समझना और उन्हें नियंत्रित रखना एक व्यक्ति की जिम्मेदारी हो जाती है जिसके लिए वह चाहे तो किसी मनोवैज्ञानिक की सहायता भी ले सकता है अथवा अपने स्व की खोज में किसी यात्रा अथवा भ्रमण के लिए भी जा सकता है जैसा कि वर्तमान की हिंदी फिल्मों जिन्दगी ना मिलेगी दुबारा, N-H-8, Highway और पीकू आदि में दिखाया गया है। इस तरह मनोवैज्ञानीकरण समाज में होने वाले उत्पीड़न को छिपाने का कार्य भी करता है।

बाजार ने कैसे मनोविज्ञान के सिद्धांतों को अपने लाभ के लिए प्रयोग किया, यह समझने के लिए केवल एडवर्ड बर्नेस, जो कि फ्रायड के भांजे थे, के विषय में जानना काफी होगा। बर्नेस ने फ्रायड के मनोविश्लेषण के सिद्धांत को सिगरेट कि बिक्री बढ़ाने एवं विभिन्न राजनेताओं के प्रोपगेंडा को फैलाने के लिए प्रयोग किया। इसी मनोविज्ञान का प्रयोग बाजार ने

Fromm argues, for the marketing character, everything is transformed into a commodity-not only things, but the person himself, his physical energy, his skills, his opinions, his knowledge, his feelings, even his smiles. This character type is a historically new phenomenon because it is a product of a fully developed capitalism that is centered around the market-the commodity market, the labor market, and the personality market-and whose principle it is to make a profit by favorable exchange.(Fromm, 1973 p.90-91)

In the mass-culture of a consumerist society, in which the masses, "lack a sense of their own worth and are strangers to themselves and one another. The result is that the masses are inevitably prone to fanaticism: propaganda has the convulsive effect of electrical shock on people in this state" (Flynn, 2006, p. 90).

We are sometimes stressed, burnt out or traumatised by our struggles, and when we collapse in exhaustion and despair it is vital to know what demands to make on professionals who make it their business to patch individuals up when they fall apart.(Parker, 2007, p.4)



व्यक्ति के अस्तित्व को वस्तुओं से जोड़ने के लिए किया, जिसे हम बौद्रिला के पद अंसनम के सिद्धांत से समझ सकते हैं जिसके द्वारा उन्होंने मार्क्स के सिद्धांत को आगे बढ़ाने की कोशिश की है (ee Lane, 2008)।

मार्क्स के उपयोग मूल्य (use value) हस्तांतरण मूल्य (exchange value) सिद्धांत के आगे बौद्रिला ने पद अंसनम सिद्धांत दिया जिसमें उन्होंने कहा कि लोग केवल अब वस्तुओं को उपयोग के लिए एवं हस्तांतरण के लिए ही नहीं लेते वे अब पदार्थ को अपने स्टेटस सिम्बल के लिए भी लेते हैं। बाजार इसी बात का लाभ आज उठा रहा है और मनोविज्ञान का प्रयोग अपने व्यापार को बढ़ाने, अत्यधिक माल को बेचने व अत्यधिक लाभ को कमाने के लिए कर रहा है जिस कारण से मानव पर बाजार का नियंत्रण बन गया है। मानव पर बाजार टेलीविजन, अखबार व अन्य विज्ञापनों के माध्यम से नियंत्रण स्थापित कर रहा है।

जब व्यक्ति मनोवैज्ञानीकरण द्वारा स्थायित्व प्रदान की गयी सरलमति (naive thinking) से आलोचनात्मक चिंतन (critical thinking) की ओर बढ़ता है तो वह पाता है कि इन व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों का सीधा सम्बन्ध उनके आर्थिक एवं राजनीतिक परिवेश से है। तब हम कह सकते हैं कि वह एक आलोचनात्मक चेतना प्राप्त कर चुका है। यह आलोचनात्मक चेतना व्यक्ति को एक ऐतिहासिक परिपेक्ष में रखती है तथा उसे स्वयं से, अन्यो से, सम्पूर्ण विश्व से संवाद स्थापित करने के योग्य बनाती है (Freire, 1973, पृ.13-14)।

वास्तव में उत्पीड़कों का हित, जैसा कि सिमोन द बुवा ने कहा है, कि "उत्पीड़ितों की चेतना को बदला जाये, न कि उनका उत्पीड़न करने वाली स्थिति को, क्योंकि उत्पीड़कों को जितना ही उस स्थिति से अनुकूलित होने की दिशा में ले जाया जाएगा, उतनी ही आसानी से उन पर पभुत्व जमाया और उसे बरकरार रखा जा सकेगा" (पाउलो फ्रेरे, 1970, पृ.75)। बाजार मनुष्य को उपभोक्ता के रूप में देखता है और

इसलिए मनुष्य को उपभोक्ता समझने के कारण उसे वस्तुओं को उपभोग करने के उद्देश्य से केवल उपभोक्ता के रूप में तैयार किया जा रहा है, जिससे मनुष्य अमानुषिक हो रहा है। जिससे बाजार व्यक्ति की परिस्थितियों को ध्यान में रखकर केवल उसकी चेतना को प्रभावित करता है और अपने लाभ को आसानी से बढ़ा लेता है।

वस्तुतः यह जांचना जरूरी है कि जो शिक्षा आज विद्यालयों, विश्वविद्यालयों में दी जा रही है वह कितनी कारगर साबित हो रही है जिससे कि वे अपनी स्थिति को बदल पाने में सक्षम हो सकें व अपनी चेतना के आधार पर निर्णय ले सकें। मूलतः यहाँ स्पष्टता से यह विचारना होगा की मानव की कौन सी अवधारणा समग्र मानव एवं सामाजिक विकास के लिए उपयुक्त है। आज ऐसी शिक्षा अपरिहार्य है जो मनुष्य के सम्पूर्ण विकास के साथ-साथ उसे आलोचनात्मक बना सके जो बाहरी ताकतों के प्रभुत्व से निकल कर अपने स्व को ध्यान में रखते हुए मनुषिक जीवन का निर्वाह कर सके।

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Especially in the late nineteenth century to the 1950s, when the idea of progress emerged, public schools were being developed and organized "around a modernistic, industrial, 'factory' model" (Fishman, 1999, p. 246). In this conceptualization of school, which followed Taylor's 'scientific management' theory of breaking tasks into smaller, simpler, repeatable tasks by the workers who value standardization, a rigid sense of time, and bureaucratic accountability. The school was thus being considered as a site for learning the fundamental skills and rules-of-the-trade that one has to enter after becoming an adult.

This capitalist society is as a mental or emotional process it operates as something simultaneously as the particular property of the exploitative and alienating, and for sure it intensifies individual experience, but it also constitutes that individual experience as something 'psychological', as something that operates as if it were inside each person. Whether it is viewed individual and as something that cannot be completely comprehended by them. (Parker, 2007, p.5)



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The Mahatma's Sons: Harilal and Manilal Gandhi (A psychodynamic perspective on the father-son relation)

Ms. Swati Sehgal

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Delhi

Abstract When a reference is made to identity development as a process, choices made and differential investment by the individual to various sub-groups that he/she is a part of (family, peers etc.) are important factors. Personal characteristics that distinguish individuals from others within the same group are significant correlates in the shaping up of identity. Drawing from this perspective, this paper seeks to explore the father-son relation (Gandhi and his two elder sons, Harilal and Manilal), the domain of the personal experiential and life events from the prism of cinema, novel and biography. The attempt is to present a nuanced understanding without seeking to critically evaluate Gandhi's philosophy or the initiatives that mark the trajectory of his quest for harmony.

Key words: identity, Harilal, Gandhi, father-son relation

Introduction

The paper attempts to understand the relation of Mahatma Gandhi and two of his eldest sons, Harilal and Manilal, both in its “human and historical perspectives” (Parikh, 2001, p. ix). I seek to highlight that the analysis is not aimed at presenting them as dichotomous personalities or associating their actions with moral agendas. Rather, through this paper an attempt has been made to present a nuanced understanding and a more rounded perception of Gandhi as a father.

The intertwining of the public image with the personal in case of Gandhi and his sons, more so in the case of the former, is a significant consideration in unraveling the same. “There is an inexorable trade-off between the public and personal lives and interests” (Parikh, 2001, p. ix). The intent is to shift the focus upon the “clash between certain convictions and values and family aspirations,” particularly in case of Gandhi and his eldest son, Harilal (Chopra, 2007, para. 7).

From the perspective of developmental psychology the analysis seeks to demonstrate how the network of familial bonds and circumstances are integral to the shaping of identity. It becomes

even more complex in the Indian cultural milieu which celebrates the collectivist ethic (Kakar, 1982). Thus the aim of the paper is to bring to the foreground the ramifications that the family has as a contributory factor in the process of the forging of a distinct sense of self. Secondly the development of identity has to be understood in a continuum perspective, as located in the evolutionary framework marking the transition from childhood to youth.

The insights are sourced from biographical accounts and snapshots, drawn from different mediums - films, novels, biographies, published letters etc. It includes representations from cinema and literature; primarily the movie, *Gandhi: My Father* (2007) and the novel *Mahatma vs. Gandhi* by Dinkar Joshi (2007). Keeping into perspective that they are fictional renderings and the text, however unconscious it may be, is coloured by the authorial voice, the second half of the section pertains to accounts from published letters and biographies.

Biographies in comparison to autobiographies, can be described as narratives where aspects of the 'self' are prioritised and underplayed in its myriad dimensions. Besides Gandhi's autobiography,



which is an incredibly valuable resource, three prominent biographies on Harilal Gandhi and Manilal Gandhi – *Gandhiji's Lost Jewel: Harilal Gandhi* by Nilam Parikh(2001), *Harilal Gandhi: A life* (2007) by Chandulal Dalal (Ed. and Trans. by Tridib Suhrud) and *Gandhi's Prisoner* (2004) by Uma Dhupelia Mesthrie have been chosen for the analysis. Twin factors influenced the choice of these works – the absence of substantive autobiographical accounts and the propensity of different biographical texts in etching out the image of these much-forgotten men.

Harilal and Manilal: A brief sketch

Harilal Mohandas Gandhi (1888 – 18 June 1948) was the eldest son of Gandhi and Kasturba. He was born in Rajkot and probably in the ancestral house of the Gandhi family. He had three younger brothers – Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas. Immediately after his birth Gandhi left for England. Harilal had a keen desire to go to England for higher studies and to become a barrister as his father had been but it was fated otherwise. Later, accounts of his arrests and public drunkenness became commonplace. He died from liver disease on 18 June 1948 in a municipal hospital in Mumbai.

Manilal Gandhi, the second son of Gandhi and Kasturba, was born on 28 October 1892. He spent close to five decades of a life (almost sixty-four years) in South Africa. Most of these years, in particular, were lived at Phoenix Settlement, on the communal farm that Gandhi had started in 1904. For thirty-six years he (1920-1956) was the editor of the newspaper *Indian Opinion* which his father had a crucial hand in establishing in 1903 (Dalal, 2007).

Analysis

Literature has the propensity to recreate the web of life by capturing its complexities, ambiguities and varied dimensions within specificities of peculiar socio-cultural and historical contexts. Characters woven into the fabric of prose works evolve and their veiled selves are unravelled to illustrate the kaleidoscope of fundamental human tendencies that lurk behind human behaviour. It strikes an inevitable chord with the concerns such as the mind and consciousness of individuals that

characterise the discipline of psychology. A similar case is that of cinema; where the congruence of reel life with real life is inevitable. Not disregarding the dreamy and quixotic resolutions to life-situations that are sometimes portrayed one cannot overlook the social relevance of cinema. This may be elaborated upon by highlighting the fact that cinema can and does function as a platform for raising issues of social relevance – giving voice and space to the marginalised.

In this context, the movie *Gandhi: My father*, a 2007 Indian film by Feroze Abbas Khan. is a succinct and sensitive portrayal of the angst and mental turmoil of Harilal. Though taking into purview the wider social-political conditions of the era, yet it is distanced from the larger-than-life image of Gandhi. In an interview the director of the movie, Feroze Abbas Khan (March, 2012), highlights that very little is known about Gandhi the Man and his family life. And in the autobiography too the son is conspicuous by its absence. An oft-quoted argument is that “Harilal Gandhi's entire life was lived in the shadow of his father and it was spent rebelling against everything his father believed in”(Manzoor, 2007, August, para. 1). The veracity of the statement is highlighted through several anecdotes.

