13
Adolescence

13.1 Introduction
We all fondly remember our childhood experiences and how we grew from the stage of a young child dependent on others to an adult who does so many things. Before entering to the stage of adulthood children enters the stage of adolescence. Atul, 14, is asked by his parents to pay more attention to his studies and less to games as it is the foundation stage. He is called an adolescent. He is growing and growing very fast. But at the same time he is asked to behave like a child. Atul is in a state where he cannot understand that whether he is an adult or a child. All of us undergo this stage which poses many challenges and is full of excitement. At the same time it demands adjustment on many fronts. This lesson shall help you to understand the nature of adolescence and the challenges and major tasks faced by adolescents, the influences that shape them and some of the important problems faced by adolescents.

13.2 Objectives
After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the nature of adolescence as a developmental stage,
- enlist the developmental tasks encountered during adolescence,
- explain the physical development during adolescence,
- state the gender role and describe the phenomenon of generation gap.
13.3 The Period of Adolescence

Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood to adulthood. It is a period when rapid physiological changes and demands for new social roles takes place. The adolescents, due to these changes often face a number of crises and dilemmas. As you read in the example of Atul, Adolescence is considered to start with the onset of puberty. Puberty is defined as a period of transformation from a stage of reproductive immaturity to a stage of full reproductive competence. Adolescence is the period in the life span of a person when he or she assumes the ability for reproduction. The sign of puberty in girls is menstruation. There is no such definite change in the boys to mark puberty. However, a variety of bodily changes do appear including growth of long bones of arms and legs, appearances of pubic hair and appearance of facial hair. The boys also experience nocturnal emissions or ejaculation of semen during sleep.

Adolescence is the period of development from pubescence of adulthood. It is the period when the child moves from dependency to autonomy. It is a period demanding significant adjustment to the physical and social changes which distinguish childhood behaviour from adult behaviour. The stage of puberty bring in a number of physical and physiological changes.

The main physical changes that take place during adolescence are as follows:

Table 13.1: Physical changes in Boys and Girls during Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase in height</td>
<td>1. Increase in height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Development fatty and subcutaneous tissues</td>
<td>2. Development of muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Growth of hair in armpits and pubic area</td>
<td>4. Growth of hair in the armpits, pubic area and appearance of facial hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Voice becomes shrill</td>
<td>5. Voice break takes place due to lengthening of vocal cord and enlarging of larynx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Appearance of breast bud</td>
<td>6. Increase in the size of penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. On set of menarche</td>
<td>7. Nocturnal emissions take place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be noted that the onset of puberty varies from person to person. The genetic factors interact with socio-economic status, health, nutrition and emotional level to shape the pattern of growth and development during adolescence. On an average a girl reaches her
puberty at the age of 13 and boys in approximately one year later that is 14 years of age.

The period of adolescence not only brings physical change but psychological changes that make the child a qualitatively different person. These changes affect the personality and adjustment in later life. Let us study about some of the features of cognitive development that takes place during adolescence.

**Cognitive Development**

Very noticeable changes in intellectual development take place during adolescence. The adolescent becomes able to think in more abstract and logical terms. The quality of thinking in terms of great ideals also emerges during the period. The three main characteristics of adolescent thought are as follows:

(a) Capacity to combine several factors and find solution to a problem.

(b) Ability to see that what effect one factor will have on another factors.

(c) Ability to combine and separate factors in a probabilistic manner.

However, the above characteristics of adolescent thought may not apply to each and every child. Important variations have often been seen in individuals of the same culture.

**Emotional Changes**

As you have read the onset of puberty brings physical changes among the adolescents. These changes are often accompanied by emotional tensions. The adolescent is exposed to new social situations, patterns of behaviour and societal expectations which bring a sense of insecurity. It has been found that there is increase in the incidence of depression. The adolescents show the tendency of impulsive urge to take immediate action which often leads to risk taking behaviour. The peergroup support emphasizes the decision of risk taking behaviour.

**Changes in the Body Image**

Due to rapid physiological changes taking place in an adolescent, a consciousness and increased interest about one’s own body develops. The body image can bring a sense of fun, pride, shyness or even unhappiness.

