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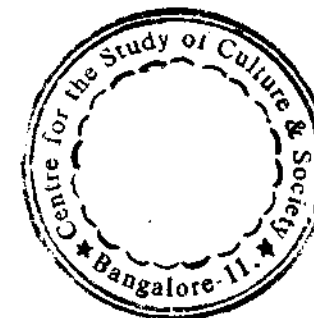
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INDIAN PERSONALITY : A PERSPECTIVE*

SHIB KUMAR MITRA

The Indian Psychoanalytical Society has done me an honour by asking me to deliver the 14th Girindra Sekhar Memorial Lecture this year. Dr. Girindra Sekhar Bose was a pioneer. A contemporary of Freud, whom he never met, Girindra Sekhar ventured out on the uncharted ocean of human mind, some time after Freud, when psychology in India was just beginning to be institutionalised in the university and psychiatry meant electro-shock therapy and mental asylum. I did not have the privilege of meeting Girindra Sekhar, but as a student of psychology and psychoanalysis, I used to hear a good deal about him. By any yardstick of evaluation, he was an exceptional person. He was a psychoanalyst, an organiser, a leader of thought and a writer. Had I been a student of Calcutta University which I was not, I would have met him. I was a student of Patna University, and it was a stroke of luck that Patna University started an Institute of Psychological Research and Service with Haripada Maiti as its Director, who was my analyst, and had brought with him the Girindra Sekhar tradition, his image and the culture that Indian Psychoanalytical Society, in those days of middle forties, had developed. I could sense what Girindra Sekhar was like, through H. P. Maiti, who was inspired by the same frontier spirit as Girindra Sekhar, who was his mentor. As this lecture has been instituted to commemorate the birth anniversary of Girindra Sekhar the founder of psychoanalysis in

* 14th Girindrasekhar Memorial Lecture delivered on 9th February, 1985, in Calcutta.

India, I pay my humble tributes to him today. I believe I would not have been what I am today, but for psychoanalysis with H. P. Maiti, an extraordinary person himself, and who, in turn, would not have been what he did become, a pioneer, without the influence and example of the charismatic personality of Girindra Sekhar. The Indian Psychoanalytical Society is a living tribute to Girindra Sekhar, its founder, and the institution of this lecture by the Society, carries forward an intellectual tradition set by the founder himself.

As a pioneer in psychoanalysis, Bose was interested in understanding the nature of man in depth, and was, therefore, led to inquire into the manifestations of the nature of man in literature, art, mythology, folklore and religion. As an Indian psychoanalyst handling Indian patients, his curiosity was aroused by the way Indian tradition, culture and religion influenced his patients, whether in the symptoms they brought to the analyst, or the defences which the patients had developed during the course of their lives, and particularly, the nature of repression, in which Bose was specially interested, or the transactions of everyday living, including the interaction with the analyst in his chamber and outside. Bose's writings in English, as well as in Bengali, give enough insight into his endeavour to understand Indian philosophy, religion and mythology from a psychoanalytical point of view. For example, Bose was interested in the bi-sexual nature of man, embodied in the image of Ardha-nariswara, indicating a cultural acceptance of bi-sexuality, although one of the problems in analysis, as Bose had found, was acceptance of femininity. Likewise, although, culturally, the divine Mother is accepted as the highest principle of energy, *Shakti*, which sustains the universe, identification with the Divine Mother was neither easy, nor common. Acceptance of femininity was not the same thing as acceptance of passivity, as Bose had found. It is acceptance of both the creative and the destructive impulses in oneself that is truly an acceptance of one's femininity, and is reflected in the idealised form of the Mother Goddess, who creates as well as kills. That femininity is not just the libidinous aspect of oneself, but also its destructive aspect, in the mind, is a view, I am led to hold, pursuing the insight of Bose. Bose was thus concerned with the relationship of Indian culture with Indian psyche, and thereby set a tradition which is to be found in the writings of later analysts, like the early papers of Dr.

T. C. Saha, Sudhir Kakar's books and some papers of Amarendra Nath Basu. I am only following this tradition.

In this lecture, I will attempt to develop a perspective on Indian personality, based on my observations, experience and studies, over a period of forty years. Over the years, I had some glimpses of the person in India, in different situations, and also in various studies. As will appear later, as I develop my presentation, I had been cogitating over various lines of thought in formulating my views on Indian personality. But I have not yet arrived at a definite formulation; what I have developed, instead, is a perspective. I will present this perspective to you in the hope that it might stimulate other researchers in this area to achieve something more substantive than what I have to offer.

The question of model personality

The relationship of culture and personality has been visualised as the development of a model personality in a culture. I have to clarify first whether I propose to revive the theory of model personality, which seems to have been given up for quite some time. I do not wish to do that, but I have considered the possibility of a model Indian personality, later. Before that, however, I will address myself to the question of cultural relativity of all psychological concepts, particularly of personality.

