Chapter 3
Identity Development in Adolescents

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Abstract This chapter focuses on the process of identity development in adolescents. This assumes significance in the context of adolescence being a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. This transitional process is influenced by the socio-cultural context that needs to be taken into account to fully understand the adolescents and their issues. The chapter highlights the role of sociocultural contexts in adolescent development and in the process of shaping the sense of identity in adolescents. The influence of various macro contexts and micro contexts on the behaviour, personality, and experiences of adolescents is discussed.

Keywords Adolescent · Youth · Identity · Contexts · Development · Sociocultural factors · Peer relations · Family

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage in the human life span which is marked by major changes in all the aspects of development including physical, psychological, cognitive, moral, and emotional. It starts with the obvious pubertal changes and involves changes in thinking, reasoning, morality, altruism, emotion regulation, etc., which impact the growing sense of identity of the adolescent. There are changes in the body, mind, emotions, and the way the adolescent relates to parents, peers, and others in their environment. How the adolescent perceives and receives these changes is mediated by how the adolescents are 'situated' in different contexts and environments. This consequently influences the identity development in adolescents. Hence, it cannot be a uniform experience for the adolescents, but the multiplicity of situations and contexts of adolescents affecting their experiences need to be taken into account when considering adolescent identity development.

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Sociocultural Context of Adolescence and Youth

Famous Indian Developmental Psychologist, Saraswathi (1999) raised a pertinent question "Is adolescence a myth or a reality?" on the basis of an ethnographic study of children and adolescents in Gujarat, an Indian state (Saraswati and Dutta, 1988). The spontaneous answer to this question appears to be "Of course! Adolescence is a reality". While there are cultural variations in formal recognition of adolescence as a distinct stage of life, it is certain that almost all cultures distinguish between young people and adults. Furthermore, most cultures institutionalize a period of preparation/apprenticeship for adulthood which draws upon the biological, cognitive, and emotional development attained by persons in this stage. Notwithstanding the two decade old question, if we try to probe what made T. S. Saraswathi pose this question, we will understand that there is no kinescopic conception of adolescence. Instead, there is, socially and culturally, wide variation in the structure and experience of adolescence and youth.

The Kaleidoscope of Adolescence and Youth

In the context and culture of Gujarat, a study conducted by Saraswati and Dutta (1988) showed that the transition of children into adulthood seemed smooth, almost invisible. This was especially true for the rural adolescent girls who assumed the roles of wives, mothers, and home managers in their early teens. The notion of 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) associated with the development task of identity formation in adolescent and youth is not a dominant psychological experience in cultures where the 'rites of passage' are clearly tied to biological markers like puberty and social milestones like end of apprenticeship, schooling, taking over the family's occupational role, and marriage. In such societies (usually simpler with less differentiated economy), skills and tasks of adulthood are gradually acquired by young ones over the course of childhood. By the time of puberty, they reach adulthood, they have many competencies needed to function successfully as adults. In industrial–technological societies, in contrast, children reach puberty long before they have the requisite level of social and technical competence necessary to fulfil the complex social and economic roles. Thus, in such societies, multiple other events, rather than puberty, more accurately index readiness for adulthood. These milestones include—completion of education, entry into full-time employment, moving out of the parental household, and becoming financially independent (Elliott and Feldman, 1990). In most societies, marriage marks the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Unlike traditional societies where marriage is tied with biological maturity, in modern societies, marriage is linked with full-time employment and financial independence. In sum, the choice of key developmental markers and the age at which particular milestones can be attained affect the length, temporal boundaries, and psychological experiences of adolescence.

In complex societies world over, more and more people have been entering an extended period of adolescence termed as 'Youth' (Keniston, 1971) or 'Emerging adulthood' (Arnett & Taber, 1994) owing to the extended demands of education, preparation for specialized employment, and consequently delayed age of marriage. Youth/Emerging adulthood is distinct demographically and subjectively from adolescence (roughly from ages 10–17) and adulthood (beginning mid to late 20s). Most adolescents do not feel that they have the requisite skills for adulthood, and the majority of people over 30 and older are of the opinion that they are adults. Thus, most people in their 20s feel that they are in between adolescence and adulthood: The majority answer "in some respects yes and in some respects no" when asked whether they feel they have reached adulthood (Arnett, 1997). They occupy the stage of youth/emerging adulthood.

The adolescents and youth are differentiated with regard to their experiences, their perspectives, and hopes for the future. They may respond to their social landscapes with enthusiasm, passion, idealism, indignation, protest, silence or apathy. On one hand, they are represented as reckless, irresponsible, and uncommitted; on the other hand, as dedicated, deferential, and conformist. They invite love, respect, and admiration for their deep sense of honour, energy, and passion along with feelings of hatred, fear, and panic because of their often disruptive relation with the adult society. Adolescents are lauded as a symbol of hope for the future as well as scorned as a threat to the existing society.

There cannot be a singular understanding of adolescence and youth worldwide. There are 'adolescences' rather than the adolescence. This is not to deny that global youth culture has emerged due to the rapid spread and use of satellite television, information technologies, and social media. Appearances, interests, and concerns of adolescents and youth have converged. But underlying these similarities are distinct and diverse realities. The commonalities of biological, cognitive, and psychological development and the challenges brought on by the new global world of the twenty-first century are transformed and given distinctive meanings within diverse cultural and institutional systems. The forms that adolescence take vary not only across cultures, but also within a given culture. The lives of adolescents show differences across the wide variations of geographical, economic, and social indicators.