Innumerable biographical narratives and interpretations are available on the life of Gandhi; in comparison, the sheer paucity of documented evidence about Harilal's life trajectory is visibly evident. The biographical accounts of Harilal, though scant and mostly woven together through popular instances, highlight a pertinent factor that Harilal's life was devoid of his father's presence during a significant span of his childhood. His childhood is marked with small intervals of time when his father came to Kathiawad, only to leave for Mumbai and thereafter South Africa for better prospects. “During those days...he (Gandhi) liked being with the children (a reference to all the children of the joint family) and found great pleasure in their company. Along with other children, Harilal also benefited from this” (Dalal, 2007/1977, p.2). But it is equally pertinent to note that a significant span of his childhood is spent bereft of his father's presence.



During his youth Harilal was one of the most endearing and committed supporter of the ideals upheld by his father. As a thirteen year old he readily assented to giving away the ornaments gifted for the cause and was an ardent admirer and sought to actively contribute to the mobilization of the masses against discrimination and exploitation. Named as *Chhote Gandhi* his contributions ranged from taking the responsibility of the *Indian Opinion* press to active participation in the Transvaal agitation as a *satyagrahi* – hawking without permit, choosing jail terms and intensive imprisonment as a protest etc.

The ideological commitment can be construed as a significant indicator of developing personal values and making choices, a significant phase of developing a distinct sense of self. However the 'processual' perspective to the development of identity brings to fore the idea that the sense of commitment might not be crystallised and fixed. Taking into purview this factor it may involve a further exploration. As highlighted earlier, the process is checkered with risks, uncertainties, introspection and conflicts and tends to reach consolidation after a considerable period of time. If one analyses the example of Harilal from this lens there are two important considerations: firstly it brings to fore quite vividly identity development as a process of assimilation and differentiation and the yearning for 'singularisation' visible through certain certain behaviour patterns (Adams, 1992).

Both father-son worked as a team to stand for the cause in South Africa. On being asked why he allowed Harilal to go to jail Gandhiji mentioned that "I think whatever my son does at my instance can be taken to have been done by me" ... "It will be a part of Harilal's education to go to gaol for the sake of the country" (Dalal, 2007/1977, p. 15). Neither was Harilal given the opportunity to go and study law nor was he allowed to go with his wife Gulab to India – due to financial exigencies and the demands of the movement. But there was a deep-seated yearning "to study, educate himself and work for a living" (Dalal, 2007/1977, p. 28). With

no one to confide his inner turmoil, the feeling of claustrophobia in South Africa must have compelled the decision to leave for India without informing.

What is potently reflected in the actions and the behaviour exhibited is assertion of freewill and individual choices in the face of absence of support from the significant others. The crisis of the situation is that the overwhelming desire to carve a niche for himself/ herself becomes the guiding factor. In light of the Eriksonian (1963) framework, there is a dissonance experienced in the inner world due to conflicting opinion and pressures.

In the two-and-a-half years in South Africa, before Harilal left in a huff because he didn't agree with his father's notions of education, Gandhi's refusal to send him to study abroad on a scholarship was a significant juncture, an incident that heightened the differences of opinion in the father-son. Devdas Gandhi in an article titled *My Brother* (Dalal, 2007/1977, Appendix 2) mentions this incident highlighting that with this "my brother's sense of injury was complete. He never returned to Bapu after that in any sense of the term" (Dalal, 2007/1977, Appendix 2, p.148). It proved to be a catalyst and propelled Harilal's hasty departure from Phoenix. It is pertinent to consider that the contingencies of the social milieu, both pressing and delimiting in South Africa and Gandhi's own ideas on education, influenced by the idealism of Ruskin and Tolstoy's views endorsing manual labour, had prevented him from allowing his sons to seek an education which he never supported. The possibility of being subjected to social exclusion and an education which was not imparted in the mother tongue of the children deterred him from sending them to school. Dalal's (2007/1977) biography mentions that he had decided to devote time to the children at Phoenix but as the social movement gained momentum in South Africa he could not find enough time and the question of education during the stay in Africa remained unresolved. Further the biography

While returning to India in 1901, the Indian community out of respect for Gandhi gave him a grand farewell and several gifts. Dalal (2007/1977) and Parikh (2001) in the biographies mention that while Kasturba wished to keep the ornaments for her daughter's-in-law, Gandhiji resented this. When Harilal was asked for his opinion, he agreed with his father.



(Dalal, 2007/1977) highlights that a conflict must have gnawed at Harilal's being of how could a life of service, character building and simplicity valued by Gandhi could be achieved by remaining unlettered. Also when his ideal – his father - had been motivated for the cause after attaining prestigious qualifications, why was he and his siblings being left behind! The idea of saying that he was in Bapu's class did not satisfy his answers.

During this span Gandhi's letters that are addressed to Harilal are marked by a constant strain of concern; however they reverberate with a persistent sense of complain and dissatisfaction too. The mild rebukes can be labeled as a marker of veiled concern for the child. But equally significant is the fact that Harilal, inspite of the joint family, was distanced from his elementary family and the letters were the only source of succour and the chord that connected him to his parents and his siblings in South Africa. More than the affection, what stands out in these early letters Gandhi wrote to his eldest son is his curious mix of friend and a heavy parental hand (Reddy, 2007, August, para. 6).

The conversation between the father-son, after Harilal was discovered at the Delagoa Bay, trying to leave for India and brought back to the Tolstoy farm, is poignant. It is visibly evident that there was a strong sense of urgency and desire to pave his own path or destiny and for that he wanted to study. The conversation revolves around Harilal's passionate outcry against his life being defined, delimited and shackled by the ideals of his father. Harilal states that "I had always strangled my desires for your satisfaction..." (Joshi, 2007) but the decision to send someone else on Mr. Mehta's scholarship, while he equally deserved the opportunity, was a gross injustice against him. It comes forth as a shock to Gandhi and he states that the futility of the English system of education had prevented him from sending Harilal. It is a significant juncture for both father and son. For Harilal it functions as a cathartic release, a vent to

his pent up emotions. For Gandhi, it comes to fore as a realization, a realization of the inner turmoil that his son was undergoing. Thereafter Harilal left for Ahmedabad to complete his education and to stay with his family.

Parikh (2001) offers an interesting explanation based on the idea of inter-generational conflict of the same and examines the differences in the relationship in a more humane light. She states that the absence of an alternate vision was the tragedy of Harilal's life and clashes of opinions happen with every generation. From the standpoint of the Identity Status Paradigm (1966) forwarded by James Marcia there is a state of moratorium which involves a state of self exploration in order to achieve an inner sameness of one's values, beliefs etc. Correlating this paradigm with family correlates Carol Markstrom (1992) in the essay, *A Consideration of Intervening Factors in Adolescent Identity Formation*, mentions that different identity statuses can be identifiably correlated, though not equivocally, to varied patterns of parenting and familial milieu. In case of Harilal it can be stated that this strong-willed desire to fulfill the needs and ambitions slowly degenerates as the circumstances become hostile and Harilal becomes a pitiable figure.

Harilal's semi-public letter (1915 (in Suhrud (trans. & ed.), 2007, Appendix 1)) to his father has been often cited as an instance of a provocative indictment of his father's methods and practices. However on the whole several passages from the letter illustrate that it is written from an emotionally mature vantage point. For instance the sense of disenchantment is not only directed at the father but to himself at certain junctures. There is an ebbing and flow of emotions throughout the text which are potently reflective of an oscillation between blaming and self-reflection.

A similar example comes to fore in Franz Kafka's, a twentieth century German writer, *Letter to His Father*. The letter, as in case of Harilal becomes a mode of expressing or writing the unwritable.

Namely the four identity statuses were that of foreclosure (commitment without exploration), diffusion (where neither commitment nor exploration is present), moratorium (ongoing self exploration in absence of commitment) and achiever (commitment after duly exploring different avenues).



Kafka's letter exemplifies the angst of the son for whom the father's physical and psychological strong presence becomes overwhelming for him. As critics describe, even his work functions as the very epitome of the immobility and impossibility of the strained, sterile relationship he had with his father (Fischer, 2011). There are apparent similarities in the psychological experiences expressed by Kafka and Harilal. However situational matrices vary and subtle variations in case of Harilal are several.

The yearning to define and extricate, or rather salvage, the 'I' from being delimited and circumscribed by the 'You' comes to fore in the following excerpts from Harilal's letter:

I separated from you...In so doing I followed the dictates of my conscience.

It was usually not able to distinguish the Phoenix institution from you and hence I left that too. (Dalal, 2007/1977, Appendix 1, p.137)

Another pertinent factor that is noticeable that the sense of dissatisfaction and disenchantment - whether it is the *Open Letter to His Father* or it is the scene in *Gandhi: My Father* (2007) where he offers an orange to his mother completely disregarding his father's presence at Katni station - is directed primarily at his father. The anguish and admonishing of the mother comes to fore in the letter - *An Open Letter to Her Son by a Mother*.

I do not understand what I should tell you. Now it has become hard for me to even live. How much pain are you inflicting...'

I long ardently to meet you: but I do not know your whereabouts.'

(Open Letter to Her Son by a Mother (Excerpts), in Parikh, 2001, Appendix 8, 176, 177)

The biographies highlight that Harilal was a man who never stopped caring about his family, even after his downfall. He cared so deeply that he preferred to entrust his children to Gandhi and Kasturba, and stayed away from them rather than embarrass them with his degradation. "The tragedy of Harilal's life was that after picking up the moral courage to rebel against his father he became one of

those individuals who failed at everything he undertook, and gradually got pulled into the vortex of failure until he believed it was his destiny to wander homeless forever" (Parikh in Reddy, 2007). He was rebelling against the Mahatma, who was setting ideals for an entire nation. He was running against the tide of revolution and on top of it, he lost the support a family provides. He went "looking for a father," explains Parikh, "and always found a Mahatma instead"(in Reddy, 2007, para. 7). From a psychological standpoint it can be interpreted that there is a persistent yearning and desire to carve out a niche for himself propelling the attempts, sometimes frantic and reckless. However it cannot be disregarded that "there was a mutual respect between them..." and it was 'It was never Gandhi versus Gandhi, but Gandhi and Gandhi'" (Reddy, 2007, para. 9).

While Gandhi was in South Africa, Manilal's childhood years like his elder brother Harilal, were spent in the joint family at Rajkot. Mesthrie (2004) in her biography of Manilal Gandhi highlights that Gandhi "missed out on the crucial developmental stages of both sons...He was a stranger to them. It was their mother who provided them with emotional warmth and security" (Mesthrie, 2004, p. 35). However their arrival in South Africa in the 1896 is an important juncture as they witnessed their father's committed involvement in resistance initiatives and his image as a public figure. This experience did have a sustained influence and a deep impression on the young minds. For instance Manilal along with his elder brother readily agreed to Gandhi's decision to return the gifts while they were returning from South Africa to Rajkot (1901).

Mesthrie (2004) explicitly highlights that the life trajectory of Manilal Gandhi would have been very different had he been left behind like his elder brother, Harilal, at Rajkot when once again the family moved to South Africa in 1904. It cannot be overlooked that the circumstantial matrices of socialization and enculturation were markedly varied in case of both brothers. Particularly in case of Manilal experiences such as an extended family which consisted of members from differing socio-economic and cultural origins, the merging of public and private lives, the exposure to different



languages, such as English and Gujarati, his father's insistence on value of physical labour, etc. would not have escaped his attention during the growing up years. Also Mesthrie's (2004) biography points out that what Manilal recalled of his own childhood were experiences that were actually "lessons in discipline" (p. 57) given by his father. Thus whether it was the day when he was asked to walk a distance of 32 km to fetch his reading glasses which he had forgotten or the 'talk' he had received from his father on the importance of setting limits after he had sore stomach from eating his favourite dish in excess. Another important instance about which Gandhi makes a detailed reference in his autobiography too is the period when Manilal was taken seriously ill at Girgaum. We get a glimpse of a caring, nurturing father. But on the other hand we witness how he embarked on his own course of treatment. "Gandhi nevertheless decided that no matter how ill the boy became, the family was bounded by religion to remain vegetarian" (Mesthrie, 2004).

As a teenager, the shift from the house in Natal to the Phoenix farm (1906) was a significant juncture for Manilal. Harilal's extended periods of absence from the farm and his disenchantment with the manner in which surveillance was being carried out contrasted with his brother's active and devoted participation in the establishment of this communal farm. Soon his fate is inextricably intertwined with the farm as he became the editor of the paper (1920), *Indian Opinion*, which was published at the farm. However the intervening period (1906-1920) was not devoid of dichotomies and ambivalences where Manilal questioned his lack of accomplishment. Mesthrie (2004) biography, interestingly titled *Gandhi's Prisoner*, provides a nuanced insight into Manilal's unflinching commitment and dedication to the ideals cherished by his father. However at the same time highlights that "Gandhi would lay down his beliefs so persuasively that, in the end, Manilal had no choice" (Mesthrie, 2004, p.24). There are several instances which illustrate that there was a dichotomy which irked him or gnawed at his being repeatedly, but the volley of emotions remained resolutely caged in.