Scientific concepts are characterised by universality. Thus, the concepts of physics, chemistry, biology, neurology and physiology, for example, characterise certain aspects of natural phenomena, irrespective of where the concept was formulated and by whom. The fact that Einstein discovered relativity does not make the concept of relativity itself relative to the European civilisation of the twentieth century. This is not to suggest that scientific concepts do not change, they do, as new facts are found and cannot be accounted for. Scientific concepts, although universal, represent a level of understanding reached at particular points in time, and are accepted as universal, in the sense that these concepts are found to apply to *practically all* the observable phenomena which these concepts are related to, either by way of description and/or explanation. But, it is to be noted that they cover *practically all*, not *certainly all*. There is a *probability* that a concept will cover *all* the phenomena falling within the domain

of the concept, but really, the experience of the scientist which leads to conceptualisation, is limited, and it is absurd to demand that a concept is valid only when *all* the known facts are observed.

The concept of oedipus complex, for example, when Freud proposed it, is one such concept. It has raised a good deal of controversy on the grounds that it is not universal, first, because it is dependent on the scientist, who first made the observation and, also because it is not applicable to human nature everywhere; although, like other scientific concepts it is based on a limited number of observations of the phenomena subsumed under the concept of oedipus complex. It has been argued that Freud's own background as a Jew, and the culture of Vienna in his times, on the one hand, and the class from which his patients came, influenced his conceptualisation which might, therefore, be true of the late 19th and early 20th century patients, and of the persons born and brought up in the Austro-German European society and culture, but could not be generalised to cover other societies and cultures. One recalls in this context Malinowski's investigations in primitive cultures. The point is that cultural relativity was the main argument against the universality of the concepts of personality.

Once the relativity of personality and culture was recognised, it was but a natural step to investigate the interaction of culture and personality. We had a number of studies on the subject of personality in nature, society and culture, a theme on which Clackho and Murray wrote the well-known book, bearing the same title. Cross-cultural research is a very active branch of psychology today, which encompasses the whole of psychology, and not just a few concepts like that of personality. Psychological concepts are considered as culture-bound, not to mention the instruments of observation and measurement.

The anthropological tradition of the study of primitive cultures led to an ever-growing awareness of cultural differences, culture itself was the main focus of investigation in anthropology, and Ruth Benedict and Kroeber's work illustrate this. Recognising the fact that cultures are discriminably different, and personality is shaped by culture, it is only reasonable to investigate the specificity of culture personality relationship, and find out how culture shapes personality. The next step, obviously, is to expect that the personality is unique in

each culture and, so, it is possible that different cultures produce different personality types. However, psychology is oriented towards the individual, and, therefore, the uniqueness of each individual is emphasised, as against the uniqueness of each culture in the anthropological tradition. The concept of each culture and personality was proposed in this context of specificity of culture and personality, the view being that a culture lays the ground-plan for a prototype of personality, within which individual uniqueness has to operate. There were a number of studies of model personality in different cultures. The most well-known studies are those of Margaret Mead, Cora Dubois and Abram Kardiner. The growth of anthropological psychoanalysis showed similar trend. Geza Roheim and T. C. Sinha, to mention only two outstanding researchers in this area, have done painstaking work in understanding the relationship of personality and culture in depth, combining anthropological field observation with psychoanalytical insight. The attempt in anthropological psychoanalysis has been to understand how personality is shaped by culture, and, on the other hand, how cultural institutions, expressions, mores, manners, customs, beliefs, etc., are supported dynamically by personality. Cultural anthropology however, has extended its interest beyond primitive cultures to modern societies, and thus, the distinction between it and sociology has become academic. The well-known Middletown studies in America are classic examples of this trend. Marriott's work in Indian villages also falls in this category. In psychoanalysis, this extension of the model of a homologous relationship between culture and personality is reflected in the classic work of Erik Erikson entitled *Childhood and Society*, where he has covered primitive cultures as well as modern. The homologous relationship between personality and culture is extended by Erikson through his concept of 'mutuality', which gives a much organismic view of culture and personality than the logical concept of homologous relationship. In Erikson's work on identity formation and identity crisis, we have seen the same concern to understand personality in relation to culture; best expressed by the concept of mutuality. Sudhir Kakar has followed this trend.

What I have done here is a quick survey of the historical trends in the understanding of the relationship between culture and personality, centering on the concept of model personality in a culture.

For purposes of our discussion here, I have restricted myself to a few highlights, because the research literature is vast, covering a span of four decades of work by psychoanalysts, anthropologists and others. It seems to me that the trend has been to consider both personality and culture as dynamic and mutually influencing and shaping each other. There seems to be an assumption that there is a prototype of personality encouraged by a culture.