The Contexts of Development for Adolescence

India has one of the largest youth populations in the world. About 1/5th of its population is in the age group of 15–24 years. The lives of this mass of individuals vary according to their gender, class status, caste standing, religious identity, geographical location, and various such parameters. Human beings develop within the psycho-social context in which they are located. Much of the research literature in the field of developmental psychology has been devoted to the study of 'person-in-context'. A wealth of cross-cultural research and findings stemming from investigations of ethnically and socio-economically diverse communities indicate the

influential role played by socio-cultural experiences in the development of various psychological capacities (moral, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic). The environment consists of not only the events and conditions immediately surrounding the person, but extends beyond home, school, and neighbourhood settings to broad cultural values, laws, customs, and institutions of culture. A complex system of relationships among multiple levels of the environment influences the growth of a person. The negotiative relation between person and environment is instrumental in shaping and organizing the experiential reality and developmental potential of the human individual.

Sinha (1979) adapted the ecological model of development proposed by Brofenbrenner (1979) to highlight the context-dependency of development in the Indian context. In this model, Sinha states that the Indian child grows within an ecology that consists of two layers—the upper layer and the surrounding layer. The upper layer consists of visible factors such as nature of home and its facilities like availability of space and technology; schooling and peer interactions. The surrounding layer is more pervasive, less clearly visible but constantly interacts with the upper layer. It consists of geographical conditions such as density of population, caste and class status, availability of general amenities like sanitation, health care, electricity and water facilities, etc.

The meanings, norms, ideals, values, ideologies, opportunities, and choices characterizing the maturational environment are transmitted to the person from a very early stage in a subtle and/or obvious manner through the child-rearing practices, signs, symbols, and messages that are present in cultural/historical/economic/religious dimensions of society and day to day social interactions that occur between people. Against such an ecological view of human development, let us reflect upon the influences from the wider cultural context on the adolescents and youth of India.

The Macro Contexts of Development

The Brahmanical-Hindu Time Table of Human Development

The life cycle of human beings is usually understood with reference to western notions and theories. Shakespeare (1623) talks of the seven ages of man in his play ‘As you Like it’. Sigmund Freud, the founder of Psychoanalysis, in his psychosexual theory of development (1905) maps human development in terms of progressive maturation of sexual and aggressive drives giving rise to characteristic psychological traits. Erikson (1950), an ego psychologist, provides an elaborate time-table of human development in which development is the outcome of a dynamic relationship between the individual’s growing capacity to interact with an ever-expanding radius of people and institutions—from ‘mother’ to ‘mankind’—and the readiness of society to welcome, invite, and influence this interaction.

In the Brahmanical-Hindu culture, there is an indigenous life span model of human development called the Ashrama system. Ashrama system is an ethical theory of Hindu philosophy, where it is combined with four proper goals of human life (*Purushartha*) for fulfilment, happiness, and spiritual liberation. These four goals are: Dharma (moral duty, right action, alignment with truth of things), Artha (wealth, power, and fame), Kama (fulfilment of desires, pleasure of senses, aesthetic enjoyment of life, affection), and Moksha (liberation, salvation).

Here we will describe the four periods of human life span under the *Ashrama system* in the light of how these affect the development of identity in adolescents.

1. *Brahmacharya (student life)*—This stage roughly corresponds with the adolescence and youth stage. In the Hindu cultural imagination, young boys take on the role of students and apprentices in this stage. It marks the formal start of education. Upanayana is a traditional rite of passage that marks the acceptance of the young boy by the guru for teaching him all knowledge to lead an effective life. It symbolizes the 'second birth' of the young boy as the child will now shift from his earlier indisciplined and unregulated life to understanding the intricacies of life with spiritual and secular knowledge and know-how under the care, supervision, and guidance of the guru or teacher.

They take the vow of 'chastity, obedience, and austerity' necessary to build their character, knowledge, and skills through a deep identification with and emulation of the guru (teacher). The growing boy is trained to discipline his impulses and desires, both material and sensual, and pursue knowledge through concentration and single-minded determination. The guru imparts the knowledge of science, philosophy, scriptures, and logic. The disciple works to earn dakshina (alms) to be paid to the guru and learns to live a life of Dharma (righteousness, morals, and duties).

2. *Grihastha (householder stage)*—This stage begins with marriage. The young man now enters the stage of a householder with all the training of his mind. The tasks of this stage are to earn a righteous living, look after all family members, including the elderly, children, and guests. This stage allows one to acquire wealth and power (Artha) and fulfil desires (Kama). This is also the stage where he is in direct contact with society and serves the society. This stage lends support to the other three ashramas. In this stage, the three Purusharthas, viz., Dharma, Artha, and Kama are cultivated and practiced. The three rinas (debts), such as the paternal debt, debt towards the teachers, and debt towards gods can also be repaid in this stage.
3. *Vanaprastha (retired life)*—This is a stage where a person begins to develop more mental abstinence and detachment from familial and worldly affairs. The vanaprasthin gains greater spiritual maturity and takes to solitude for meditation and contemplation. Kalidasa has described a vanaprasthin as a 'muni', who observes silence, talks less, hears more, and renders service with a sense of duty and smile. A transition stage between the householder phase and sannyasa, this stage holds special significance for a person. The emphasis of life shifts from Artha and Kama (wealth, pleasures, and desires) to Moksha (spiritual

liberation). The person exercises discipline of the body (such as reducing the need for physical comfort and giving up cravings for material goods, celibacy, etc.) which allows for the sublimation of his instinctive and material life as well as widen the scope of sympathy from family and village to humanity at large.

4. *Sannyasa (renunciation)*—This is the highest stage in the Hindu timetable of human development. In this stage, man renounces the material world. He becomes one with the universal soul—Brahman. The world is his kin. He serves the poor, consoles the bereaved, heals the sick. He maintains equanimity and is beyond the pale of anger, greed, sorrow. The sannyasi is a homeless beggar-saint.

Thus, in this stage model, Brahmacharya is the stage for learning of Dharma, Grihastha is the stage for pursuing Artha and Kama within the framework of Dharma, Vanaprastha is the preparation for pursuit of Moksha and Sannyasa is about observing Moksha. It is the solid secular-spiritual foundation laid out during adolescence and youth and ripened during adulthood which leads to the attainment of the highest ideal of Hindu life—Moksha. In such a cultural imagination of human life, adolescence and youth are believed to be full of potential which needs to be harnessed for personal and collective evolution and to sustain harmony and order in the world.