He thought he would make a good doctor. He also wanted to learn and play the piano, and urged his father to buy him one, but Gandhi could not fulfill the promise.

What class must I tell people I am in? Should not one be learning a skill to earn a living? (Mesthrie, 2004, p.75)

Interesting to consider is the letter addressed to Manilal by Gandhi from Volkrust prison in the year, 1909. According to the terms of imprisonment he was allowed to write only one letter in a month (Fischer, 1951, p119) and Gandhi mentions that he decided to write the letter to Manilal as he was the nearest one to his thoughts. Fischer (1951) in his pioneering biography of Gandhi highlights that in this letter "Gandhi's warm and tender concern to mould Manilal into his own image probably sounded like a sermon interlarded with... chores. Gandhi's selfless injunctions were for his son's good, but the prospect of chastity, poverty and hard work under a strict taskmaster... offered few thrills to the young man on the threshold of life." (p. 93) Apart from the socio-political contingencies Fischer's (1951) analysis also veers towards a more psychological explanation which refers to Gandhi's marriage at thirteen and the absence of the span of boyhood in his own life.

Conclusion:

Gandhi was an epitome of self actualization as universal good had assumed more salience for him than his personal self. From the same it can be purported that there was a stupendously well established synchrony between the inner world and the outer realm. The beliefs and the matrix of value systems that he subscribed to were often fed in by the experiences he had. These are suitably named as 'experiments' in his autobiography – *My Experiments with Truth*. They are mentioned as seminal learning experiences that had contributed to his ideas in a significant manner. Whether it was the question of sending one of his sons on a scholarship to study in London or his decision to punish Manilal by banishing him from the *ashram* (1916) for giving money to Harilal from the ashram funds, Gandhi was unlikely to have favored his



own sons. As a father, he cannot be separated from the public persona and often the 'self' is overshadowed by the image of the Mahatma.

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Adolescence Denied: The Life and Works of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Ms. Nidhi Seth

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Delhi

Abstract : *This essay is an attempt to examine feminine identity, contoured and marked by societal embargoes, from the standpoint of personal reflective writings. Drawing from the tenuous yet inescapably important linkages between literature and psychology, it is an attempt to draw insights from the life trajectory of a radical feminist writer of the early twentieth century Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. Her writings embody caustic criticism of religion and patriarchy for their connivance in barring women from education and employment. Strict purdah (veiling or seclusion), marriage at the age of sixteen and early widowhood surmised the early life of Rokeya. However, she emerged stronger as she set up a girls' school and also published various essays, stories and novels around the theme of women's education. This paper will seek to give a brief outline of Rokeya's own life and discuss some of her writings and the role conflicts of Rokeya's life as is apparent in the case of purdah. While Rokeya was the staunchest opponent of purdah, she continued to observe it in her life and her school. However, her writings contain sometimes a virulent criticism of the tradition. The paper will also seek exemplars for the focal areas of investigation of the volume. Thus, the paper will examine the condition of girls, especially adolescent girls, in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century India. It will examine the identity and role conflicts faced by girls and women as depicted in Rokeya's work.*

Keywords: *Adolescence, women, education, identity, voice*

“Was there ever any good work accomplished in this benighted world without someone having to take the pains for it? The great Galileo was put in a lunatic asylum for saying 'the earth moves.' Which honest man has been able to speak his mind in this world without being condemned? So I say do not listen to what society says. In this world, good words or deeds are not appreciated in the present times.” (Hossain, as cited in Akhtar & Bhowmik, 2008, p.8)

The extract here sums up the non negotiable stance of a voice offering staunch resistance to what is normative. The act of challenging the accepted standards of knowledge or the accepted societal roles is often quashed with equal virulence. The paper seeks to investigate the life trajectory and personal reflective writings of one such voice, for whom agency surfaces in life choices and in the act

of writing. Here, quite interestingly, the intersections with developmental psychology are significant: A distinguishing facet being the marked absence of adolescence as a life stage manifested in the exploration of Rokeya's personal reflective writings.

Adolescence as a life stage has been increasingly recognized in its contextual variations. Valence has been accorded to individual engagements emerging from a variety of life situations. Departing from the accepted singularity of characteristics marking adolescence, the dynamics of difference has been recognized. (Brown, Larson & Saraswathi, 2004). Deriving from this theoretical perspective the attempt in this paper is to delve into the chiaroscuro borne out of the images of silence and *purdah* at certain times in Rokeya's life and the images of subversion,



characteristic of the insurgent female characters who inhabit her *personal reflective writings*. I also seek to delve into the tensions created by social mores and typecast images of women in the analysis as it has a bearing upon forging a sense of self. Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar's work in the area of the identity development of women in India is seminal for our understanding of the life and times of Rokeya and will be operationalized for the purpose of the analysis.

A Brief Look at the Lives of Nineteenth Century Bengali Women

If we look at Indian history, particularly the history of nineteenth century Bengali women in India, we find that adolescence as a life stage wasn't acknowledged by the society. Upper caste girls led extremely protected lives in the *antahpur* or *zenana*, the feminine private quarters of the home which were physically segregated from the public and male spaces. Limited space and poor ventilation made the *zenana* vulnerable to diseases. The distinction, however, wasn't just physical but socio-cultural as it signified distinct spheres of influence (Karlekar, 1993, p. 48) for the *antahpur* was ruled by the *ginni* or the oldest female member of the family who shouldered the responsibility of socialising every new female entrant.

The lives of girls and women revolved around cooking and keeping *bratas* for the safety of the men of the house which was geared towards inculcating in them virtues of chastity and obedience. Child marriage meant that the girls entered adulthood even before they were ready for it physically or mentally. Toiling hard in an unknown home, their only hope for relief was giving birth to the male heir of the family which meant teenage pregnancies with the inherent risk of miscarriages or the death of the young mother. Polygamy among certain Hindu Brahmins and Muslims and *sati* among the Hindus were other traditions detrimental to the status of the nineteenth century Bengali women. Thus, very early on in life these young girls were socialised into aspiring to achieve the ideal of womanhood as set by "Sita" (referred here generically to signify chaste and virtuous woman). The intersectionality of gender

and cultural practices conspired to prevent among young girls manifestation of many important features of adolescence such as development of individual thought, decision making, independence from adult (read here as male) authority or the freedom of creative expression. It also denied young girls the phase of moratorium accorded by adolescence.

Girls were also denied education on account of two fears. One, it was said that the girls who studied would become widows and second and perhaps greater fear was the fear of sexual licentiousness as an educated girls could send and receive letters to liaise with men. Educating women had no economic benefits and it was also feared that educated women would demand their rights and overthrow the shackles of patriarchy. Muslim women received rudimentary knowledge enough for reading the Koran but none to exalt or develop a critical mind. With time, educated Bengali babus in the administration felt the need for educated companionate wives. Brahmo reformers became the first to extend education to women but its nature, content and mode was decided by men who too schooled women into playing a subservient role to men.

The Life of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Rokeya was born in 1880 into a Zamindar family in the Rangpur district (in present day Bangladesh). Her father Zahiruddin Muhammad Abu Ali Saber (?-1913) was a learned man who knew Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English. However, he was strict and orthodox and kept the women in the family, including his four wives, one of them a European, under strict *purdah*. Nothing much is known about Rokeya's mother Rahatunessa Saber Chaudhurani. Most probably, she spent her entire life in *purdah*. Rokeya's childhood, too, was spent in strict *abarodh* (extreme form of *purdah* or seclusion). She had to conceal herself from other women too, from the age of five onwards. An incident from her childhood is sure to arouse a mix of humour and pathos in the mind of the readers. When Rokeya was five, her sister in law's maids came visiting prompting her to run about the house in order to conceal herself. She reached the attic and hid there.



Every morning, till the maids left, her *ayah* would take her to the attic and leave her there. She would ask her little cousin brother for a drink of water or food if he came to her playing. However, being small, the kid would often forget the assigned chore. Bharati Ray (2002) writes that such childhood experiences concerning *abarodh* made her bitter and “created a resentment [in her] that lasted all her life and generated her most resolute opposition to the system.” (p.20) From the standpoint of twenty first century theories in child psychology one can understand the aberrative childhood that young girls including Rokeya spent, devoid of the freedom of mobility or carefree conduct.

Having an orthodox father meant that she couldn't go to school. However, unlike her father, her brother Ibrahim Saber turned out to be progressive. He taught both Rokeya and her elder sister Karimunnessa. According to Shamsunnahar Mahmud,

“Their father disapproved highly of Rokeya's learning English or Bengali. Brother and sister would wait for nightfall...would gather their books, and as darkness engulfed the world, a dim light would be lit in the youngster's rooms. By candlelight the brother taught while the sister drank deep at the fountain of knowledge.” (as cited in Srivastava, 2003, p. 87)

Her brother got Rokeya married to Syed Sakhawat Hossain (1858-1909) in the year 1896, at the age of sixteen. She had a brief but relatively happy marriage with Hossain who supported not only her education but also valued her literary pursuits. Rokeya's babies died quite early denying her the joys of motherhood. Additionally she devoted a major part of her life nursing her diabetic husband. After the death of Sakhawat Hossain, Rokeya's step-daughter and her husband forced her out of her home. She set up a girls' school in Bhagalpur in 1909 with the money bequeathed to her by her husband and called it the Sakhawat Memorial School. To make the school a success, she studied the techniques at other schools and modified them to apply in her school. Running the school wasn't easy for her and often she ran into trouble with the conservative elements of society. Later she moved

the school to Calcutta.

Rokeya started publishing in 1902 and continued to do so till the end of her life. Her writings invariably revolved around the degraded condition of Indian women. Rokeya set up the Calcutta branch of Anjuman-i-Kahawatin-i-Islam (AKI) in 1916 which propagated Muslim girls' education. She died in 1932 while working for her school and was buried at Sodepur. Her dream of the school continuing even after she was dead has become true. The school got government aid and is today known as the Sakhawat Memorial Govt. Girls' High School with 1300 students on its rolls and a faculty of 60.

The Personal Reflective Writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

The term *personal reflective writings* has been adapted from Karlekar's work (1993) and refers to the personal narratives and exhortatory literature which ensconces within it novels, short stories, diaries, letters, essays, autobiographies, poetry, memoirs and the like. Rokeya, according to Bagchi, “was a boldly controversial writer on women's emancipation” (as cited in Ray, 2002, p.75) and her essays show that she could be “Remorseless...in exposing women's oppression and the machinations of a patriarchal society that indoctrinated them into defending and justifying their own subjugation.” (Bagchi, 2005, Introduction) A case in point is Rokeya's “Sultana's Dream” (1905). Published in 1905, in the Indian Ladies' Magazine, co- edited by Sarojini Naidu, “Sultana's Dream” is a feminist utopian fiction about a fictional land which is ideal for women. Rokeya describes an interesting incident, documenting her husband's response to the draft of “Sultana's Dream.”

“We were then stationed in Bhagalpore. My husband was away on tour, and I was left alone at home. He returned after two days and asked me what I had been doing during his absence. I then showed him the draft of Sultana's Dream, which I had just written. He promptly read through the whole book without even bothering to sit down, and remarked, “A Terrible Revenge!” (Ray, 2002, p. 2)



What prompted Syed Sakhawat Hossain's remark was perhaps the subversive nature of the text wherein the protagonist Sultana visited Ladyland where women roamed openly in the streets while the men lived in the mardanas (as opposed to *zenanas* for women). Women's education was valued and they were teachers and scientists and so on. It had universities for women and no woman could marry before the age of twenty one. Ruled by a queen, the place was free of crime and used modern science and technology in order to provide comfort to its citizens with amenities like air cars, solar power to cook food, irrigation facilities etc without causing any harm to the environment. The Ladyland didn't trade with any country which kept their women in seclusion. "Men, we find, are rather of lower morals and so we do not like dealing with them." (Bagchi, 2005, p. 14) The very title of the story and its setting in the dream of the protagonist makes it apparent to the readers that the utopia would perhaps remain an unfulfilled wish. Writing in the first person, Rokeya directed virulent criticism at patriarchy inverting the gender roles completely making the readers feel the full impact of the injustice towards them. In a sharp contrast with the lives of Bengali women of the times including Rokeya's own life, the girls in Ladyland are provided with education and delayed marriage allowing them the freedom to experience and explore life choices in a state of moratorium. Moreover, in her writings we find an outlet of the adolescent dreams that her educated mind envisioned for the freedom of women.