The question of national character is related to the concept of model personality and has been discussed by Inkales and Levinson. Klineberg's work seems to have burst the myth of national character, by reducing it to the status of a social stereotype of a nation. It indicates more a social perception of one nation by another, just as there are, within a nation, social perceptions about various social groups, identifiable by colour, religion, language, caste, etc.; it shows more of inter-group relations and social distances than anything else. The early research on social stereotypes centered on anti-Negro, anti-Jew prejudice in America, leading to the development of the theory of *authoritarian personality*, in the classic work of Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick and associates, who gave a dynamic view of social stereotypes and social prejudices, linking personality with the social psychology of inter-group relations. Thus, although Klineberg's work led to a scepticism about the validity of the concept of national character, subsequent attempts to understand the formation and development of social stereotype and prejudice led to the identification of a personality pattern, called the *authoritarian personality*. Plethora of studies on authoritarian personality followed the work of Frenkel-Brunswick and her associates. My early work in 1950 was also on this subject, in the context of Hindu-Muslim prejudice, and my findings confirmed some of the characteristics of the authoritarian personality, reported by Murphy.

Now, it is pertinent to ask, whether the finding of the "basic personality structure", to use Kardiner's concept, of authoritarian personality, cutting across various cultures, does not go against the theory of model personality, because authoritarian personality is not culture-specific. As the pattern of authoritarian personality has been found in cultures which are so different as German, Indian and American, it cannot be regarded as a prototype of personality in

these cultures, and certainly not as the "basic personality structure" arising in diverse cultures.

It may be useful to recall here the distinction made by Kurt Lewin between *genotype* and *phenotype* in the theory of personality. It is a useful distinction which solves the problem of finding 'types' of personality in a culture, instead of a model personality, and of the further problem of finding some 'types' which are found in common among different cultures, the one of authoritarian personality. The observed syndromes of personality in a culture are phenotypes. The genotype underlying the plurality of phenotypes need not be singular, but should be much less plural. The work of typologists, of personality, such as Jung, Kretschmer, Spranger, Sheldon, to name a few, shows that genotypes are different from a modal personality, which, by definition, has to be culture-specific, whereas a genotype is not necessarily so. Authoritarian personality is a good example of a genotype of personality which may be found in culture; whereas the basic personality structure of the people of Alor, which was identified by Cora Dubois is a phenotype found in a culture, but could also be found in some other culture.

If this analysis is correct and modal personality is regarded as a phenotype, it appears that, except in primitive cultures, most cultures would produce several phenotypes of personality, because of the heterogeneity in most cultures, some more visible as in India, others less as in America. So, we are brought to the position that the theory of modal personality has limited utility in understanding the relationship between culture and personality, limited in the sense that modal personality identifies only a phenotype.

This distinction between phenotype and genotype restores to psychology of personality the mark of a science, which it had lost in the controversy over the relativity of some concepts, like that of the Oedipus Complex. Once the Oedipus Complex is accepted as a genotypical concept, the futile search for it in different cultures, for validity, gives place to a more positivistic approach of finding its phenotypes in different cultures.

In discussing Indian personality, I am thus led to the position that what I am looking for is not a singularly unique pattern of personality, which characterises the Indian in general; there may be several Indian personality types arising out of the diversity of culture

of India. However, whether the apparent diversity of the Indian people reflects a diversity of cultures is a controversial point. We do speak of *the* Indian culture in the singular. It is possible that *the* Indian culture is a composite of several sub-cultures; there is an overarching commonality encompassing the sub-cultures, which is recognised as *the* Indian culture. In terms of personality, it means that we may expect to find a genotype underlying more than one phenotypes.

The influence of child-rearing practices

With the acceptance of the idea of a relationship between personality and culture, there followed a search of the specific ways in which culture shapes personality. Following Freud's early formulation of the genetic aspect of psychoanalytical theory, research was focussed on detailed observation of infants and children in their inter-actional milieu at home and in play. There were longitudinal studies of child development in relation to critical phases identified by psychoanalytical theory in relation to the cultural beliefs, folklore and rituals, at critical periods, like birth, breast-feeding, weaning, toilet training, etc. I will try to indicate, briefly, what light is thrown by such studies and the trend of thought on our understanding of the Indian personality.

The child-rearing practices in the various ethnic groups in India may not be the same and, therefore, we may expect differences in phenotypes of Indian personality. Although there is evidence of actual differences, obtained in some studies and investigations on child-rearing practices in some of the ethnic groups in India, the number of such studies is not large enough for us to conclude that the practices do differ significantly with caste, religion, language, class, education, urbanity, and such other social characteristics. However, even if the child-rearing practices do differ among the various groups, the more important question to ask is, whether such variations or such that phenotypes of personality are likely to be significantly different. The argument of differences may be carried too far in the direction of uniqueness. Some differences do matter, in theory and in practice, but not all, and, therefore, although there may be a good deal of similarities as well; just as the unique personality of each individual has quite a few things in common with others of