Kakar (1979) has compared the traditional Brahmanical-Hindu view of human development and Eriksonian psychosocial theory of development and suggests a possible convergence between the two. Both the frameworks view human development in terms of stages of life, each building on the previous stage and bestowing a specific strength to human life. The individual in each stage is seen in the context of his psycho-social environment and in interaction with the sequence of generations. Specifically, with regard to the adolescence stage, both theories opine that it is a preparatory stage wherein the individual builds the foundation of skills, habits, character, and values which pave the way for life ahead.

At this juncture, it is important to highlight that the spiritual-philosophical ideas of human development embodied in the ancient Brahmanical-Hindu worldview take a largely upper caste (the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, and the Vaishyas), male centric view of life span development. They do not reflect the possibilities and constraints characterizing the lives of women, Shudras, and Dalits. Traditionally, education and opportunities of spiritual evolution have remained the prerogative of upper-caste men. Formal education was theoretically available to members of the Dvija (twice born) castes, viz., Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. The Brahmanical centres of learning were open to all the Dvija castes but they "appear to have attracted mainly the Brahmin students" (Thapar, 1978). A Shudra who dared to listen to the recitation of the Vedas must be severely punished as per the injunction (Thapar, 1978). The exclusion of women from this discourse also served to minimize the educational opportunities for women and served to establish motherhood as the highest role for them.

Cultural Messages in Classical Texts and Popular Narratives

The stock of folklores, legends, and myths in a culture are repositories of ethnotheories of human development. They reflect as well as construct the dominant value orientations, parenting practices, cultural goals which influence the nature of growth and development in that particular community. In ancient Hindu epics and legends of Gods, we find characters like Prahlada, Devvrata, Shravan Kumar, Krishna, etc., that become exemplars of boy childhood and adolescence in the Indian context. Their stories provide important cultural messages about relevant development goals set up for male adolescents to learn in order to become 'mature adults'. The story of Prahlada exemplifies courage to withstand the filicide of his demon father Hiranyakashyap, in order to uphold his spiritual devotion to God Vishnu. Devvrata, the original name of Bhishma in Mahabharata, took the vow of lifelong Brahmacharya (celibacy) and of service to whosoever sat on the throne of his father to enable the latter to marry a woman of his choice. He showed the path of subjugating personal desires to paternal wishes and getting rewarded in return. Shravan Kumar is a popular metaphor of a dutiful son in the Indian context who served his blind parents selflessly till the end of his life. Krishna provides a multitude of images for Indian boys to emulate. These include: playful and mischievous cowherder, enchanter and lover of gopis, and the protector.

The Indian Oedipus *Devvrata was the eighth son of Kuru king Shantanu and the river goddess Ganga. In his adolescence, King Shantanu fell in love with a fisherwoman, Satyavati. When he expressed his deep desire to marry her, her father demanded the throne for the child of Satyavati. Since, Shantanu has already promised the throne to his beloved and very capable son Devvrata, he sorrowfully declined the demand and became despondent. When Devvrata came to know of his father's reason of sadness, he took the vow of lifelong celibacy, thus forgoing his claims as the 'heir apparent' and denying himself the pleasures of conjugal love. In return of his sacrifice, Shantanu blessed him with the boon of Ichcha Mrityu (control over his own death).*

*Indian cultural tales, folklore, and myths show that the direction of aggression in the Indian father-son relationship is reversed. Unlike the Western Oedipus myth, the Indian son doesn't wish to overthrow the father. Rather, the father suppresses the son. In both the Ganesha myth or the story of Devvrata (later known as Bhishma), both sons win power, honour and titles as rewards for submission to the father figure. In both the legends, the power of the father figure is never overthrown (*Ramanujam, 1983*). After a fight or willingly, the son submits and identifies with the father. The Indian Oedipus provides an important caveat to the assumption that adolescence spans out in a uniform way across cultures. It provides a significant insight in the way paternal authority is negotiated by the growing son in the Indian cultural milieu.*

We notice an absence of youthful female characters in Indian legends and mythos. Hindu mythological stories are replete with images of Mother Goddesses and/or Apsaras (beautiful enchantresses) as symbols of cultural imagination about mature women. But, rarely do we find descriptions of female adolescence. This highlights the gendered nature of adolescence. This ties up with what Saraswati and Dutta (1988) found in their fieldwork in Gujarat with respect to the girl child. Kakar (1978) opines that the anticipated 'adult roles' of homemaking and motherhood are made clear to the growing girl rather early in her life and she is socialized for the same, limiting her mobility and exploration of self. Cultural notions like girls being the carriers of family honour, chastity, and virginity as important virtues for their marriage adversely affect girls' access to education. Parents are often reluctant to send girls to co-educational schools where they can interact with boys, be harassed by boys and men while travelling to and fro from school/college and form relationships with them. Girls usually have lesser freedom than boys to meet with friends outside home and to move about independently in the community. Constant pressures to be submissive, docile, and uphold family name also undermine their ability to voice their opinions, take their decisions, and develop their agency. Unlike boys, who experience less parental authority during adolescence, girls live under the scrutiny and overprotection of their families. This is soon exchanged with living under the protection and patronage of the husband after marriage.