Several other of Rokeya's shorter works such as essays and sketches on the subjugation of women contain sarcasm and unalloyed criticism directed at institutions of patriarchy responsible for the subjugation of women. In "The Creation of Man," a group of women encounter Tvasti, the God of Creation. They first mistake him to be a spy of the religious men who lived nearby, a device used by the writer to highlight the suspicion in which religious men held single women living alone. They ask him about the materials used for the creation of men. He replies, "I used the poison-fang of snakes; including the root to make teeth. To make the hand and toe nails, I used tiger claws. I used a donkey's brain, entirely to fill the brain cells

of men." and "I took heat from fire to create women, I used only a piece of burning coal to make men." (Akhtar & Bhowmik, 2008, p. 31) Such caustic writing often led to excision of passages from her writings in further publications even in progressive journals.

Rokeya is also critical of women holding them responsible for their own subjugation. First published in Nabanoor in 1904 as "Our Degradation", "The Degradation of Indian Women" is an excised version of the earlier essay. Herein Rokeya criticises women for happily wearing emblems of slavery (jewellery and ornaments) especially those who wore so much gold that restricted their mobility. For them she writes "The body is like an inert lump, the mind more so." (Akhtar & Bhowmik, 2008, p. 11) Criticizing the over protectiveness of men she writes, "They imprison us in the cages of our hearts, depriving us of the ray of knowledge and pure air, thereby pushing us towards slow death." (Akhtar & Bhowmik, 2008, p. 9)

"The Worship of Women" is a piece of writing in the form of conversation between four fictitious women namely Jamila Begum, wife of a famous lawyer, Amena Begum, a widow, Kusumkumari Ray and Prabha Chatterjee, a Brahmo. The writer takes on the role of Mrs. Chatterjee in the conversational piece on the position of women in Hindu and Muslim society. Reading a piece from the magazine she says that the Hindu religion does treat its women with honour sparking off a debate among women who cite examples from ancient texts to assert the contrary. For example, Khana was a fourth century AD astrologer whose knowledge outshone that of her husband and her father in law and she was invited to the court of King Vikramaditya. On the way, her husband cut off her tongue, "rewarding" her with death. The women also condemn the present times for the practices of child marriage and *purdah*. They can't decide on who's the creator of *purdah*, Hindu or Muslim, however, what they do know is that women can't leave *purdah* until men learn to be decent and courteous. Here Rokeya hits out at men and presents an alternative to the hitherto misogynistic representations of women.



A Brief Commentary

In order to understand the life of Rokeya for the present paper, Sudhir Kakar's examination of the psycho social matrix that informs the development of feminine identity in India is quite pertinent. Kakar (2007, 2011) asserts that Indian society exhibits a preference for the birth of a male child in the family as opposed to that of a female one for ritual and economic reasons. While there is a lot of social devaluation of girls, love by the mother helps boost their self esteem and girls are also treated as Lakshmi which are some redeeming aspects of their lives. Meanwhile, women in the family take it upon themselves to socialise the young girls into female roles and also provide them with a refuge from the patriarchal sphere of influence. It is in this situation, then, that the construction and circumscription of the identities of Indian women takes place.

Besides the social diktats there are ideals of womanhood enshrined in the mythologies and upheld by the society at large. Kakar also emphasises that "...her identity is wholly defined by her relationship to others...

First, she is a daughter to her parents.

Second, she is wife to her husband (and daughter-in-law to his parents).

Third, she is a mother to her sons (and daughters)." (Kakar, 2007, pp.56-57)

In late childhood, a deliberate inculcation of the feminine roles and virtues starts taking place and the Sita ideal of womanhood (to be obedient, chaste and virtuous) is upheld for the young girls to aspire to. Thoroughly trained in the Sita ideal at a young age, the young girl prepares to get married. However, the "...whole process of feminine adolescent development is normally incomplete at the time an Indian girl gets married and is transplanted from her home into the unfamiliar, initially forbidding environment of her in-laws..." and "...she must resolve the critical issues of feminine identity in unfamiliar surroundings without the love and support of precisely those persons whom she needs most." (Kakar, 2011) Wifehood is characterised by serving the marital family endlessly while being looked upon with

suspicion as the source of discord in the family and in the hope of giving birth to a male heir which helps raise the status of the young daughter in law. Motherhood brings about an improvement in the lives of women and provides them with a reason (the child) to centre their existence around. Thus, the psycho-social reality of Indian women and the development of feminine identity in India are circumscribed by relational identity in each phase. As far as adolescence is concerned, according to Kakar (2011) "... the identity struggle of the adolescent Indian girl is confounded by the coincidence of marriage, the abrupt and total severance of the attachments of childhood, and her removal from all that is familiar to a state of lonely dependency upon a household of strangers" (p 76). As we have seen above, the Bengali women's lives followed the same trajectory as outlined by Kakar.

If one looks at Rokeya's life then it too followed the orbit of the development of feminine identity as delineated by Kakar (2011), until the death of her husband. What followed then was a period of intense negotiation for an identity which was more than mandated by patriarchy. It was the identity of not just a woman but that of a school teacher, a writer, a feminist and women's activist. Her works are symptomatic of the fact that the socially unacknowledged stage of adolescence found a mental outlet in the form of her writings characterised by deep rooted utopian formulations and a zeal for reformation. Adolescence is also a period of rebellion and Rokeya through her works rebels against the conservative Muslims and all religious leaders bent upon shackling the women to the hearth by fashioning utopias of real and fantastic natures.

In her works, Rokeya has argued for an identity for women which goes beyond the relational identity of daughter, wife and mother. While her contemporaries were singing paeans, in a manner of speaking, in the favour of education as it helped women run their homes better, Rokeya exhorted women to get educated in order to earn for themselves and become independent. Sister Sara of Ladyland in "Sultana's Dream" and Siddika/Zainab of *Padmarag* (Rokeya's famous and partly autobiographical novel) shun the foreclosed identity offered by nineteenth century and early



twentieth century Bengali patriarchy. What we witness in Rokeya's works are women characters, who though victims of their circumstances, have taught themselves to rise above it and forged a deep sense of companionship with other other downtrodden women. Her female characters don't stay in the "character" prescribed by patriarchy. Rather they devote themselves to the service of humankind attaining self fulfilment along the way.

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Acknowledgments: I wish to express my gratitude towards Prof. Namita Ranganathan for expressing interest in my work and helping me identify the contours of adolescence relevant to this paper. I also wish to thank Ms. Swati Sehgal for suggesting to locate the absence of normative adolescence in the life of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and for giving valuable inputs.



Reflections / My Voice



सरकारी नीतियों का अतिथि शिक्षकों के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर प्रभाव

कु.भानु प्रिया

अतिथि शिक्षक, सामाजिक विज्ञान

शिक्षाविदों के अनुसार एक शिक्षक के लिए परमावश्यक है कि वह उन सभी छात्राओं छात्रों की मनरुस्थिति को समझे जिन्हें वो पढ़ा रहा है अथवा सिखा रहा है। वर्तमान समय में दिल्ली सरकार के केवल प्रतिभा विकास विद्यालयों को छोड़ कर अधिकतर स्कूलों में छात्र-छात्राओं की संख्या 75-110 प्रति कक्षा है। प्रत्येक शिक्षक एक दिन में कम से कम 5 कक्षाओं में जाता ही है और एक सप्ताह में लगभग 700 विद्यार्थियों से रू-ब-रू होता है। यह संख्या 700 इसलिए है क्योंकि स्कूल में अनुशासन बनाए रखने के लिए प्रत्येक शिक्षक को विषय के अतिरिक्त अन्य कक्षाओं में भी जाना पड़ता है। आंकड़ों के अनुसार सरकारी स्कूल साल के 365 दिन में 220 दिन लगते हैं, इन्हीं 220 दिनों में शिक्षक को समय-सारणी के अनुरूप अपने विषय को भी पढ़ाने के साथ-साथ पाठ्यक्रम भी पूरा करना होता है जो कि उनका एक शिक्षक के तौर पर मुख्य काम है। इसके आलावा शिक्षक को अन्य काम, जैसे परीक्षा के लिए प्रश्न-पत्र तैयार करना, परीक्षा परिणाम तैयार करना एवं अन्य कागजी काम भी निपटाने होते हैं। इस पूरे काम को करने के साथ शिक्षक से अपने सभी शिक्षार्थियों की मानसिकता को समझने की अपेक्षा करना हास्यास्पद लगता है। इस प्रकार की अपेक्षा एक शिक्षक की मनोस्थिति को किस हद तक बिगाड़ सकती है, इस पर किसी का ध्यान नहीं जाता। जबकि वास्तविकता यह है कि बालकों की मनरुस्थिति को समझने के लिए शिक्षक का स्वयं का मानसिक स्वास्थ्य ठीक होना अपरिहार्य है। वह तभी शिक्षार्थियों के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य एवं विकास को समझ सकता है जब स्वयं उसका मानसिक स्वास्थ्य बेहतर रहे, किंतु एक व्यक्ति से कंप्यूटर की भांति यादशक्ति की अपेक्षा करना क्या उचित है? मैं अपने व्यक्तिगत अनुभव से कह सकती हूँ कि ऐसा करना उचित नहीं है, क्योंकि मशीन की भांति काम करते-करते स्वयं एक शिक्षक मशीन की तरह संवेदनहीन होने की स्थिति में पहुंच जाता है या पहुंच चुका है।

खेलते-कूदते बालकों का विद्यालय में प्रवेश इसलिए कराया जाता है कि उनका सम्पूर्ण विकास हो सके व वे चिंतनशील नागरिक बन सकें। शिक्षकों की जिम्मेदारी में इन विद्यार्थियों को कक्षा पहली से कक्षा बारहवीं तक विद्यालयों में सीखने-सीखाने के प्रक्रिया से गुजरना पड़ता है ताकि उसका भविष्य जीविकोपार्जन के क्षेत्र में सुरक्षित हो सके। समाज के

भविष्य को सुरक्षित करने एवं राष्ट्र के निर्माण करने वाले इन असहाय शिक्षकों की दुर्दशा पर न तो प्रशासन का ध्यान जाता है, न नीति बनाने वालों का, न शिक्षाविदों का, न मनोवैज्ञानिकों, व न दर्शनशास्त्रियों का।

इन उपर्युक्त बातों को कहने का तात्पर्य आज की शिक्षा प्रणाली को दोष देना नहीं है बल्कि आपका ध्यान उस अन्याय की ओर आकर्षित करना है जिसे आज का शिक्षक झेल रहा है। इस अन्याय के बावजूद भी इस शिक्षक ये उम्मीद की जाती है कि वह अपनी आवाज को दबा कर केवल दी गयी जिम्मेदारियों का निर्वाह करता रहे। प्रशासन भी शिक्षक को केवल इस नजर से देखता है कि 6 घंटे काम के बदले ये तनखा प्राप्त करते हैं और इनका कोई अधिक काम तो होता नहीं है।

कोई तो इन शिक्षकों के साथ वैचारिक और मानसिक स्तर पर न्याय करने की पहल करे! पिछले 6 सालों में, क्षेत्रफल की दृष्टि से, दिल्ली जैसे छोटे प्रदेश में सरकारी स्कूलों में रित्त शिक्षक पदों की संख्या बढ़ते-बढ़ते 22000 तक पहुंच गई है। सरकार का शिक्षा विभाग इन रिक्तियों को भरने के बजाये शिक्षित व योग्य दैनिक मजदूरों से काम ले रही है। आप यह न सोचें कि मजदूर जैसे अनपढ़ या कम पढ़े लिखे लोग सरकारी स्कूलों में शिक्षा देने का काम कर रहे हैं अपितु यह मजदूर वर्ग सुशिक्षित हैं और कम से कम 12वीं डाइट या उसके बराबर का डिप्लोमा, स्नातक बी.एड. स्नातकोत्तर बी.एड. जैसी उपाधियों से विभूषित होने के साथ साथ सी.टी.ई.टी पास है। इन दिहाड़ी मजदूरों की परिस्थितियां आम मजदूरों से कहीं अधिक बुरी हैं। आम मजदूरों की इच्छा हो तो वह रविवार, गांधी जयंती, होली, क्रिसमस, ईद या अन्य राष्ट्रीय पर्वों पर गुजर बसर करने के लिए 600-700 रुपये कमा सकते हैं, लेकिन दिहाड़ी मजदूर के पास यह अवसर भी नहीं होता क्योंकि स्कूल बंद होते हैं और इन शिक्षकों को केवल उतने दिन की ही मजदूरी दी जाती है जितने दिन स्कूल खुलता है। इसी दिहाड़ी मजदूर को आप अतिथि शिक्षक (Guest Teacher) के नाम से जानते हैं।

स्कूलों के कामकाज का बढ़ता बोझ और विद्यार्थियों की अधिक संख्या ने विद्यालयी वातावरण एवं शिक्षकों को भी शारीरिक व मानसिक रूप से अस्वस्थ बना दिया है। परन्तु कम वेतन में अतिथि शिक्षक को अपने घर