**Change in Attitudes, Interest and Interpersonal Relationships**

The adolescence brings a change in the habitual pattern of behaviour, attitude and personality. There are marked changes in the adolescent’s social interest. Adolescents use new set of values in selection of friends and social grouping. The choice of friends depends more on
similar interests and values. The peer group influences the attitudes, values and behaviour more than the child’s own family. Interest in world affairs, politics and government often develops during this period. Some of the recreational interests during adolescence are sports and games, scholastic and extracurricular activities. There is genuine desire to help others and engaging in benevolent activities like collecting funds for a cause, arranging charity show etc. This also helps the adolescent to learn to adjust in variety of situations. It must be noted that alongwith these changes adolescence also brings in negative syndrome like being self-centred, showing off, emotional immaturity, stubbornness, irritability, unsatisfactory relationship with the family and other unattractive personality traits.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.1

1. Select the appropriate answer:
   (i) Adolescence is the period between:
       (a) birth and childhood
       (b) childhood and old age
       (c) adulthood and old age
       (d) childhood and adult
   (ii) The sign of puberty amongst boys is
       (a) Facial hair growth
       (b) Nocturnal emission
       (c) None of the above
       (d) All of the above

2. Give any one characteristic of adolescent thought.

13.4 The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

The developmental tasks during adolescence are listed below:
(1) Accepting one’s physique or body as it is:-
(2) Achieving new and more mature relationships with age mates.
(3) Achieving social roles i.e. becoming responsible members of society
(4) Achieving values.
(5) Preparing for economic career.
(6) Preparing for marriage and family life.
**Parenting Styles**

The adolescence period is also affected by the child rearing practices. The child-rearing styles can be divided into three broad categories:

1. Authoritarian
2. Permissive
3. Authoritative

A description of the nature of these styles and outcomes for the development of the child are given below.

**Table 13.2: Parenting Styles and Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Style</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Outcome for the Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authorisations</td>
<td>Unquestioning obedience from children</td>
<td>Upset, moody, aggressive, poor communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>Highly involved and places few controls on the child</td>
<td>Fails to learn respect, impulsive, out of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Caring and sensitive and also sets firm limits and encourage increasing responsibility</td>
<td>Self reliant, self controlled friendly and socially competent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Parenting

Now let us study the basic ingredients of a healthy parent-child relationship. These are:

(a) **Mutual respect**: Avoiding hitting and talking down to the children. Parents should provide more opportunities of doing work to children.

(b) **Shared enjoyment**: Parents and children should spare and spend some amount of time with each other in a day.

(c) **Encouragement**: Children who are encouraged more often believe in themselves. The progress of children should be recognized and approved.

13.6 **Identity crisis among adolescents**

Identity is the sense of self. It is the answer to our quest for who am I, our values, beliefs etc. Seeking an identity means locating one’s place in the social setup. Identity also refers to one’s skills and attributes as a person. As you have read during childhood, parental beliefs and attitudes exert pressure on the thinking process of child. The adolescent period initiates the development of a personalized set of beliefs which many a time give birth to conflict with elders and society. The adolescent period shows rapid shift between self-confidence and insecurity. Identity confusion happens to be a major characteristic of adolescence. The parents, teachers and members are expected to be responsive to the needs of the adolescents and help them achieve their goals and aspirations that provide him or her a meaningful identity.

Most of the adolescents come out of the identity crisis by the time of their adulthood. Some are disturbed and confused to have a lot of problems in their early adult life. The extent of adolescent crisis varies from society to society. In the traditional joint families in India, a young adult can continue to be dependent on the family for a much longer period than is noticed in the western societies. As a result, the western adolescents may actually have a shorter period of preparation to assume an independent adult role compared to the Indian youth. In any case, adolescence is a period of great upheaval and challenge for the young mind.