In popular narratives like novels, short stories, and movies, we find the dynamic interplay of tradition and modernity shaping the lives of ordinary people. The protagonists, male and female, provide examples of resistance against the sociopolitical order (the 'angry young man' trope popularized by Amitabh Bachchan,[1] the 'ambitious career woman'), reclaiming dignity and freedom for self by women (in films like 'Arth', 1983, 'Thappad', 2020 and 'Secret Super Star', 2017),[2] and of masculinity in touch with emotions (the 'metrosexual' hero exemplified in the 'Complete Man' image in the well-known series of advertisements for a leading garment brand Raymonds). Such constructions of human subjectivities by literature and media open out life's distinctive complexity and indeterminacy allowing the adolescents and youth from across social-religious groups to dream and desire alternative realities. Gokulsing and Dissanayake (1998) suggest that the song and dance routine in Indian films, expressing a degree of intimacy, sexuality, and vulgarity not generally

[1] By the 1970s and 1980s, the joyful optimism in the immediate aftermath of independence had waned in India. Domestic politics was in turmoil, corruption levels were high, social and economic inequality was rampant. This found representation in the iconic film Zanjeer (1973) in which Amitabh Bachchan epitomized a new kind of hero—angry, brooding and despondent—existing in a world where injustice was a daily reality. He was driven by the desire for revenging against the narcissistic injuries meted out to him by the unjust, unequal world and the desire to set the wrongs right.

[2] In commercial Hindi films, women are either portrayed as hero's love interest, successful homemaker or as a vamp. In Arth and Thappad, we find women opting out of faithless, loveless marriages and taking decisions to live their lives without the men. They feel complete and happy within themselves. In Secret Superstar, we find an adolescent school going Muslim girl's struggle to achieve her dream of becoming a singing sensation and giving a better life to her mother who suffers from domestic violence and emotional abuse at the hand of her father.

found elsewhere in the script, enables a safe mediation between traditional, parental standards, and the individual romantic impulses of the young protagonists.

Opportunity Structures of Caste, Class, and Geographical Location

Indian society is fragmented by caste system. Varna and jati are two terms commonly found in Indian languages denoting caste. Varna is a more abstract and scriptural term indicating the four broad groups into which castes are supposed to be divided (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, with the varna-less 'untouchables' or Dalits regarded as outcaste outsiders); while jati is a more locally situated and ethnographically relevant category, varying in its hundreds, if not thousands, across the length and breadth of not only India, but the whole of South Asia. Caste is a system of rigid social stratification into ranked groups based on descent. It is hereditary. Caste is at the same time economic (in that it has consequences for how wealth is distributed), political (how power is distributed), and social (how status is assessed). Caste divisions of various caste systems across the world also regulate life matters such as access to housing, marriage, and general social interactions. Caste divisions are reinforced through the practice and threat of social ostracism, economic boycotts, and even physical violence.

Since independence, the affirmative policies and social and political mobilization of scheduled castes and Dalits have had some positive impact on the economic and social status of these marginalized sections of Indian society. Reservation of seats for scheduled castes in educational institutions, government jobs, legislature, and local bodies has resulted in an increased representation of these previously discriminated sections in education, employment, and politics. Social and political mobilization of scheduled castes has furthered their process of achieving equality of status and opportunity in society. It has also resulted in a change in their public image in the society. Now perceived as vote banks and political actors, they are becoming a political force to reckon with in Indian polity. This allows the adolescents and youth belonging to the marginalized caste sections of society to sense the opportunity to get ahead in life, to have role models among their communities whom they can emulate, to debunk their stigmatized identities (Sinha, 2020).

While much has been gained, much still remains. The benefits of reservation policy are being reaped by the better off among the scheduled castes. Prejudice, discrimination, and violence against them still prevail in wider society. Poverty is rampant among these sections of society. The chilling suicide note of Rohith Vermula, the Dalit Ph.D. scholar which stated—"*My birth is my fatal accident. I can never*

recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past….."[3]— is a testimony of continuing exploitation and dehumanization of backward castes in India.

Thorat (1979), a famous Indian Economist and a Dalit thinker, reminiscences his experiences of growing up with a stigmatized identity. He shares, *"During this period I was in school from the sixth to the eleventh standard. By then I had learned that I was untouchable by caste and therefore not allowed into the village temple, the caste Hindu homes, or into the common village dinner. Aware of the limits on my social relations, I used to try to stay within these limits; but whenever subjected to discrimination, I used to oppose it. This reaction to the stigmatized identity was associated with a conscious desire for equal treatment. The reaction was mainly emotional: I would either scold the caste Hindu or develop feelings of hatred"* (p. 74). Such humiliating experiences are shared across members of the lower castes.

Class divisions are yet another reality of social life. In middle and upper-class homes, the continuity between childhood and adulthood is disrupted (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Increased income allows teenagers to remain outside the labour force and there is little productive role that they are involved in. There is a segregation of the adolescent world from the adults. Adolescents in these sections of society attend formal schools and college. The educational environment, teachers, and peers exert a strong influence on their development. As digital natives and as consumers, they participate in the adult world at ever younger ages. Growing up in individualistic culture, middle and high-class adolescents define their own lifestyles and emphasize on their own needs, motives and interests. They have a more open-ended vision of the future. Their globally linked lifestyle also precludes the possibility of their being rooted in the culture of their family and caste community for all their lives.

While the urban middle-class young persons now have greater opportunities for personal fulfilment through self-determined identity explorations and commitments, a larger sense of purpose and meaning is usually lacking among most young people belonging to this section in America (Cote, 2019). Cote (2019) discusses the affluence-purpose paradox, which has come to dominate the lives of young persons in well-off sectors of societies, world over. Proactive identity formation which requires self-regulation, self-discipline, and self-reflection is undermined by the instant gratification culture of consumerism and narcissism fueled by the materialistic culture.

While rural adolescence does differ from urban adolescence in terms of greater continuity between childhood and adulthood due to involvement in familial/caste/tribe-based occupations and community participation at younger ages, the youth culture characterized by hedonism, consumption, fashion, and technological absorption is increasingly becoming a significant feature shared among youth across class and geographical locations. A teenager dressed in T-shirt and jeans carrying a mobile phone has become a ubiquitous feature of the Indian landscape.

[3] (2019, 17 Jan). My Birth is My Fatal Accident: Rohith Vemula's Searing Letter is an Indictment of Social Prejudices. *The Wire.* Retrieved from https://thewire.in/caste/rohith-vemula-letter-a-powerful-indictment-of-social-prejudices.