खर्च की ही चिंता सताती है और यदि वह अगर कहीं किसी बीमारी का शिकार हो जाएँ तो समस्या और बढ़ जाती है। इन दिहाड़ी मजदूरों के साथ समस्या केवल उस वेतन भर की नहीं है जिसमें उसके परिवार का गुजर-बसर ठीक से नहीं चल पाता है, बल्कि उस अपमान और अभद्र व्यवहार की भी है जिसमें उसे खुद के अस्तित्व पर सवाल नजर आने के साथ-साथ अपनी काबिलियत पर भी शक होने लगता है। उसके मन में पैदा होती हीन भावना या तो उस पर प्रश्न चिन्ह लगा देती है, या फिर बदले की भावना उसे मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को बिगाड़ती है। लेकिन इन सभी बिन्दुओं पर न तो शिक्षा विभाग ध्यान देता है ना ही सरकार का ध्यान इस ओर जाता है। ऐसी परिस्थितियाँ इंगित करती हैं कि सरकार कहीं ना कहीं निजी क्षेत्र को बढ़ावा देना चाहती है और अपनी संवैधानिक जिम्मेदारी को नहीं निभाना चाहती क्योंकि इस क्षेत्र से सरकार को कोई विशेष आय नहीं होती।

एक ओर वर्तमान शिक्षक समाज के सामने रोजगार-अनिश्चितता और बेरोजगारी है तो दूसरी ओर इस अतिथि शिक्षक के सामने इस अनिश्चित मजदूरी की भी प्रतियोगिता है। एक ओर जहाँ यह स्वीकार किया जाता है कि मात्र अंको से प्रतिभा का मापन नहीं किया जा सकता, वहीं दूसरी ओर अतिथि शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति हेतु बनाई जाने वाली मैरिट सूची अंको के आधार पर बनाई जाती है जो कि उनके शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में अर्जित किए गए अनुभव को बेकार साबित कर देती है और इस सूची में नाम न आने का डर इस अतिथि शिक्षक के मन में हमेशा बना रहता है।

इन शिक्षकों की मजदूरी की अधिकतम आयु सीमा 40 वर्ष है, जिसके बीतने के बाद ये शिक्षक स्थायी नियुक्ति के पात्र भी नहीं रहे जाते। माना जाता है कि हर साल 20 वर्ष में एक नई पीढ़ी तैयार हो जाती है। पिछले 6 सालों में दिल्ली के सरकारी स्कूलों में 22000 रिक्तियाँ तैयार हो चुकी हैं जिन पर इन सुशिक्षित मजदूरों को स्थायी नहीं किया जा रहा है। संविदा शिक्षक सुशिक्षित मजदूर के रूप में एक ऐसा आयु वर्ग है जो बेरोजगारी की पंक्ति में मौजूद है।

सरकार अपने विद्यालयों में इस तरह का माहौल क्यों बना के रख रही है? इन संविदा अध्यापकों के लिए सरकार की नियति व नीति क्या है? क्या कभी इन संविदा अध्यापकों को स्थायी किया जाएगा? मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि सरकार इस विषय पर गंभीर नहीं है क्योंकि इस शिक्षित बेरोजगारी का सरकार को पूरा लाभ मिल रहा है जिस कारण से संविदा अध्यापकों का शोषण किया जा रहा है। सरकार ना तो इन संविदा अध्यापकों को स्थायी कर रही है ना ही इन रिक्त पड़े पदों को स्थायी रूप से भर रही है जिसका असर सीधे तौर पर शिक्षार्थी पर पड़ रहा है। वर्ष में दो माह के अवकाश के समय ये शिक्षक बेरोजगार होते हैं तथा ऐसे में ट्यूशन केंद्रों के लिए कार्य करने के लिए मजबूर हो जाते हैं। ना ही इन्हें किसी प्रकार की PF बचत और ना ही किसी प्रकार की उपचार सुविधा

उपलब्ध है। ये पूंजीवाद का अकेला पहलू नहीं है। इसका एक पहलू और भी है, जिसे कुछ हिसाब-किताब द्वारा समझा जा सकता है। विद्यालय साल में 220 दिन लगते हैं। दिल्ली के अतिथि शिक्षक 22000 पदों पर कार्यरत हैं, जिसे सरकारी आकड़ों में 17000 बताया जाता है। एकजल्ज्कीएकदिन की औसत तनखाह 800 रुपये है। प्रति अतिथि शिक्षक की औसत मासिक आय = कमाई के वार्षिकदिन/प्रति दिन वेतन/12 महीने = $220 \times 800 / 12 = 14666.66$ — जबकि पे कमीशन के हिसाब से यह कम से कम 32000 रुपये मासिक हो जाते हैं। अब प्रशासन को एक मास में एक अतिथि शिक्षक से बचत होती है = $32000 - 14666 = 17334$ रुपये एक मास में 17000 अतिथि शिक्षकों में प्राप्त बचत = $17334 \times 17000 = 29,46,78,000$ —। एक मास की बचत लगभग 30 करोड़ है। वार्षिक का अनुमान स्वयं लगाया जा सकता है। इस धन में प्रशासन बड़े-बड़े 'विकास-कार्य' करता है। विद्यालयों में आए दिन नई-नई स्कीमें चालू करते हैं, राज्य में बड़े-बड़े प्लाई-ओवर बनते हैं और भी बहुत सारे काम होते हैं, जिन्हें टेंडर या ठेके पर दिया जाता है, जिनका उद्देश्य है खोखली कागजी कार्रवाई और वाहवाही। बात यहीं खत्म नहीं होती, इस प्रक्रिया के तहत प्रशासन उन सभी खर्चों से भी बच जाता है जो उसके कर्मचारी का हक है — 10.7: प्रोविडेंट फंड, ESI का वह खर्च जिसके तहत कर्मचारी सस्ती सेवा हासिल कर सकें, मातृत्व अवकाश और उस दौरान दिया जाने वाला वेतन आदि। इस तरह की और भी अधिकार हैं जिससे इन शिक्षकों को वंचित किया जा रहा है।

अगर बात भय, असुरक्षा और मानसिक द्वंद के विषय में की जाए तो समस्या एक नहीं अनेक हैं, हर पल अतिथि शिक्षकों के मन में डर बना रहता है की किसी भी पल कोई स्थाई टीचर प्रमोशन या ट्रांसफर लेकर उनके स्थान पर आ जाएगा और फिर वो बेरोजगार हो जाएगा। दोबारा नियुक्ति पाने के लिए उसे डीडी ऑफिस और प्लानिंग ब्रांच में धक्के खाने होंगे। जब तक नए सिरे से बनी मेरिट में उसका नाम नहीं आ जाएगा तब तक वह अपना घर खर्च कैसे चलाएगा। उसे हर पल डर सताता है की काम करते हुए उससे कोई गलती ना हो जाए नहीं तो बवंडर उठ खड़ा हो जाएगा अतिथि शिक्षक की गलती का हर्जाना सभी शिक्षकों को भुगतना होगा। जैसे शिक्षा मंत्री के नाम लिखे गए किसी प्रार्थना पत्र में अतिथि शब्द को गलत लिखा गया था तो शिक्षा मंत्री ने खुले मंच पर भरी मीडिया में अतिथि शिक्षकों की क्षमता पर सवाल खड़ा किया था एवं देश भर के सामने पूरे अतिथि शिक्षक समाज को अपमानित किया गया। जबकि 2014 में स्वयं शिक्षा विभाग ने एक सर्कुलर जारी किया जिसमें 5 सितंबर अध्यापक दिवस को 14 नवंबर (बाल दिवस) के नाम संबोधित किया गया था। बाद में इस घटना को गलती का नाम दिया गया। उनकी गलती मामूली सी चूक कहलाती है और अतिथि शिक्षक की



गलती पूरे अतिथि शिक्षक समूह का अपराध है।

एक वास्तविकता यह भी है कि इस अतिथि शिक्षक समाज में अपने विषय के ऐसे धुरंधर भी हैं जो स्थाई शिक्षकों के कान काटते हैं। इस काबलियत से जुड़ा एक तथ्य यह है कि जब विद्यालयों में किसी काम की पहल करने की बारी आती है तो गेस्ट टीचर आगे बढ़ कर काम करते हैं, हां इसकी एक वजह बेशक उनकी कम उम्र का होना भी है लेकिन जब उस पहल के बदले प्रशंसा की बारी आती है तो उसे स्थायी अध्यापक के हिस्से डाल दिया जाता रहा है क्योंकि सरकारी रिकॉर्ड में अतिथि शिक्षक परमानेन्ट एलिमेन्ट नहीं है बल्कि आने जाने वाला दैनिक मजदूर हैं। अधिकतर स्कूलों में देखा गया है कि स्कूल में एक रजिस्ट्रारों में विद्यालय के कई कामों की ड्यूटी और इंचार्जशिप गेस्ट टीचर के नाम होती है जबकि सरकारी रिकॉर्ड और ऑनलाइन विवरण में उसके काम का नाम किसी स्थाई शिक्षक के सिर-माथे होता है। यह अतिथि शिक्षक नाम का प्राणी वह मूक मशीन बनकर रह गया है जिसके अनेक संचालक हैं और अपनी सुविधानुसार इसको घुमाते चलाते हैं। सोचनीय है कि एक प्राणधारी के साथ मशीनों जैसा व्यवहार उसके तर्क-विवेक और सुख-चौन को किस हद तक प्रभावित करता होगा? उसके अंदर कितने क्रोध और ग्लानि के भाव को पैदा करता होगा?

तनाव उस समय भी कम नहीं होता जब स्थायी टीचर अपनी गलतियों का प्रशासन के कोप भाजन से बचने के लिए अतिथि शिक्षकों को कहता है घुमहारा क्या है, आज इस स्कूल में और कल दूसरे में। तुम्हारा रिकॉर्ड कौन रखता है? तुम प्रिंसीपल की डांट खा लोगे तो क्या फर्क पड़ेगा? हमारी परमोशन और नौकरी पर बन आएगी। किसी दूसरे की गलती को जबरदस्ती अपने सिर इसलिए ले लेना ताकि वह कुछ दिन स्कूल के बीच बना रहे, कितनी मानसिक तकलीफ देता है, इसका अंदाजा लगा पाना भी बहुत मुश्किल है। यह तनाव सेशन के अंत में चरम पर होता है जब कक्षा के विद्यार्थी उसे कहते हैं प्लीज छुट्टीयों के बाद भी हमें पढ़ाने जरूर आना। सेशन के अंत में मानसिक पीड़ा इसलिए भी बढ़ जाती है क्योंकि अपने प्रियों (विद्यार्थियों) से बिछड़ना हर किसी को असहज होता है। विद्यालयी राजनीति माहौल में, चाहे सह-कर्मि और प्रिंसीपल फर्क जरूर करें लेकिन विद्यार्थी अपने गुरुजनों को उनकी काबलियत और प्रेम के आधार पर सम्मान देते हैं। जिस अतिथि शिक्षक को विद्यार्थियों से मिलने वाले अधिक सम्मान की कीमत सह-कर्मियों की चिड़ की भावना से चुकानी पड़ती है उसे अपने सम्मान और विद्यार्थियों दोनों से दूर होना पड़ता है।

विशेष रूप से एक विधवा, एक तालकशुदा, और एक विकलांग अतिथि अध्यापक की ओर से देखें तब उनकी बातों और परिस्थितियों से उनके मन में नौकरी जाने का भय किसी भी सामान्य शिक्षक से और भी कहीं ज्यादा दिखाई देता है। इस वातावरण को बदलने के लिए विद्यार्थियों के

नजरिए से चाहे जितनी भी नीतियां बना दी जाएं, लेकिन जब तक शिक्षकों का मानसिक द्वंद खत्म नहीं किया जाएगा और मानसिक रूप से स्वस्थ बनाया जा सकेगा तब तक शिक्षा विभाग की नीतियां प्रशासन और सरकारों की कोशिशें व्यर्थ ही साबित होंगी।

व्यक्ति पूंजी इसलिए अर्जित करता है कि उसका जीवन सुखपूर्वक व्यतीत हो सके लेकिन इस पूंजीवादी युग में हमारा प्रशासन, नीति निर्माता आदि इस तरह प्रभावित होते चले गए हैं कि मानव कल्याण की परिभाषा के साथ ही खिलवाड़ करने लगे हैं। इनके लिए किए गए फैसले और जारी किए गए नए नियम देश भर में फ़ैले सरकारी विद्यालयों को वास्तविक लाभ दें या न दें लेकिन उन तमाम विद्यालयों के मालिकों और उनमें पढ़ने वाले विद्यार्थी व उनके माता पिता के लाभ को ध्यान में रखकर जरूर बनाए जाते हैं, जिन व्यवस्थाओं को हम कॉन्वेन्ट, पब्लिक या प्राइवेट स्कूल के नाम से जानते हैं। CCE पैटर्न, पास करते जाने की नीति आदि सरकारी विद्यालयों में चाहे कारगर साबित न भी हो लेकिन रिहायशी स्कूलों के लिए फायदेमंद हर सूरत में साबित हुई है। इन नीतियों ने जहां गरीबों के बच्चों को सरकारी विद्यालय में इस कगार पर ला दिया है कि नवीं कक्षा में भी वह अपनी बात किसी भी एक भाषा में ठीक प्रकार से लिखने में समर्थ नहीं होते हैं, वहीं रईसों के बालक इन नीतियों का लाभ उठाकर डीप्रियां हासिल करके बड़ी-बड़ी पैतृक कंपनियों के मालिक बने फिरते हैं। इन नीतियों का उद्देश्य गरीबों को गरीब और अमीरों को अमीर बनाए रखना नहीं है तो क्या है?