the same culture. What we are looking for is this commonness. In other words, I am assuming that the phenotypes of Indian personality are few, and there may be overlap among these types. Likewise, in the matter of child-rearing practices, I am assuming that there is a good deal in common among the various social groups in India. I think there may be only a few genotypes of personality, cutting across cultures, but, in inter-action with the culture of different societies, at different times in history, produce different phenotypes. Besides, in every culture, there are processes of change, which affect, sometimes, the ways in which children are brought up, and, therefore, the phenotype of personality also changes. Thus, permissiveness in child-rearing in America is cited as an example of a cultural change which influenced the development of some phenotypical changes in modern American personality. It seems that in recent times there have been some changes in child-rearing again and so, we may expect to see some phenotypical changes in the American personality in the near future. Likewise, it is claimed that changes in the child-rearing practices in modern West Germany, since the last World War, has led to significant changes in the authoritarian personality. I believe that there have been significant changes in child-rearing in India since independence in the urbanised and educated, middle and upper classes, and, therefore, I expect the emergence of a new phenotype of Indian personality.

It seems, however, that there has been a decline of interest in studying child-rearing practices in recent times, as compared to the boom that we had witnessed in the thirties and forties. Apart from the cultural, anthropological and psychoanalytical studies of personality and culture, which included observations of child-rearing practices in primitive cultures, where such practices are more easily observable, and have a high degree of commonality among the families, psychoanalytical theory in its early days of acceptance, when the theory of infantile sexuality and oedipus complex had shaken everybody, also led to inquiries about infancy and early childhood experiences in the family and home. Freud's observation of the child, in the case of little Hans, still remains a classic of observation of child behaviour and of linking the observations to the development of personality, in relation to the early life experiences of the child in its own family and home.

Freud's line of inquiry was picked up by later analysts, notably by Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, although, subsequently, important differences in theory and practice of psychoanalysis of the child emerged under their leadership. But, observation and interpretation of child behaviour, in an analytical setting, was common to both, which influenced later developments in the methodology of child psychology. Erikson demonstrated the use of unstructured play situation in his early work in California. But, analytical approach was not concerned so much with child-rearing practices, as with the understanding of the child as a person, coping with reality, and with the crises and challenges arising from within, from both its body and mind. The significance of the mother and the father in developing the child's ego and super-ego was in the focus of their attention. Thus, Anna Freud discovered the mechanism of identification with the aggressor, and Melanie Klein discovered the part-object, the breast, and the mechanism of projective identification, which are major contributions to the psychoanalytical theory of the development of personality. The breast in Indian mythology, art, architecture and aesthetics is noticeably significant and may help us in understanding the Indian personality. The trend of thought in child analysis reached a new height in the monumental work of John Bowlby, on attachment and loss in infancy, and his concept of *separation anxiety* has led some psychoanalytical thinkers (e.g. Wisdom) to consider this as subsuming, and even possibly replacing the concept of *castration anxiety*. The importance of phallus in Indian culture and the Indian psyche should not be under-rated, and, therefore, it is difficult to accept a replacement of castration anxiety by separation anxiety. But, it is noteworthy that separation anxiety is equally dominant in Indian religious tradition, and in poetic and mythical tradition as well. The common belief of the male child that the male genital which the female child does not apparently have, lies shrouded within the female genital, and is likely to come out later, is shared by the female child as well. The yoni-lingam nexus is represented in the religious symbolism of the phallus in India. The exaggeration of the phallus and the exaggeration of the breast in Indian sculpture should be considered together. The breast protrudes aggressively, as if asserting femininity on the one hand, and phallic masculinity on the other. The image of *ardha-nariswara*

is a natural development of this trend of unconscious phantasy, indicating bi-sexuality as the ideal. The child's sexual identity in India seems to be marked by confusion, and gives rise more to role-playing than being oneself, because being oneself requires an acceptance of one's sexual identity as either male or female. There is an association of fear with the phallus as well as the breast in our folklore, myths, and religion, which indicates a possibility of a feeling of organ inferiority and occurrence of psychic impotence. A male, thus, feels more secure with male, and a female with female, leading to sex division in informal, as well as, formal social grouping, which is common in India. Another consequence of this basic sexual identity confusion is difficulty in forming intimate relationships with either sex, because intimacy leads to exposure of oneself, of one's inferiority. The Indian personality is, thus, beset with a basic sexual problem. Of course, bisexuality in psychoanalytical theory is regarded as a universal aspect of the human being. But how a culture reacts to bisexuality is what we are concerned with here. One notices that there is a good deal of resistance in modern Western culture to accepting homosexuality. Sexual role is identified as masculine or feminine and a person, when male, has to play only the male role, and when one is female, the only role is feminine. This kind of rigidity of sex role identity goes against the ideal of social equality of the sexes. It is no wonder that the social movement of equal rights for women emerged in the West, and the fight is still going on. Indian acceptance of bisexuality has, however, made it easier for us to accept the idea that masculine-feminine characteristics are shared by both the sexes. It is not surprising that there has been idealisation of the nurturant and benevolent Mahatma Gandhi, the embodiment of non-violence and passive resistance, as the greatest national leader of India, on the one hand, and of the strong-willed, determined and aggressive Indira Gandhi, the fighter *par excellence*, on the other.