In the recent season of a highly popular Indian television show—Kaun Banega Crorepati? (Who will become a Millionaire?)—one of the contestants, Tej Bahadur Singh, a farmer's son, shared his life conditions which are reflective of a large majority of young people living in rural areas in India. He described how fragmenting landholding and declining returns on investment in agriculture have forced young people to look at government jobs and urban cities for their livelihood. He himself had aspirations of becoming an IAS officer (a prestigious government job in India) and confessed to being ridiculed by his kith and kin for 'daring to dream rich children's dreams'. Education is increasingly being viewed, especially for boys, as a route to become financially stable and give their families a better life. Youth who are denied access to higher education, on account of their family background and material constraints, and those who fail to find suitable jobs, often face frustration and alienation (Verma, 2000). Adolescents and youth from economically weaker and rural sections aspire for materially prosperous, urban living. But the desperate flight towards modernization, westernization, and urbanization creates cultural and psychological upheaval and fragmentation in people, restless and rootless cosmopolitanism, resulting in a sense of nostalgia and loss (Nandy, 2001).

The Changing Indian Village *In Indian cinema, the chasm between town and village, or between India and Bharat, has been a familiar theme. City was simultaneously perceived as the site of opportunities and alienation. The classic film 'Do Bigha Zameen' (1953) is a moving account of a poor peasant eking out a living in the harsh environs of a metropolis as a rickshaw puller so that he can pay back the loans. In many films, the village was presented largely as a homogeneous community where the moral economy thrives. The farmer was hailed as the true 'Bharatwasi' (inhabitant of India) and village land as yielding food for the teeming millions of the city. The hit song, 'Is Desh ki Dharti' ('the fertile land of the country') exemplified this sentiment. In contrast, to the simpleton villager, the city dweller was portrayed as corrupt.*

Today, the rural characters of the Indian village rarely attract viewers any more. It is hard to recall a film made since the 1990s, when India began to liberalize its economy, that glorifies the Indian village. In fact, these counter positions no longer seem to resonate. Indian villages are changing perceptibly. Not only do the poor, landless farmers have urban aspirations in order to build a more secure life, but even prosperous landowners seek a future outside the village or in nonfarm enterprises.

Religious Rites, Values, and Identities

Religion is an important basis of identity for mankind. The core of religious identity is a personal identification of oneself with a social collective (group) characterized by a particular cultural—historical—religious tradition (Ashmore et al., 2004). Religious values and practices influence people's lives from birth to death. Religious rituals mark important life transitions and events. In Hinduism, Jātakarman (birth rites), Nāmakaraṇa (naming ceremony), Annaprāśana (first eating of solid food) Karṇavedha (ear piercing), Cūdākaraṇa or Caula (first haircutting), Upanayana (initiation of brahmacharya), Samāvartana (conclusion of brahmacharya), Antyeṣṭi (offering of body to fire) are few of the important rites of passage. In Islam, the new baby is welcomed into the world as the father whispers a call to prayer—adhann—into his or her right ear and a call to worship—iqama—in the left. So, the first words the child hears are God's words. Bismillah is the celebration around the child's fourth birthday when he or she begins formal religious education. Zakat, an 'obligatory charity' is an important pillar of Islam, an act of worship and spiritual investment. Baptism, Confession, and Anointing of the Sick are important sacraments in the Catholic Christian tradition.

Growing individuals, the world over, feel the presence of religious faith during challenging circumstances as well as during celebratory occasions. Religious faith becomes the basis of abiding hope in life for people everywhere. Religious values provide a worldview to guide one's life. Every form of religion provides the 'right way' of living life. Concepts like 'Nishkaam Karma'(selfless action), 'Dharma' (moral duty), 'Samskars and Punya Janam' (psychological impressions carried forward through a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth), 'Paap-Punya' (sin and good deed), 'Anasakti' (non-attachment to material pursuits), Brahman-Atman (universal soul vs. individual soul) are ever-present in the collective psyche of Hindus. Mishra (2012) illustrates how the collectivist values exemplified in the traditional Hindu religious texts are mediated by socialization agents such as schooling to influence youth identities.

Religions also have the tendency to become fundamentalist and periodically erupt in bouts of individual and collective violence against people, groups, and symbolically charged symbols. The fundamentalist mindset draws upon distinct religious and ethnic identity and erects strict borders towards other groups, a tendency called totalitarianism by Erikson (1968). The success of fundamentalism depends upon the creation of a historical account by giving a new meaning to the culturally rooted representations and symbols (such as swastika, saffron colour in the context of Hindu fundamentalism, and Jihaad in the context of Islamic fundamentalism) or rejecting their significance altogether (such as rejection of satyagraha in modern-day politics). Youth who feel systematically excluded/alienated from the dominant trends of the world on the basis of their birth circumstances (ethnic, caste, class considerations) are recruited into the fundamentalist ideology because the shared myths, memories, values, and symbols help them to reclaim a personal sense of identity and heal the feelings of loss.

To take an example, Nandy et al. (1995) provided a brief analysis of the activities of Bajrang Dal (a religious and youth organization belonging to the right-wing group of political organizations in India). They showed that the youth members of Dal are mainly drawn from the poor, upper caste population of the smaller cities and semi-urban areas. They have some education and aspirations to enter the expanding modern sector of India, but they are unemployed. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (the parent organization of Bajrang Dal) assuages their anxieties and gives them a place in society by handing them a cause to fight for—restoration of lost honour and pride to the Hindus. As if out to prove their worth to society and themselves, the Bajrang Dal youth have been involved in some of the more violent incidents that have taken place as part of the Ramjanmabhumi agitation.[4] In defense of the Dal, Vinay Katiyar, its chief, drew an analogy with the incident in the Hindu Epic Ramayana where Hanuman burns down Lanka. According to him, Hanuman had no other choice after the demons tied a burning rag to his tail to reduce him to ashes. Similarly, they followed Hanuman's footsteps by engaging in violence against the new set of demons who have put a torch to the hearts of the youth.