आज का समाज पूंजीवादी है लेकिन पूंजीवाद में भी अर्थशास्त्र के कुछ नियम हैं कि स्वस्थ शरीर, स्वस्थ मस्तिष्क और शिक्षा मिलकर अच्छा उत्पादन करती हैं। अतः शिक्षक जो शिक्षा ग्रहण करके आया है उसके शरीर और मस्तिष्क को स्वस्थ बनाए रखने का जिम्मा भी इस पूंजीवाद को उठाना ही चाहिए। अन्यथा नीतियां केवल कागजों और कॉन्वेन्ट स्कूलों तक ही सीमित रह जाएंगी।

सरकार का इस प्रकार का रवैया ये इंगित करता है कि कहीं सरकारी विद्यालयों में ऐसा माहौल इसलिए तो नहीं बनाया जा रहा है कि आने वाले दिनों में इन विद्यालयों को लोक-निजी-साझेदारी के अंतर्गत (NGO) गैर सरकारी संगठनो या निजी क्षेत्र कम्पनियों को दे दिया जाए। यदि ऐसा नहीं है तो सरकार अपने विद्यालयों को इस तरह अनदेखा क्यों करती? संविदा अध्यापकों की ओर क्यों ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता है? अब इन अध्यापकों को बाँध कर रखने की एक नई तकनीक का उपयोग किया जा रहा है कि इनके संविदा का प्रत्येक वर्ष नवीनीकरण किया जाता है। जिससे इन अध्यापकों को एक और वर्ष काम मिल जाता है परन्तु इस बेरोजगारी में वे इस बात को अनदेखा कर देते हैं कि उनकी पात्रता में एक और वर्ष कम हो गया है।



Acceptance: Need and Desire

Ms. Vidushi Dahiya

3rd Year, Gargi College, University of Delhi

The uniqueness of a person is sometimes lost while fulfilling the need and desire to be accepted. The beliefs, faith, opinions, personal interests, etc., which make one unique, seem meaningless as soon as one views oneself as a part of a group. This I have learnt as a result of my experiences of teenage years. My horror of not being liked by people was my greatest concern. I dreaded desertion, which acted as a catalyst in the attempt to change myself for someone else. One can ask about the reasons for teenagers like me to be desired and accepted, but actually, there is no one reason. For me, the main reason was that being a part of a group somehow made me feel safe, even though there were negative impacts of it, which either I ignored or I was not aware of. Adults don't understand how much the feeling of being rejected and of exclusion affects a teenager's mental well-being. Our loneliness may take severe forms like depression, self-inflicted pain, and suicidal tendencies.

When I began my higher studies in a reputed college in Delhi, I felt being completely out of my comfort zone, which made me vulnerable, I felt the need to change myself so that I can be considered to be on an equal level with other people. In a college, we, teenagers, hail from different backgrounds and come in contact with each other and we form deep relationships and friendships. We unknowingly imbibe each other's habits and we are not very sure of how we should be and how not to be. Asked by our best friend even once to do something, we feel unable to say no. The result is that we start liking things that the other person likes and in this process we lose our own self. Such peer pressure may lead to substance abuse and, being a college student, I

have seen numerous incidents of the same. Teenagers get dragged to such limits that either they succumb to the pressure or feel lost and lonely. Thus, being in a group where people smoke and drink on a regular basis makes one prone to such behaviour. Generally, it feels difficult to refuse and easy to accept such habits, even if it is in the name of 'just trying'. These are exciting times where we meet friends-of-friends-of-friends, we experiment, and we 'have fun'.

I have never felt so much in need of support, either emotional or financial, and we expect this support from both the sides- friends and parents. Thus, in many ways, we play a dual role: we act differently with parents and often, in completely opposite ways with friends. We start hiding important details about our lives from our parents and our friends become an escape from the constant poking of our parents. We wish to get accepted by our parents by lying to them and, at the same time, we wish to be accepted by our friends by wooing them with our involvement with them in various activities and actions. The result is that we teenagers indulge in more and more lying to get away from our own actions, thereby, creating more chaos, which later becomes sort of difficult to resolve. In this process, we teenagers complicate our life so much so that sometimes the outcomes are disastrous. We often get alienated from both family and friends.

The fact is that teenage years are very sensitive and we want all our wishes to be fulfilled. When parents pressurize us to do something, we rebel; when they give us freedom, we feel lonely; when they decide for us, we deny; and when we are asked to decide for ourselves, we are confused.



Similarly, romantic relationships need our serious considerations. When in relationships, we want to be accepted and appreciated by our partner. We believe that we get involved in relationships out of love. We intend to find someone who would give us both physical closeness and emotional strength. In this quest, we often get into both good and bad relationships. The understanding of right and wrong differs for everyone, but just to please the other person we might agree to indulge in activities that are generally unacceptable to us. We get over-involved with our partner and get fascinated by everything he/she does. Having dealt with a lot of relationships myself, I noticed myself changing with each relationship. It happened because every partner expected and desired a different version of me. Despite trying hard, sometimes, I felt that I was not able to match to my partner's expectations, which had an adverse effect on my self-esteem. I formed the perception that maybe I am not made for relationships and in fact, one of my friends even told me the same upfront. I even thought to myself that maybe I would never be able to truly love and be loved by someone. With this idea, I started disengaging from the idea of love so that any loss of love could not affect me negatively. There have been phases, when I have cried out of melancholy and pain of dissatisfaction in every single relationship. It was around this time that my parents also sensed that something is wrong with me. My mother kept on pestering me to share, but I didn't, as I feared that it might hurt her.

I ask myself a lot of times why do we not take the right decision at the right time. We turn so hasty while taking decisions in a relationship that we lose sight of right and wrong, and the main reason for this is we attach ourselves with the other person so much that we surrender ourselves to his/her wishes and fancies in the name of love. Personally, when I recognized the importance of self-worth and the need to be oneself, to resolve the complexities in life, I realized the consequence of my past relationships have been very severe as I had completely lost faith in relationships. I never

thought that being myself could be one simple solution to all the life problems others need to accept me as I am.

We teenagers at times may often indulge in objectionable practices in the name of pleasing people, friends, and partners, which includes stealing, sex, drugs, etc. to the extent that one may even ruin one's life. I wonder why we think that there is nothing wrong with, say drugs, when we all know how harmful drugs can be. We can trace how our perceptions change according to the people around us because believing in something and still doing the opposite is a difficult thing, but changing one's view completely is another, the latter is more harmful, as I have come to believe. When in relationships, partners reach to a great extent in pleasing each other, and sex is an aspect of it, especially, unwanted or unplanned. We teenagers take big steps without consulting elders, like taking contraceptive pills, without even knowing the kind of impact it can leave on their health. The primary concern these days should not be about the lack of knowledge about sex, because we know that websites and porn give a lot of wrong information, but rather it is about the thrill that we seek in doing things which we are told are wrong.

We must recognize our self-worth and why is it important that people accept us the way we are. When we realize the importance of ourselves it is generally too late and we've become a different person altogether. Doing risky things for the sake of adventure now seems nonsensical. It can have harsh consequences on the future life and mental health. Seeking support from family members or siblings is important. At times, some do consider going to a counsellor for solutions, but we do have a predilection towards friends for advice, generally because we are more open to our friends and can share basically anything with them without understanding that their knowledge is not too different from ours. Thus, choosing a right source for taking advice is important, which is decided by the extent to which we feel accepted.



A Portrayal of Adolescent Angst: How *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* Contributes to the Mental Well-Being Discourse

Ms. Ima Kazmi

Secondary School Teacher, The British School

Chbosky, Stephen. (1999). *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. New York: MTV Books/ Gallery Books.

"I am both happy and sad at the same time, and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be."
(p.2)

It is with these words that Charlie, Stephen Chbosky's protagonist from his novel, *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* (1999) introduces us to his narrative of loss and love, pain and pleasure and fears and desires that constitute his life as a quiet and reserved fifteen year old. And it is with these words that Chbosky's novel, right from its opening page, manages to articulate a fundamental truth of adolescent experience - that emotions don't lend themselves easily to neat categorisation; they revel in being messy and tumultuous, and are usually hard to make sense of, particularly if you are a teenager trying to cope with the myriad challenges of growing up and 'finding' yourself.

Adolescence constitutes that strange liminal space where change remains the only constant and where every single day comes armed with new challenges and discoveries. It is a stage of life marked by never-ending transitions, which inevitably extracts a mental and emotional toll from all those struggling to keep up with its vicissitudes and developments. Curiosity to experience new things, intertwined with a sense of vulnerability becomes a defining characteristic of this stage. Chbosky (1999) explores this in his novel through the journey of his protagonist as

well as through the story arcs of several other characters surrounding him. His novel, with its sensitive portrayal of the mental health concerns faced by its protagonist, has significantly broadened the scope within mainstream media for a discussion of socio-emotional development and psychological well-being of adolescents.

Since its publication, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) has been hailed for its role in enabling a conversation about mental health and wellness of adolescents, as well as derided for its over-sentimental and maudlin portrayal of teenage life. In the thirteen years that have passed between the publication of the book and the release of its film version in 2012, which, incidentally, was written and directed by the author Stephen Chbosky himself, it has continued to hold sway over large swathes of millennials who have identified with the protagonist's mental angst as well as with his inability to exert complete control over his own life. Throughout the novel, Charlie is urged by different characters to 'participate' more in life as opposed to being the eponymous 'wallflower' of the novel's title. This is one of the ways in which the novel posits an integral mental health-related concern at the heart of its narrative: *is it possible to ensure that the burden of unpleasant memories and the persistent anxiety of growing up do not obstruct the formation of a healthy sense of self, so that an individual can actively steer the course of his or her own journey across adolescent life?*

Childhood Trauma, Adolescent Anxiety

Charlie's story begins with his entry into high school, a world of many firsts - first crush, first



kiss, first dance - which, besides being a vital rite of passage for young individuals, can also be a world of peaking stress and anxiety. The readers soon find out that Charlie had spent some time undergoing psychiatric treatment in the last summer following the death of his best friend. By the time we meet our protagonist, this incident, combined with his repressed memories of his beloved Aunt Helen's death during his childhood, has already resulted in a mental breakdown. The novel dwells over the bond between a young Charlie and his mother's sister, Aunt Helen, who shifts into their house a few years prior to her untimely death as she was struggling to cope with a history of being physically abused. Part of the reason that her car accident leaves such an indelible mark on Charlie is the fact that she had been on her way to purchase two customary gifts that she bought for him (for Christmas and for his birthday) on Christmas eve when she gets hit by a truck. The pain of losing her is further compounded by the guilt that lodges itself in his psyche. It comes tumbling to the fore when his best friend, Michael, commits suicide following 'troubles' at home. But what truly precipitates Charlie's advent into anxiety and depression is the revelation that comes right at the end of the novel. Charlie had been sexually abused by his favourite adult, Aunt Helen when he was a little child, a fact that his mind has repressed so completely that it takes him two mental breakdowns and multiple anxiety attacks through the course of the novel before he can allow the memory to resurface.

The lingering impact of these events in his young life culminate in PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), a condition which develops after exposure to severe trauma. PTSD can be triggered by a range of traumatic experiences - war, natural disaster, a fatal accident, sexual abuse, assault, physical violence or childhood neglect. An individual suffering from PTSD often re-experiences the trauma, in the form of intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, chronic nightmares or recurrent hallucinations, which impede the enjoyment of a fulfilling life. Since trauma often results in repression of memories as a defence

mechanism, the individual is torn between the desire to suppress the memory of that incident and the inability to prevent oneself from re-living it at vulnerable moments. For Charlie, his trauma exists below the surface of his active consciousness, and some of its most painful aspects have entered what in psychiatric circles is termed as a "memory hole" (www.ptsd.va.gov) - a space akin to a black hole from which details of the source event cannot be recalled because the person does not want to remember them. A series of somatic and psychological triggers, including the substances he dallies with and the new relationships he forms, eventually lead to the extraction of those repressed memories.