I have strayed away from the main point of discussing the trend of thinking and research in the context of child-rearing practices. Let me catch the thread again. I have indicated earlier how psychoanalytical observation of children has contributed in deepening our understanding of the development of child personality. While Freud's theory of infantile sexuality gave the first theoretical framework for observation of child behaviour and development, the most significant

contribution of the painstaking work by analysts in this area was in deepening our understanding of the development of the ego and the super-ego.

The other trend of work in the matter of child-rearing practices is reflected in the researches done by anthropologists, psychologists and child development specialists. The anthropological approach was to look closely at the culturally approved modes of treating the various developmental crises in the life of a child, from birth onwards to puberty. There are rites and rituals, beliefs and folklore surrounding every critical event in a child's life, and what the parents and the family do are prescribed ways of doing things in a given culture. Anthropological observations in the field have shown the varieties of ways in which the different cultures handle pregnancy and child-birth rituals, breast-feeding, weaning, teething, giving of first solid food, etc. The attempt has been to correlate the cultural profile of child-rearing practices with the personality profile for every culture studied.

We do not have, in India, many studies of child rearing practices, except in the anthropological analysis of primitive culture. However, there are well-known common customs in the matter of child-rearing practices, among the various Indian social-cultural groups, supported by a more or less common system of beliefs and myths, making it possible for us to make some observation. Also, there are some features of the Indian situation which are, more or less, common throughout the country.

The typical Indian girl is married rather early in life, gets pregnant early, and too frequently. The first child is expected to be a boy, and gives credit to the young mother. The rites and rituals for the fulfilment of this expectation are well-known. However, if the first-born happens to be a girl, the mother is believed to be no good. This is the beginning of over-valuation of the male over female, which shows up in later life-events. If one examines infant mortality figures, one finds that the rate is higher for female than male in our country. This is largely due to a greater degree of neglect of the female child on the part of the mother. The little girl soon discovers that the little boy is valued more by the mother, which confirms her feeling of inadequacy and inferiority related to sex, and encourages various defence-mechanisms. Typically, the Indian girl develops into a shy, coy and demure young girl, who carefully covers herself up with a sari, but, at

the same time, likes to decorate herself and show off with ornaments from the head to the toe. There is a tendency to attract attention to the breasts by a mannerism of pulling the sari across the breasts ever so often. The architectural pieces and painting, which are very good objects of art show the young Indian female in the fashion I have described.

When the daughter is married, the parents consider it an act of giving away. This is not so in the case of a boy. This attitude confirms the inferiority of the girl, as if the parents get rid of a burden through marriage. For the girl, the event of marriage is repetition of her experience of the first separation from her mother, and of being treated as inferior, even unwanted. Hence, the newly-wed daughter breaks down weeping at the time of going to the groom's house. The social seal is put on separation by the custom of other ladies present on the occasion participating in a ritualised wailing. Dowry is a symbol of compensation for the inferiority of the girl, and the girl suffers in the hands of the in-laws if the dowry is inadequate. It heightens the feeling of inadequacy and inferiority in the girl and the in-laws usually do not fail in reminding her of it. Hence, homicide or suicide is the end result of many marriages.

Thus, the fate of the boy and the girl are not the same, and a difference in personality is to be expected, as also a difference due to rural and urban status and education.

I should mention here the study of six cultures by some anthropologists, psychologists and others. They had studied six cultures, of which India was one. Their finding with regard to the Indian mother was that, among the six cultures, the Indian mother was not found to be as warm as some of the others. Their study was based on observation of the mother in rural households. This appears to be a finding which supports my view that the Indian mother, who becomes mother at an immature age, bears a large number of children in quick succession, works hard in the household to keep the family going as well as works with the husband in the field, the farm, road construction, building construction, dam construction, and such other gainful activities, can hardly be a very warm person. Besides, as I have shown already, the Indian girl is treated from birth onwards as an inferior person, and her only source of adequacy can come from procreation, where she scores over men. The warm mother is hardly

portrayed in architecture ; what is portrayed is the voluptuous seductress. What is worshipped is the powerful mother who can give everything and destroy anything. She has the male under her feet when she is Kali, and kills the male, when she is Durga. She rides the lion or the tiger, when she is Amba. To speak in terms of Jung's theory, the archetypal images of the Mother are in the unconscious of the woman in India. She worships these images because they represent her ideal self, what she wishes to become, so that she can maintain a modicum of self-respect herself, and some narcissism, in order to suppress her death instinct. Death wish is very common with Indian women, and it is expressed easily in everyday life. It is tempting to go further into the ramifications and implications of the relative lack of warmth of the mother, but I wish to restrain myself for the sake of presentation of some other ideas.