Neoliberalization, Social Media, and Formation of Youth Identities

The new economic dispensation of liberalization in India, in 1991, threw open the gates to new technologies, business ventures, foreign media, consumption goods. The new ideological messages are of imagination-backed initiative and guiltless indulgence. The adolescents are growing up with access to opportunities—educational/professional/consumption—their parental generation never had. The general mood of consumerist buoyancy and optimism about the emergence of India as a global giant is adding to their confidence and ambitions for material betterment. The youth are entering enterprise culture where they have to meet ever-increasing demands of productivity, competitiveness, and efficiency. In return, they are compensated with huge pay packets, foreign assignments, performance-linked promotions, and café culture. Multinational companies give many opportunities to their employees to learn and work abroad. Thus, employees are required to have skills such as sensitivity to nuances of different cultural norms and etiquettes, world knowledge, and an international lifestyle to fit in the global economic order. A large number of young Indians are expressing a form of 'individualized Indianness' (Bhatia, 2018) by engaging in specific cultural practices of watching American media, shopping at malls, visiting bars and pubs, and having romantic/sexual liaisons on the sly.

The enterprise culture places a great premium on social prowess, confidence, exuberance, initiative, risk taking—characteristics necessary for effective networking

[4] The agitation is regarding the history and location of Babri Mosque and whether a Rama temple existed at the site which was demolished to build the mosque on the orders of the Mughal King, Babar. It has been an issue of intense communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India.

and self-presentation that are in turn necessary for success in the competitive employment sphere. Autonomy is expressed through choice (mostly as consumers). Identities are defined by the brands one consumes—Nike shoes, Starbucks coffee, buying an iPhone, and driving BMW. Branding is not limited to commodities but extends to self as well. Tom Peters in his 1997 article 'A Brand called You' in Fast Company magazine encourages us to think of ourselves "every bit as much of a brand as Nike, Coke, Pepsi, or Body Shop". He counsels, we must envision ourselves as "CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc." and to recognize that "our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You".

Social class, caste, and gender create different experiences and engagements with neoliberal norms, ideas, and values (Sayer, 2005). The lives of poor, rural, and low caste youth reflect how conditions of scarcity exclude them from the discourse of neoliberalization. They do not have the access to the social and educational opportunities to fashion themselves as neoliberal selves comprising of a set of skills and attributes which need to be continually developed and projected like a brand. Their cultural values and practices are also undermined and treated contemptuously by the neoliberal ideology eroding their self-worth. Such youth are at risk of developing a negative identity (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson (1968), forming a negative identity compensates for a lack of identity. Excluded from the possibilities of adopting socially accepted identity options, adolescents from marginalized sections adopt negative identities (e.g., lazy, angry, violent, delinquent) to resolve extreme identity crisis.

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, Instagram) is a new social environment for adolescents to network, to express, communicate, and spend their leisure time. Besides these benefits, it also creates the dangers of cyberbullying, online stalking, sexting, internet addiction, social isolation, identity confusion, and sleep deprivation.

Violence, Political Mobilization, and Civic Engagement

Violent conflicts between nations and groups, state and group terrorism, rape as a weapon of war, the movements of large numbers of people displaced from their homes, gang warfare, and mass hooliganism—all have become common occurrences around the world. Because of the ubiquitous nature of violent conflicts, it is a significant social contextual factor to be taken into consideration in relation to human development. They take a heavy toll on health in terms of deaths, physical illnesses, disabilities, and mental anguish. The growing individual experiencing violent environment have diverse understandings and memories of such events. Recchia and Wainryb (2011) found distinct dominant trends in how youth who are exposed to violence make sense of the violence. For some youth, these experiences carry personal or cultural significance. Others see them as frightening and so challenging to their sense of self that they feel very powerless in their memories of violence.

Khan and Majumdar (2017) report that young men and women of Kashmir have experienced several direct and indirect forms of violence which include direct physical beatings, being body checked, interrogated as well as witnessing torture, arrest or detention of neighbours and family members by armed forces, witnessing the searching and forceful occupation of their house and witnessing the destruction of the town. Their study further suggests that living in a conflict zone where movie theatres are shut, phone services are periodically prohibited, transportation is unavailable when curfews are in effect, movement is restricted and the military is heavily deployed—the sociopolitical self of youth is adversely impacted. They experience unfreedom, bondage and hopelessness which can lead them to turn towards violent retaliation.

The extent to which adolescents and youth of a country are involved in constructive political processes such as volunteer work, activism, civic movements also shape the potential of youth to become engaged citizens and voters. When from a young age, children are seen as responsible and capable to be a part of the solution, especially for problems that affect them such as environment, AIDS, substance abuse, unemployment, they emerge as agents of transformative social change. At Barefoot College Night Schools in India, children have far-reaching rights to directly participate in school affairs. Opportunities for civic and political participation of young men and women meet their needs for social inclusion, to drive social change through their energetic initiatives, as well as also enhance youth employability.

Micro Contexts of Development

Familial Context, Parental Authority, and Social Change

Family casts a long shadow on the psyche of Indians. Widely conceived as a collectivist society, Indians exhibit a high degree of familism. Familism is a dimension of collectivism that has two important normative dimensions (Mucchi-Faina et al., 2010). One is 'support obligations' which includes the obligation to provide material, economic as well as psychological support such as affection, reassurance, and care to family members. The other is 'adherence to traditional norms' which includes the obligation to conform behaviours and ideas to traditional moral values and to adhere to parental authority. The first dimension focuses on the function of the family to meet the needs of individual family members, the second dimension focuses on the interests of a family group.