Pressure and Angst: 'Perks' of Being a High-Schooler

Given his mental and emotional background, it is not a surprise that high school, with its numerous demands, turns out to be a domain of added stressors for Charlie. Chbosky uses minor characters as well as various episodes from Charlie's life to flesh out the contours of adolescent life in high school, stripping aside the glamour and breathless excitement adopted by most young-adult fiction to expose the rampant *cliquism*, bullying tendencies, abusive relationships, homophobia and heavy reliance on drugs and other psychotropic substances that pervade this world. At the beginning of his narrative, Charlie writes about Susan, the girl who was funny and friendly during middle school, but who no longer stops to say 'hi' to him. Having changed over the summer (which translates to 'having her braces taken off' and 'growing taller and prettier'), Susan seems to now enjoy the company (or empty adulation?) of groups of boys who hang around her. Susan had been close to Michael before his death, but refuses to acknowledge that, or even the fact that she is studying in the advanced English class, because she is too busy conforming to the 'pretty and popular' stereotype. While Susan is a minor character in the novel, without any great significance to the central plotline, Charlie's



insightful comments about her transformation (he says, “I think it's sad because Susan doesn't look as happy”(p.7), help in establishing the demands of adolescent life and how it can often lead to individuals suppressing their real identities in order to fit the socially-constructed categories of being 'cool' and 'popular'.

Another minor episode involves Sean-the-bully who threatens Charlie but instead ends up getting a good beating from him. While this could be any other incident where a bully gets his just desserts, in Chbosky's hands, the incident becomes multi-textured - first, on being threatened by Sean, Charlie points out, “He seemed pretty unhappy as well, and I told him so”(p.7), which is what angers Sean the most; second, after having hit Sean, Charlie cannot stop crying until his sister drives him back home. In one deft stroke, Chbosky manages to not only humanize the school bully, but also addresses the idea of bullying as itself being a symptom of mental and emotional distress. This episode brings into focus key aspects of Charlie's personality- his inherent tendency to justify the actions of others, his ability to spot signs of unhappiness in others even as he cannot analyse his own emotional distress, and his unexplained aggression which comes to the fore under extreme provocation.

The World of a Wallflower: Seeking Escape from Memory and Reality

Not all of Charlie's high school experiences are negative in nature. His interaction with his English teacher, Mr. Anderson, becomes a source of encouragement for him. Charlie turns out to be quite gifted in his response to literature and Mr. Anderson recognizes this by assigning him extra-curricular reading and writing tasks. For anyone who loves literature, the list of books that Mr. Anderson asks Charlie to read at different points in the novel - *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Great Gatsby*, *On the Road*, *The Stranger*, *A Separate Peace*, *Walden*, *This Side of Paradise*, *The Fountainhead* and *Hamlet*, among others- is highly interesting to note. Mr. Anderson, who urges Charlie to think of him as a friend and to

call him 'Bill' when they are outside the classroom, seems to understand Charlie's struggles with expressing himself and, thus, introduces him to literary counterparts who faced moral, emotional and existential challenges of their own. By bringing characters such as Atticus Finch, Holden Caulfield, Jay Gatsby, Howard Roark or Hamlet into Charlie's frame of reference, Mr. Anderson attempts to reassure Charlie that he is not alone in his predicament and that he can gain strength by relating to these conflicted literary figures. While the books play a motivational, almost therapeutic role in Charlie's life, they pose a different kind of challenge- by immersing him so completely in their fictional world, they enable Charlie to further escape from 'participating' in his actual life. He says, “It's strange because sometimes, I read a book, and I think I am the people in the book,”(p.28) which reinforces the idea put forth in Chbosky's novel that it can be counterproductive if people use thought to not participate in life.

Charlie has a propensity to recede into the background of his own life, to observe people and their actions, and to think about things rather than 'do' things. His friends refer to him as a 'wallflower', telling him that, “You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand.”(p.37) And while there are 'perks' of being a wallflower, there is also the fear that one may miss out on actually *living* through the moments that make up one's own life, particularly during adolescence. One of the ways in which Charlie's PTSD manifests itself is through his emotional numbness or a sense of detachment with his day-to-day life, whereby he avoids active involvement with the people around him or in the activities that high school life is made up of, perhaps in order to ensure the avoidance of any stimuli which could trigger a re-experiencing of his trauma. Books and music become his constant refuge, helping establish mental and emotional safety while allowing him the scope to withdraw and retreat. At one point in the narrative, when things get particularly difficult for Charlie, he writes, “I don't know if you've ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a thousand years. Or



just not exist. Or just not be aware that you do exist.”(p.94) On his way towards recovery, one of the pearls of wisdom that Charlie acquires is that “Standing on the fringes of life...offers a unique perspective. But there comes a time to see what it looks like from the dance floor.”(P.174) His journey of being an adolescent is not just his journey of being a wallflower, but also his journey of coming to terms with his fear and his pain, as well as with his longings and desires.

Adding further complexity to the novel's canvas is the storyline of Charlie's sister, who ends up being in an abusive relationship and ultimately has to undergo an abortion for an unwanted pregnancy. The first time that her boyfriend hits her, Charlie's sister, instead of putting up a fight or ending the relationship, gets spurred into greater physical intimacy with him - a reaction that puzzles and upsets Charlie. It can be counted among the many sexual encounters referred to in the novel containing elements of subjugation and force. It is important to note here that as a child, Charlie had been an unwilling witness to yet another sexual encounter - at a party thrown by his elder brother during their parents' absence from town which had soon descended into drunken chaos. Charlie narrates that his siblings had asked him to remain in his room, but a drunk high-school couple had made their way inside and despite Charlie's presence in the room, the boy had insisted on sexual intimacy. It is only much later, while narrating this incident to his friends, Charlie realizes that what he had witnessed had in fact been a rape. In the light of Charlie's traumatic past, these incidents acquire a menacing potency, inducing further fear and panic within him.

Adolescence: A Haven of Friendships or an Inferno of Drugs?

Two of the most interesting characters who contribute to Charlie's coming-of-age narrative are brother-sister duo, Patrick and Sam. They are seniors at his school who welcome him into their social circle, providing him with the security of steady friendship and unpretentious company, a rarity for him. Soon enough, Charlie develops

feelings for Sam, beginning his foray into the typical adolescent territory of unrequited love. Even when he finds himself pulled into a relationship with one of Sam's close friends, Mary Elizabeth, Charlie continues to long for Sam and this in fact creates rifts in their friendship. Sam's presence in Charlie's life is a source of happiness, something that even leads him to feeling 'infinite' in her company, but when the threat of losing her looms large (such as at the time when she graduates from school and is about to move away to college), his condition becomes particularly fragile. Parallel to this runs Charlie's friendship with Patrick, who happens to be in a secret relationship with the school's quarterback, Brad. However, given the fact that the book is set in 1991 and that homophobia was an even more potent phenomenon then than it is now, Patrick and Brad cannot publicly 'date' each other, and are forced into meeting illicitly, on the side-lines of parties and in deserted places. When Brad's father finds out about them, he beats his son following which, Brad not only shuns Patrick but even goes to the extent of verbally abusing him in front of his hyper masculine friends, perhaps to vent his frustration and self-loathing. Patrick, hitherto portrayed as a happy-go-lucky character, ends up becoming manically depressed, embracing the routine of drinks, drugs, and sex in order to fill the void.

While Sam and Patrick's friendship becomes a talisman for Charlie, lighting up an otherwise dreary existence, it also catapults the 15-year-old into a world of drinking, smoking and drugs. At the first party he attends with the duo, he ends up consuming a spiked brownie, and his 'stoned' condition becomes a source of amusement for the others. To their credit however, Sam and Patrick are not aware of this prank, and Sam is quite angry with her friends about this. Chbosky's novel has been criticized by many for its free-wheeling depiction of substance abuse, and on the grounds that adolescence isn't really the inferno that Chbosky presents it to be. The altered state of mind which Charlie experiences after using LSD or pot is used by Chbosky to hold up a mirror to the chaos and confusion that exist in his mind nearly every day.



Chbosky ties up his depiction of drug use with Charlie's slow and painful process of self-discovery- under the influence of drugs, Charlie attains a higher degree of honesty about his own feelings, though it isn't necessarily productive. On the whole, the rampant presence of drugs in Charlie's high-school world does end up discomfiting readers and leaves a dangerous aftertaste.

Addressing Mental Well-Being through Popular Culture

Considering the important position this novel occupies in the pop-cultural discourse regarding adolescent mental health and wellness, it is vital to note the epistolary format of the narrative. Charlie's story is narrated in his voice in the form of letters addressed to an unknown recipient, someone he believes would “listen and understand” (p.2). Chbosky deliberately makes Charlie address his letters to “*Dear friend*” in order to underline the idea that it is possible to articulate one's troubles, no matter how dense, to a receptive friend who promises not to judge or betray confidence. At the beginning, Charlie clarifies that he will withhold real names

throughout the letters, and omits enclosing a return address, because “you might figure out who I am, and I really don't want you to do that.”(p.2) This prompts readers to grapple with ideas of secrecy and confidentiality, and to acknowledge the value of communication (even if it is one-sided as in Charlie's case) as the first step towards articulation of mental angst. Through this epistolary structure, Chbosky both privileges the point of view of his protagonist as well as universalises his thoughts and concerns.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (1999) doesn't offer pathbreaking insights into depression and anxiety, nor is it a treatise on how to deal with a loved one's mental distress. Its contribution lies in the fact that it has been able to dispel some of the stigma surrounding mental and emotional disorders by creating a sensitive and engaging portrayal of a young character suffering from PTSD, providing many young readers with a point of reference. Charlie's character is fully fleshed out, never descending into caricaturish mawkishness and thus, holds up a beacon of light for all those willing to engage in a meaningful conversation about mental and psychological well-being.



The Hundred Languages of Children Towards 'Well-Being' of our Youngest Learners- Lessons from the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education

Ms. Suhasini Kanwar

Doctoral Research Scholar, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi.

The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education, by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini and George Forman. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey, 1993. Pages 411.

The Hundred Languages of Children is a book that attempts to explain what the Reggio Emilia approach to education is all about. Started in 1963, by Loris Malaguzzi, this approach was his response to a growing disagreement with church controlled, didactic approach to young children's learning and development. The book begins by describing the historical and political context, which gave rise to this pedagogy and explains how one town - that of Reggio Emilia, came together to raise and educate its children. The book explains the 'hundred languages of children' which is a metaphor for the various ways in which children learn and express their learning, and voices concern over school's inability to identify and cater to these differences.

Rooted in the social constructivist philosophy, the book details the approach towards helping children, from 0-6 years, make meaning of the world around them. It elaborates with the help of examples, how children learn best when they are left to themselves, to discuss with each other and choose what they want to learn and how. This is done by way of self-composed 'projects' which children as young as 3 years of age conceptualize and execute. As a reader of the book, one could be skeptical of this, but I had the opportunity to visit

the town of Reggio Emilia in Italy to learn about their approach and observe their classrooms in April 2016. Much to my amazement, I witnessed little children engage in dialogue, not just communication, deciding, arguing even convincing each other about various topics in a project. Not just that, I saw them construct meaning for themselves with little or no help from the *pedagogista*, their teachers. Student collaboration, community involvement, student autonomy in terms of choice and pacing are some of the tenets that the book elaborates.

While so many facets of the approach, written about in the book, need to be understood and reflected upon, one tenet that particularly struck a chord with me and which I shall discuss in detail in this article, is the focus of the Reggio Emilia approach on creating 'safe' spaces for young children, to scaffold learning. Throughout the book, the idea of creating caring and safe environments comes up repeatedly. Environments where little children feel physically and emotionally safeguarded are considered caring and safe spaces. The book explains how establishing a sense of well-being, helps the children take responsibility for their learning and engagement and subsequently leads to not just self-directed learning but also good behavior.

This strong commitment to children's safety and well-being comes from a 'rights' based approach to education. Sample this-



Children have the right to have friends, otherwise they do not grow too well.

Children have the right to live in peace.

To live in peace means to be well, to live together, to live with things that interest us, to have friend, to think about flying.

If a child does not know, she has the right to make mistakes. It works because after she sees the problem and the mistakes she made, then she knows.

(The Hundred Languages of Children, page 135)

The above statements give an insight into how students' well-being and care is manifested well beyond physical spaces and is rooted in the approach's ideology. Care as a concept extends to the smallest of activities in school. Be it making friends, the freedom to argue with them, the choice to make mistakes or the right to refuse to do work on a particular day, everything is legitimate. All these are seen as critical to creating caring environments, which in turn is considered the crucible for learning.