What I have described about the Indian mother so far leads me on to the consideration of the early oral stage of development of the child. Breast-feeding is common in India: The use of bottle and baby foods is limited to a small segment of the population in cities and towns. Demand-feeding is the rule rather than time schedule. The infant gets the breast more often than is needed. It is used for play and is used as a pacifier. Whether the breast has enough milk is another matter. More often than not, the breast does not have enough milk. However, there is, generally, permissiveness with the infant, and the infant has a good deal of close physical warmth and proximity of the mother, as if in compensation of lack of inner warmth. Concern over food, indigestion, stomach-aches and pains is very common with the adult. There is also concern over clean and unclean food. Such oral concern seem to indicate the basic Indian problem of coping with the 'bad breast' within.

Suckling of the breast, whether with or without milk, however, continued for a short time, because another child is born too soon. Thus begins envy, jealousy and rivalry, focussed on the breast, the 'good breast' that is possessed by the next child, also causing separation from the mother, as physical warmth is also drastically cut by the mother, who has to take care of the new born. Thus, develops a craze for physical proximity, for touch, to overcome separation anxiety. This is noticeable in two ways : (1) as touch taboo, maintaining a distance, on the one hand, and as (2) as physical

hugging among friends of the same sex, as if one is not secure otherwise, as if one is still separate, unless one touches the other. But there is a split between the 'good' and the 'bad' breast, laying the foundation for all later object-relations. The 'good' breast is a phantasy, while the 'bad' breast is the experience. One wishes for the one, while one avoids the other. The 'good' breast is portrayed in Indian architecture. The Indian mind is in conflict over the good and the evil ; and all that is real is evil, a generalisation which is fundamental to Indian philosophy and religion, and noticed by Western observers and thinkers, who called it the other-worldliness of the Indian.

We should take note of the emergence of envy, jealousy and rivalry, to which I have drawn your attention earlier. I consider it important, because it seems to me that this characterises much of the inter-personal relationship in later life. One of the oft-mentioned aspects of our life in work-situations is jealousy and rivalry, which prevents co-operation and team-work. The Indian excels in those situations where one works alone, like most of artistic, aesthetic and creative activities. But where the Indian has to work in a team, it is difficult because of the currents and cross-currents of envy, jealousy and rivalry, which are rooted in early infancy. Envy, jealousy and rivalry are, however, quite common elsewhere in the world. The distinguishing feature with us is that we are also very sensitive to these aspects, and use it to rationalise our failures. The roots of Indian aggressiveness lie in the oral phase of development infancy, when the child becomes mischievous and takes to biting, maybe another child or adult. Biting is a frequent manifestation of hostile impulses. Later, in the life of the child, it taken the form of back-biting and calumny. There are quite a few developments in the early childhood centring on feeding. However, I now pass on to the other stages of development.

Toilet-training in India is confined only to a small segment of the population, viz., the educated urban elite, who are very often described as Westernised in a derogatory sense, which itself indicates that toilet-training is not a part of Indian culture. By and large, the infant is left to itself, as also the very young child, who may only be at the stage of toddler, and urination and defecation take place any where, any time. As the child begins to walk, the child learns

to go outdoors for purposes of elimination, but leaves the excreta where the act is done. The child may be told by parents and others to use specific spots, either within the dwelling unit or outside, but there is hardly any insistence and punishment for failure to follow rules. Actually the child learns from observing what other children do. There is no compulsive cleanliness on the part of adults. The child does not wash after defecation for quite a long time, may be until it is five years old. Thus, there is a remarkable laxity and permissiveness in toilet-training. The child is not ashamed of its nakedness in public, nor is it ashamed of being dirty. One of the consequences of such an atmosphere of tolerance and permissiveness is that impulse control does not develop early and poor impulse-control characterises later adult behaviour. One does it wherever and whenever one is impelled from within to do it. There is not much concern about it being public and within view; there is nothing secret or private. There is no reaction-formation, and so, the secret does not become sacred. We ourselves doubt our ability to maintain secrecy. It is no wonder that our topmost secrets have been going out for the last several years.