With respect to the first dimension of support obligations of the family towards the growing individual, there is a strong trend of increased economic investment in children. Even poor families make personal sacrifices to invest in children's education. In middle-class families, costs to parents increase as years of education rise and extras such as tuitions, extra-curricular activities, leisure, and entertainment—all become integral to adolescents' lives. Because of few children and rising prosperity among

middle and upper classes, children receive more parental attention and supervision. Excessive parental supervision takes the form of 'Helicopter parenting' (Cline et al., 1992) which has become more plausible due to the availability of mobile phones and parental presence on social media sites. With respect to obedience, conformity to familial values and prioritization of family interests over self-interests, studies have consistently found that these behaviours are considered more important by Asian and Hispanic people than by European and American-European people (e.g., Fuligni et al., 1999; Suzuki & Greenfield, 2002). However, there is variation by gender, social class, and rural–urban location. An India wide Youth study conducted by KAS-CSDS in 2009[5] reveals that the extent of perceived parental control by youth vary with socio-economic status and gender. Nearly half of the youth sample of the study endorsed experiencing strong to very strong parental control. Most of these responses came from men and women from villages and towns. Youth in metros reported fewer experiences of strong to very strong parental control. Gender difference also shows a similar variation. More women youth as compared to male youth reported experiencing high parental authority in villages and towns. In case of metros, the gender difference was marginal. Geldard et al. (2016) point out that over-protective and over-anxious parents affect negatively the sense of agency and autonomy in adolescents which are important factors in progressing towards adulthood.

Kapadia (2008) in her study found that parental control was balanced by parental responsiveness towards the feelings and welfare of their adolescent offsprings. In scenarios of disagreement over marital partner selection and intersex mingling, neither party (parents and children) appeared to want to assert their views on the other. As a result, they tried to mutually accommodate each other's wishes. In contemporary Indian society, there is a rise in parental tendency to defer to the adolescent's wishes driven by the concern for children's happiness as well as by the concern to avoid unpleasantness in case children do not accept the parents' view readily. Additionally, parents are also realizing that the world in which their children are coming of age is very different from their own and thus, they are the ones who may need to follow the child's lead.

Kapadia (2008) also argues on the basis of her findings that Indian adolescents too welcome their parents' views on important life decisions. They accept their parents' role of not only knowing what was best, but also as having a responsibility to guide their children. They were trusted to do/advise what was good for the adolescent. Thus, when Indian adolescents accommodate their parents' wishes, they do not feel that they are relinquishing their personal interest in the service of family goals. Rather they trust that their parents wish well for them and by following their wisdom and authority will benefit them personally as well as the larger family.

[5] Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) conducted a youth study. It is a sample survey-based study seeking to answer key questions about how India's youth thought and lived. The survey was conducted in April–May 2016 in 19 States of India among over 6000 respondents aged 15–34 years. The findings were published in 2017 as 'Indian Youth in a Transforming World: Attitudes and Perceptions', edited by Peter Ronald DeSouza, Sanjay Kumar, Sandeep Shastri and published by SAGE.

Bansal (2012) found in a psychoanalytically informed study of urban Indian youth that whenever parental demands for achievement and personal conduct are imposed on the growing individual without dialogue, the adolescent feels emotionally controlled. It often leads to reactive rebellion and/or false self-organization.

Indian families are changing. Family units are becoming psychologically nuclearized. Obligations towards distant kin are contracting. This has resulted in less rigid and flatter hierarchical structures in the Indian scenario allowing children to participate more effectively in the decision-making process of the family, especially in matters that concern them. It has resulted in changing the role definitions of womanhood/motherhood and manhood/fatherhood too. There are greater possibilities of a more companionate husband–wife relationship where homemaking responsibilities are more equitably shared and affection can be more openly displayed. The woman/mother in such a household is freer from restrictions imposed on her by elderly members of the family. The father can also be more involved with his children rather than maintaining a distance from them as is expected in joint families. It is suggested that the early experience of having emotionally accessible fathers will reduce the power distance in institutions and alter the expectations that young India will have of its leaders (Kakar & Kakar, 2007). Fathers' support in daughters' education and vocational aspirations also lay down the foundation of a strong identity for women.

Importance and Inclusivity of Peer Relations

The exclusive hold of family and caste anchored identity is getting weakened for India's urban elite. Exposure to the global world has made the young realize that they cannot rely only on the traditional customs, values, and lifestyle of their parental figures and caste grouping as the basis of their own lives. Peer group is emerging as a powerful source of direction for the young. The peers are important not only as the reference group for fashion, food and travel preferences, entertainment, etc., but are also instrumental in shaping the quality of one's inner experience. They serve as important sources of information, support, and companionship to make sense of the world whose signposts are unfamiliar to the parents. Thus, peer authority is contending with parental authority.

The new age value of 'Networking' is found to be important for young people today (Bansal, 2012). Youth want to connect to diverse people from different walks of life in order to be in the knowledge of the opportunities and developments in the larger world. No longer parents and family/caste members suffice as role models. So, young seek inspiration from people beyond the family. Internet aids networking and enlarging adolescents' world of peers. It opens new paths of communication and interaction with people outside their immediate community, and across barriers of caste, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, and nationality. It provides new opportunities for love, romance, and sexual exploration too.

Schooling plays an important role in taking adolescents away from their families and into a peer society for the better part of the day. In traditional sectors of Indian society, involvement with peers and friends tends to be much greater for boys than for girls. Among both school-going and non school-going adolescents, adolescent girls spend more time with same-sex adults learning and performing household tasks, while boys often congregate in the evenings to play and talk.

The KAS-CSDS study mentioned in the earlier section provides an important finding of the inclusivity of peer relations of Indian youth. It reveals that only 11% of sampled Indian youth reported having friends from all three categories—opposite gender, from other castes, and from other religions. About 25% of the sample didn't have any friends from any of these groups in their immediate friend circle. As compared to the rural youth, urban youth showed more inter-category interaction highlighting that making friendships across social groups is not a matter of choice, but of constraints and when these constraints are removed due to education and urban setting, then people are more willing to cross borders. 30% of women as compared to 19% of men reported having no interaction with the opposite sex and persons of other castes and religion and 38% of women as compared to 47% of men reported having moderate interaction with other people. Thus, young women do have more limited experiences of peer relationships.