Of course, the adolescent reaches a stage of cognitive maturity by his/her ability to think hypothetically and in abstract ways. By the end of the adolescence period, thinking becomes quite scientific and logical. Adolescents can be very creative and innovative in their thinking and most of them engage in some creative activity at least temporarily. Their thinking appears to be immature because they seem to be unsure of themselves and their identity and also because they are more likely than adults to engage in high-risk or rash behaviour. But in terms of their cognitive development, adolescents quickly reach a level of thinking which differs little from the adults.
13.7 Problems of Adolescence

The physical and psychological characteristics of adolescents and the nature of developmental tasks which they are expected to perform often pose certain challenges and problems for adjustment. Basically adolescents face problems related to their home, school and society. They are presented in Table 13.3.

Table 13.3 : Common Problems During Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Related</th>
<th>Home Related</th>
<th>School Related</th>
<th>Society Related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body image</td>
<td>Authoritative parenting</td>
<td>Strict teachers</td>
<td>Gender bias, caste related problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pimples</td>
<td>Poor rapport with parents</td>
<td>Partial treatment</td>
<td>Generation gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexion</td>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>Closed school atmosphere</td>
<td>Orthodox practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
<td>Low socio-economic background</td>
<td>Not acceptable classmates</td>
<td>Repressive atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body changes</td>
<td>Non conducive atmosphere</td>
<td>Poor marks</td>
<td>Over expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moodiness</td>
<td>Space constraint</td>
<td>Too much homework</td>
<td>Lack of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touchiness</td>
<td>Comparison with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypersensitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling of rebel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crushes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Infatuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day dreams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The problems listed in table are a few representative common problems which adolescents face. The more serious problems include drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking, truancy, sexual obsessions, etc. They may not appear in everybody. There are variations in the experience of these problems across people.

Adolescent and Generation Gap

Do you and your father/mother think alike on T.V. serials, movies and sports? Your answer maybe no. This is partly due to generation gap. Generation gap means difference of opinion, interest and attitudes in the people of two age groups. The generation gap also increases as a result of greater educational, social and cultural changes experienced by adolescents in contrast to their parents. Some of the common difficulties the adolescents encounter are related to generation gap. Thus disciplinary norm of the home, parental attitude for negligence in studies, unsocial behaviour etc. often express generation gap. Though it is a temporary phase. From mid adolescence family relationship begins to improve because parents, siblings, grandparents recognize him/her as an adult or near adult. With improvement in personal and social adjustment happiness too increases.
13.8 Guidance and counseling for Adolescents

Up till now you have studied about how adolescence works as a major transition period for a person. Whenever we go to a new place we want to know about the details of that place. In that case a guide can help us to move smoothly around that place and help us in solving our problems. Adolescence is a phase which makes a person enter into the adult world. Growing into an adult a child makes us experience the problems in various domains such as

- Personal
- Social
- Educational
- Vocational and career related

Through guidance and counseling services adolescents can be helped to solve these problems. With the help of career counseling and vocational guidance they can be helped with insights into the various career opportunities and education choices that are available. Personal and social counseling can help them in resolving their problems.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.2

1. List any three developmental tasks during adolescence.

2. What is an identity?

13.9 What you have learnt

- Adolescence is an important stage in the life span of human beings. It serves as the bridge between childhood and adulthood.

- This period is marked by rapid physical and psychological transformation of the individual.

- There are major changes in the secretion of hormones by the various glands in the body. The sex characteristics develop during this phase.
• This is period during which significant bodily changes occur that characterize.

• Some of the developmental tasks of adolescents are achieving new and mature relations with mates, achieving masculine/feminine social role, achieving emotional independence etc.

• Other than the physical changes, some psychological changes too take place in the area of emotions, cognition and moral.

• The adolescents face problems related to home, self, school and society.

• The process of guidance and counseling can help the adolescent for a smooth transition of adulthood.

13.10 Terminal Questions

1. How do adolescents express their emotions? Give illustrative examples.
2. What are the developmental tasks of adolescents?

13.11 Key to Intext Questions

13.1

1. (i) d
   (ii) d

2. (a) capacity to combine several factors.
   (b) ability to see the effect of one factor on another.
   (c) ability to combine and separate factors.

13.2

1. (a) Accepting one's physique or body.
   (b) Achieving new and more mature relationships.
   (c) Achieving new social roles.
   (d) Achieving values.
   (e) Preparing for economic career.
   (f) Preparation for marriage and family life.

2. Identity is the sense of self.