There is, however, another aspect of laxity in the matter of toilet-training. The child feels a continuity with nature in sucking the mother's breast, followed by eliminating in public, and at any time it likes, like the birds and animals it sees around, e.g., dogs, rats, cows and buffaloes, crows and sparrows, to name a few of the birds commonly seen. Such an experience of being like the living things around gives a sense of being one with nature, which, however is confused with being natural. It develops tolerance, a remarkable Indian characteristic, which helps in tolerating dirt and filth, whether it is one's own creation or of others. One accepts the bad things, as if it is an aspect of life, that is evil anyway, and develops sense of unconcern and detachment. Like the Ganga, life goes on with all the pollution in it. Those who do not like it move away from the dirt, in a metaphorical sense as well, rather than try to change at source. It is not other-worldliness, but a feeling of being one with nature, putting less premium on individuality. Privacy, autonomy and individuality do not form a part of our cultural heritage. Hostile impulses are not associated with anal experience, because nobody bothers about anal erotism which, thus,

remains in the Indian adult, and is expressed in various ways, a point which I need not elaborate before this audience. Thus, the hostile impulses aroused first in the early oral phase remain linked with the mother and siblings, and find oral expression in jealousy and rivalry over the possession of the mother, displacing the siblings. Later, anal erotism gets linked with it, and so jealousy and rivalry are expressed in throwing dirt and filth around the hated persons. Great pleasure is taken in spreading dirty stories about them.

In considering child-rearing practices, I can discern the practices centring around birth, breast-feeding, weaning and toilet-training. Thereafter, I do not find much cultural concern about sex-play at the phallic stage, or voyeurism and exhibitionism, independence training, making the child sleep separately, and so on. Sex-play is quite common and is not taken seriously. There is little concern about exposure of one's body in taking bath, or in acts of elimination, besides the fact that, in the climate of India, it is pleasurable to keep the body exposed. That it is a matter of shame to expose one's body is learnt much later, and such shame is superficial, not having been generated naturally in early childhood. Sleeping separately is not an Indian custom. Like toilet-training, it is also a Western cultural mode. The family in India becomes a strong cultural unit, because of the togetherness of eating, dressing, sleeping, working, playing and even acts of elimination. Independence training is not a noticeable child-rearing practice. Children are left to themselves, and they grow remarkably into independence, themselves. They have to develop a lot of initiative, enterprise and cleverness in taking care of themselves, in matters of food, clothing, bathing, eliminating, sleeping, playing and so on. They develop into resourceful persons with all the attendant exploitative characteristics that go with it, because only then can they survive and grow. The personality pattern is adaptive.

The father is physically close, but remains a distant figure in inter-personal relationship. He is the authority in decision-making and is the main source of livelihood. He hardly takes interest in child-rearing. As soon as the children grow up a little, may be five or six, they go to the field, or the shop where father works in the village. The children see more of their father at work. They soon see the social transactions which take place between their father and

other adults in the community. These transactions are seldom pleasant and, more often than not, exploitative. Quarrels and conflicts are very frequent, sometimes leading to violence. This happens also at home, where the father and the mother fall out and fall upon one another. The children see as well as experience beating and being beaten, exploiting as well as being exploited. Physical violence takes on the meaning of an instrument for impulse-control and control over others. There is hardly any privacy at home, in the matter of intimacy between father and mother. The sex act thus falls in the spectrum of aggressiveness and violence, and it appears natural that the violent quarrel between the parents end up in sex act. Again, there is a continuity, as in nature, where the children observe the animals around them. Neither the father nor the mother appears as the purveyor of good and evil, in the kind of world in which the children live and grow. There is a greater acceptance of oneself and of human nature, as it were, than what we see in the educated, urbanised elite, whose personality is different from what I have attempted to describe here. It appears to me, therefore, that the classical oedipus complex, as we have known it, does not normally develop in the Indian. There is a diffusion of identity and an unclear identification with the parents. What the child learns is to play roles, the role of the father if he is a boy; the role of the mother if she is a girl. Indian culture emphasises role-playing, and roles define social relationships, both within and outside the family. Thus, a high degree of deference for the father and the mother is a typical Indian attitude. Deference helps the Indian to maintain distance and behave ritually. Ritualistic behaviour is a way of controlling one's impulses, libidinous or aggressive. To speak a lie is condoned in view of the over-riding importance of deference. To give up deference is to expose one's exploitative, aggressive or love impulses, the control of which from within is poor and anxiety-arousing. Hence a safe distance is ritualised in our society; one feels safe in following a prescribed set of behaviour and rules of conduct and, thus, it is not that bad to speak a lie, because it helps to maintain the prescribed role and ritual. Indian conscience is weak and a conscientious person is highly valued, because it is so rare. Gandhiji's greatness lay in identifying truth and non-violence as the twin inter related problems

of the Indian personality, and, so, day in and out, he had urged his fellow countrymen to uphold truth and practise non-violence in their daily life. We are thus led to the view that the Indian super-ego is weak.

Influence of culture and history

I think that the influence of culture and history of a country in shaping the personality has not received the attention which it deserves. In thinking about Indian personality, I found that Indian history and culture are important influences. I have considered culture earlier. Now let me draw your attention to history. The history of a nation can be considered from various points of view. We know that in the matter of Indian history, there are serious controversies among experts in India as to how one interprets certain events in India, as, for example, the rise and fall of Buddhism, the impact of Islam and the influence of Christianity, each of which was associated with empire. For our purposes, however, I suggest a psychological way of looking at history. We may consider history as a series of resolutions of conflicts and crises, as in individual life-history, and the characteristics of great leaders who, at such critical periods, have shaped our history. Leaders bring out clearly the broad personality characteristics of the people whom they lead and, particularly, their ego-ideal, as Freud had shown long ago in his *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*.