The book elaborates how the feeling of being valued is necessary for children to learn. Children, especially young children, are very sensitive and first and foremost need a sense of security to be able to immerse themselves in any construction of knowledge. Safety and care create a supportive environment in learning which involves 'partnering' with children rather than judging or evaluating them against set norms.

Children must feel that the whole school, including the space, materials and projects, values and sustains their interaction and communication (Rinaldi, 1990).

(The Hundred Languages of Children, page 137)

Infact, the book goes one step ahead in advocating choice as a pre requisite for learning and advocates giving all children the freedom to choose what they want to study and how to study and even for how much time. In the Reggio schools, the teachers know how to listen to children, how to allow them to take initiative, and yet how to guide them in productive ways. There is no race to achieve pre-determined standards and yet the dedication of the teachers, parents and most importantly the children ensures that work of quality will result.

What is it then that makes the Reggio approach so effective? How are such young children able to take charge of their learning? It is through the 'caring' environment being provided to the children.

So, how can we show the children that we care? The book elaborates different elements which I have clubbed under three broad areas:

- Physical Spaces
- Time
- Documentation of work

Physical Spaces as an element of safety and care

The book elaborates how physical spaces are considered a significant educational tool and a lot of time is spent in planning them. There are no classrooms and children are free to walk in and out of the many rooms. They pick their room based on the activity they would be conducting. There is no fixed seating either. Large windows, pleasing furnishings, green plants and open kitchens all contribute to a sense of serenity and discovery. An 'Atelier' or open space where children explore with clay, paint, markers etc is a sort of art studio. Children have access to all sorts of materials and are free to sit on chairs, rugs – whatever they choose. Even the ceilings are not spared and are used to display different types of aerial sculptures. Students' work is incorporated in classrooms and hallways in the form of large dramatic displays and this shows the children that the adults around them,



take their ideas seriously. There are no cartoons or printed charts on the walls, instead an effort is made to draw attention to objects from their daily routine. Like the display of toothbrushes or the frequent use of mirrors. All Reggio Emilia schools have large play grounds since they feel it is essential for children to spend time to connect with nature.

Spaces are seen as 'containers' which house interaction, exploration and learning. Space is also seen as having educational "content" (Filippini, 1990, cited in *The Hundred Languages of Children*, p. 138). Physical space for learning is not limited to the four walls of the school building. Rather the children are regularly taken to visit and explore the neighbourhood and the community. This makes space a very fluid concept. Spaces are organised such that they themselves facilitate learning. In fact, the environment is considered the 'third teacher' (the Reggio classroom has two teachers otherwise). Like the two human teachers, the environment is also supposed to be flexible and have the ability to incorporate frequent modifications by the children. Therefore, physical spaces are not static. Rather they scaffold student learning by providing opportunities for different activities and promoting choices. All this contributes to a sense of well-being and security in children. Children feel respected and acknowledged. When children feel acknowledged they learn better. While we are always mindful about the aesthetics and safety requirements of the physical space in our schools, this book highlights the role of the physical space as a learning aid.

Time as a concept for care.

The book also talks about the environment as a living, changing system. In a Reggio school, one can see (and having visited them, I can vouch for this) a connection between space and time. Physical spaces like the classroom are arranged differently everyday. This helps the children understand that nothing is static and spaces change

with time and context.

Time is also presented as something we organise, rather than chase. There is no hurry and students are not forced to complete tasks in a certain time frame. Rather all the projects they engage in, are long term, timelines of which they decide by themselves. This unhurried sense of pace, helps children feel safe and comfortable to engage authentically in what they are learning. Moreover, working at their own pace boosts little children's confidence and self-esteem, while rigid time and structure based systems inadvertently foster a sense of inadequacy in children.

Another facet of time is that the same teacher remains with the children for three years. She therefore understands the children very well. This also adds to a sense of comfort and familiarity in the minds of the children. The relationships children forge are trustworthy, genuine and long term. Also of importance is the fact that the Reggio schools are open from 9 am to 4 pm, and therefore, children eat, sleep and play –all in the school premises. So the school is not seen as different from home, or as a formal institution rather it is seen as an extension of home breaking down physical spatial barriers to learning.

Despite their best intent, teachers in our pre-schools struggle with managing time. While Indian pre-schools' format may not allow the same working hours, could we consider possibilities such as moving a teacher, with her class, to the next level? Could we attempt to let children decide their timelines for themselves? This would require a fine balancing act.

Documentation of students' work as demonstrators of care

The book suggests how to make a child feel ownership for school. A tremendous quantity of the children's work is exhibited all around the school. It's almost like the children have designed their schools. They choose what they want to make. Then they choose where and how to display it.



Displays include students' work samples, photographs documenting the process of learning, description of activities, knowledge constructed etc. When a child sees his/her work displayed, he/she begins to identify with the space. When children begin to identify with and love the space they work in, they look forward to spending their time there. They look forward to doing things there. And that is half the battle won. Doesn't learning begin with motivated, engaged children?

Displays serve not just an aesthetic purpose, but give the children a sense of belonging. They also serve as records of the process of learning and development. Records which parents, teachers and children refer to, time and again, to plan further. Significantly these records help the teacher reflect on the entire process of learning and also throw up professional development needs. The Reggio schools demonstrate how documentation doesn't have to be a meaningless and tiresome activity for the teacher, rather the children and teacher can get together to document their learning journeys. And the process can be enriching for students, parents and teachers alike.

Key Takeaways-

The book charms a reader by suggesting simple practices that positively impact the well-being and learning of young children. To summarise the points discussed in this article-

- Children have the right to be happy. Happy children will learn better and therefore it is our responsibility as teachers to create an environment that supports children's happiness.
- Environments in which children feel physically and emotionally safe, support their sense of well-being and bring happiness.
- Physical spaces can also lend themselves to flexibility and learning. Using a little bit of imagination, a teacher can transform the classroom that intimidates, to a

welcoming space that provides a context for learning.

- Every small gesture of the teacher, which may seem insignificant to the adult mind can potentially contribute to establishing emotional well-being in children. Some gestures like displaying children's work, asking and taking their opinion into consideration, giving them the freedom to make choices in the classroom- go a long way in establishing a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Conclusion:

The Hundred Languages of Children explains how schools are stifling students' creativity and expression by not recognising the plurality of their expression or the 'hundred' languages of children. The book talks about how the Reggio Emilia approach is testimonial to the fact that all children need is a safe, healthy, loving and nurturing environment and the rest of the 'learning' the children can take charge of by themselves.

The Hundred Languages of Children is a lovely read. Compiled as an anthology of interviews and discussions with teachers and other members of the Reggio Emilia Approach fraternity, it gives insights into many critical components of effective early childhood teaching- learning. I have just elaborated one of the many elements and would urge readers to spend time and read the entire book.

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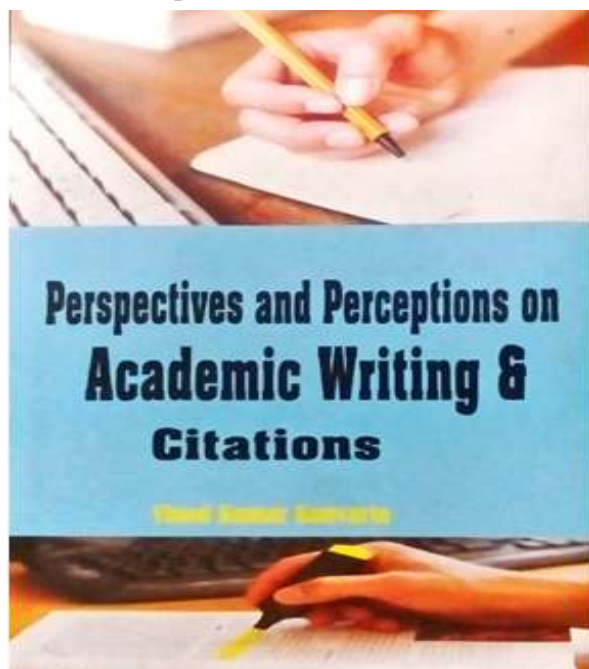


Book Summary: Perspectives and Perceptions on Academic Writing and Citations

Kanvaria, V.K. (Ed.) (2016). Perspectives and Perceptions on Academic Writing and Citations. New Delhi: VL Media Solutions.

The book focuses on the processes and styles of academic writing. It has been divided into three main sections that trace the journey of academic writing. The first two chapters present an introduction to academic writing, highlighting the need for academic writing. It emphasises the need for citation, elaborating upon concepts of plagiarism, copywriting and paraphrasing, among others.

The seven chapters in the second section focus on



academic writing and the key areas of foci in it. In the third chapter, the various types of academic writing have been briefly discussed. This chapter also focuses on citing social media in academic

research. The chapter by Rajput presents the process of academic writing, also presenting a structure of writing that can serve as a guide for researchers. The next chapter serves a useful purpose by distinguishing between personal and academic writing. It also presents the principles of academic writing and elaborately discusses various citation styles. Chapter Six focuses on APA, the most popularly used citation style, and presents useful examples to various kinds of citations. Chapter Seven addresses the important issues of academic integrity, copyright infringement and plagiarism. The final chapter in this section targets beginning researchers, introducing them to frequently used terms that are often not understood. These include discussions on indices, citations, and impact factor.

In the concluding section and chapter, the editor has presented an analysis of data collected on opinions on academic writing and citation. Analysis of individual questions on academic writing in an opinionnaire has been presented through bar diagrams, followed by an overall discussion of the same.

The book is useful for not just beginning researchers but serves as a useful resource for academic writing in general. In contemporary times that are marked by fervent academic activity and publication, this book will be a useful tool for all engaged in the fields of education and research. The expertise of the authors of various chapters in the book is valuable to those engaged in authentic research writing.



Indian Journal of School Health and Well Being, March 2016

Editors

Prof. Namita Ranganathan

Department of Education
33, Chhatra Marg,
University of Delhi- 110007
namita.ranganathan@gmail.com
9811438706

Dr. Vikas Baniwal

224, Pitampura Village,
New Delhi- 110034
vikas.psy@gmail.com
9718075874

Authors

Ms. Aakanksha Bhatia

Ph.D. Scholar,
Department of Psychology,
University of Delhi
aakankshabhatia01@gmail.com
9811551391

Ms. Manika Sandhu

Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Educational studies,
Jamia Millia Islamia
sandhu.manika@gmail.com

Ms. Anshu

Assistant Professor,
IP College for Women,
University of Delhi
anshu.dewdrops@gmail.com
9718399983

Ms. Nidhi Seth

Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Education
University of Delhi- 110007
nidhiseth2010@gmail.com
9873033605

Ms. Bhanu Priya

bhanupriya.titli@gmail.com
9873673403

Mr. Praveen Kumar

Research scholar
CIE, University of Delhi
praveen.edu2010@gmail.com
9811363099

Ms. Deepti

PhD Scholar,
Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi,
deep123k@gmail.com

Ms. Shefali Sharma

Ph.D. Scholar
University of Delhi
D-07, Fakhruddin Apartments, Sector 10, Plot
No. 18, Dwarka, New Delhi - 110075.
shefali912@gmail.com
9999269097

Ms. Ima Kazmi

Secondary school teacher.
The British School
imakazmi15@gmail.com
9953486564

Ms. Suhasini Kanwar

Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Education
33, Chhatra Marg,
University of Delhi- 110007

Dr. Kavita Vasudev

Department of Human Development and Family
Studies, Institute of Home Economics
kavita.vasudev@rediffmail.com
9810025230



Dr. Supriya Singh

Department of Education
33, Chhatra Marg,
University of Delhi- 110007
supriyadk18@gmail.com
9891385698

Ms. Swati Sehgal

Assistant Professor,
Institute of Home Economics)
Address: 127-D Gulabi Bagh, DDA Flats, SFS,
Delhi - 110007
sehgal.swati4@gmail.com

Dr. Suparna Jain

Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Daulat Ram College
University of Delhi- 110007
suparna85@gmail.com
9811231216

Ms. Vidushi Dahiya

vidushi.dahiya@gmail.com
09599680352

Ms. Astha Sharma

Sr. Clinical Psychologist,
Inst. of Mental Health and Life Skills Promotion
Moolchand Medcity, New Delhi
09971203773

Ms. Aparna Singh

Consultant Psychologist and Life Skills Trainer,
Expressions India
New Delhi
09810163000

Ms. Aparjita Dixit

Post Graduate Student, Psychology
New Delhi
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The National Life Skills, Value Education & School Wellness Program
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contactexpressions.india@gmail.com, expressionsindia2005@gmail.com

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