While peer relations are often a source of information and emotional support, they also become the basis of continuous self-other comparison along the axes of perceived superiority and inferiority. The constant exposure to comparisons with agemates and judgments by superiors lowers self-esteem, creates self-conscious doubt about 'how good one is', and gives rise to a sense of shame over one's inadequacies and failures.

Educational Contexts

Population studies in India show a decline in labour and work participation rates, especially among younger age groups. This is reflective of the withdrawal of youth from labour force or postponement of entry into the labour force in order to pursue education. More than one-third of the youth population in India has attended educational institutions during 2009–10. Figures show that the attendance rates are higher among the male and urban youth when compared to their female and rural counterparts, respectively (Dev & Venkatanarayana, 2011). However, the female youth, especially the urban female youth, followed by rural female youth have shown the highest increase in the attendance rates between the 1980s, 1990s, and 2009–2010. While increase in school enrolment and literacy rates among females and rural sections is a marker of the success of educational policies of Indian state, it is equally important to pay attention to what kind of education is being imparted in the Indian school system.

Colonial investment in schooling in erstwhile colonies like India was inspired by two factors: cheap labour to run the colonial government and to enlist the support of dominant sections of Indian society for the British empire. British intellectual

Thomas B. Macaulay in his infamous Minute on Education (1835), advocated that colonial funds for public education in India were better spent if deployed "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect". However, colonial education was also instrumental in revealing the contradictions of British rule, thereby leading to the resistance movement.

Educational sphere, including schools, technical education, and higher education, are simultaneously touted as the site of social preservation and social transformation. Along with family and caste/religious community, schools play a complementary role in socializing the child in the ethos of the society. Through authority structures, curriculum design, pedagogy, and other formal/informal practices, schools often replicate dominant sex role, class, caste, religious, nationalist values in their environment. For example, research on the educational experiences of scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) students voices the concern that the school curriculum doesn't do enough to expose all students to an understanding of how oppressive structures operate to exclude sections of society. Additionally, the assimilation of middle-class values via schooling creates fissures between the educated and uneducated among the marginalized communities. While a small minority may be able to complete their education against all odds, many drop out with an internalized sense of backwardness that society ascribes to them. It is telling that in a study conducted by Indian Express[6] on 86 toppers of two national boards in India (CICSE and CBSE) between 1996 and 2015, there was only one student from the OBC (other backward) category and no student from SC and ST categories.

The class and gender divide among young learners are quite obvious from the mushrooming of private schools in India which are managed by private trusts, religious organizations, etc. There is a steady abandonment of government schools primarily by the urban upper and lower middle class. This tendency has led to the overrepresentation of students from poor and marginalized communities in government schools across India (Nambissan, 2012). When confronted with a choice due to limited economic means, parents often send the girl child to the government school and the male child to fee charging private school, for 'better' educational experience. The Indian Express study highlighted an important characteristic of schooling in Indian context which impacts the growing child—competence in English. All the toppers sampled in the study came from English medium ICSE and CBSE schools. One of the most important reasons for the increasing popularity of private schools in India is the provision of English in these schools. Competence in English in India is not only a status symbol, but also "a socially understood shorthand for general ability" (Kumar, 2005; p. 59). The English medium schools ride on the ambitions and aspirations of Indian parents for a better future for their children. Kapil Dev, an Indian cricketing icon, was the brand ambassador of Rapidex English Speaking course in 1980s. In an interview with Hindu newspaper,[7] he recounted his experience of being ridiculed by a Cricket board official for not being able to speak in English.

[6] Chopra (2019).

[7] Lokpally (2014).

He elaborates further that he realized that in order to address the media of different countries, he had to learn proper English. Recently, a contestant in a popular Indian television show Kaun Banega Crorepati shared how he devoted himself to learn English by watching American movies and TV series.

Familial and educational spheres collide in impressing upon the child from a very young age the importance of academic achievement in India. Education is widely perceived by Indian parents as the sole means of upward mobility in the highly stratified social order of India. In most cases, the focus is on treading the well worn paths of engineering and management as they provide smooth access into the world of well paid work. Higher education is prized in vocational terms, as passports for upward mobility in the expanding service sector of liberalizing India. Government jobs continue to be highly coveted in India and are seen as a source of social status par excellence.

Competition is a ubiquitous feature of the educational life of Indian children. The English medium schools have a selective intake of students on the basis of merit. Entry into institutions of higher education is also marked by aggressive competition and/or by hefty fees which many middle and lower class parents are not able to afford. The curriculum driven, information dissemination approach and examination-oriented nature of the Indian educational system don't encourage the students to select and combine courses of their choices, get excited about ideas, and challenge their taken for granted assumptions.

Conclusion

The young in India have to deal with the contradictions of 'traditional' and 'modern', 'family culture' and 'peer culture', 'parochial culture' and 'global culture', 'old values' and 'new ideals' throughout their socialization which often create inner conflicts in them. This can also apply to the young generation across cultures also in the global world. The need of the hour is for the socio-cultural contexts to provide socialization experiences that will add to the psychological capacities and skills of the adolescents to function effectively as adults. Socialization, thus has to provide inputs for healthy individualism which allows them to make flexible adaptations to diverse settings and values. The immediate contexts of family and educational institutions must go beyond the culture of conformity and obedience and encourage youth to encounter and dialogue with differences, develop creative thought, action, and social critique, participate in decision-making in family/collective affairs and contribute to community building. Very importantly, more intensive efforts to build a strong sense of caring community, confidence, competence, and prosocial action need to be directed towards the vulnerable sections of youth who feel marginalized in the neoliberal world.

Time to Reflect

In the lives of Indian adolescents and youth, what constitute the 'traditional' sectors of personality and what constitute the 'modern' aspects of self? How does tradition and modernity co-exist together within the identity of contemporary Indian adolescents?

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