In considering the crises and conflicts of Indian history, I find it difficult to conceptualise, because of my lack of knowledge of the subject. But I think it should be possible to conceptualise, in a psychological and analytical framework, the course of Indian history in terms of conflicts and how these were resolved or not resolved. For example, India has been open to invasion for a long time from the north-west. The successive invasions have created problems of assimilation and accommodation, without losing identity. The conflict has been over identity. The conflict was never resolved, because the external forces had conquered us, and they had stayed on as out-groups, ever since the first invasion by the so-called Aryans. However, one of the consequences of such repeated invasions was a diffusion of Indian identity and a strengthening of a narrower

sectarian identity. Culturally, however, there were processes of assimilation and accommodation, on both sides, but retaining the boundaries of in-group and out-group, a characteristic which is noticeable during birth, marriage, death and religious rites and rituals, often flaring up into communal violence, reminding us of the inviolacy of the psychological space which separates the groups. Earlier, we had considered the problems arising out of bisexuality and unclear identification in the development of personality of the Indian child, preparing a fertile ground for a weak national identity and a stronger sectarian identity. The strength of sectarian identity is based on our social structure, which hinges on deference and social distance. Considering our earlier analysis, the cohesion of the family unit depends on ritualised relationships which contain hostile impulses. Any threat to the family and to our sectarian identity, therefore, not only arouses anxiety and defensive reactions but, depending on the quantitative factor in threat, uncovers the hostile impulses.

It is interesting to note that all invasions of India have come from the north-west and from the Asiatic region, with the notable exception of Alexander's invasion, which, however, was short-lived and confined to only a part of the north-west. The last invasion of India by the British was, therefore, remarkable in the sense that it did not come from the north-west, and it was not Asiatic. It was the first sizeable impact of Western culture and civilisation, which perhaps created the first discontinuity in Indian culture. For the first time, a national identity formation became a live issue. Whether such identity should go back to tradition, and maintain its continuity and, in that process, preserve sectarian identity, was an issue. Whether a national identity should be built on reformation of the old tradition and culture, by assimilating those aspects of Western culture which would not contradict our culture was another issue. Whether national identity should be formed on the political concept of a 'nation', and on modernisation, which is basically Westernisation, to my way of thinking, was another issue. We have not yet solved these issues. All the three trends are visible even now, making the problem of national integration and unity the most significant crisis of contemporary India.

Looking at it from the point of view that I have presented before you, it appears to me that the basic problem lies rooted in early child-

hood, which we have discussed earlier. Because modernisation is an euphemism for Westernisation, it is rejected, so as to preserve the rituals and role-playing, which define relationships within the family, and help to contain the hostile impulses which would otherwise wreck the family. Reformation of old tradition and culture did, however, take place although it transformed only the educated and urbanised Indian. It is important to note that in my analysis of personality, I have not attempted to focus attention on the educated and urbanised Indian, which is a small minority, although influential, and is recognised as a social class today. Education as well as urbanisation developed with the impact of British domination over India. It has far-reaching consequences, however, because in the not too distant future, perhaps by the turn of the century, education and urbanisation, the two most significant levers of modernisation, would have affected a majority of our people, and thereby hit at the very fabric of our village society and culture, in terms of child-rearing, family relations and social relationships. But, as of today, the fact is that the majority is illiterate and at best has four years of schooling, who claim literacy, and a large majority of the population is rural. What I have considered as Indian personality is the phenotype that is produced by our rural culture and illiteracy. The impact of Westernisation has produced another phenotype of personality to be found in the minority of educated and urbanised Indians, whose alienation is off-quoted. But they are no less Indian, and share, along with the rural illiterate Indian, some of the basic characteristics to which I have drawn your attention. However, there are important differences, due to differences in the family set-up, education and urban culture.

In conclusion, I wish to give here two quotations from Freud to justify my emphasis on education, culture, leaders and history. These quotations are from the third chapter of Freud's book, *The Ego and the Id*, where he discusses the development of super-ego or ego-ideal :

"The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading), the stricter will be the domination of super-ego over the ego later on—in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt"

"It is easy to show that the ego-ideal answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man. As a substitute for a longing for the father, it contains the germ from which all religions have evolved. The self-judgement which declares that the ego falls short of its ideal produces the religious sense of humility to which the believer appeals in his longing. As a child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and other in authority, their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego-ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship. The tension between the demands of *conscience* and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a *sense of guilt*. Social feelings rest on identifications with other people, on the basis of having the same ego-ideal"

I give these quotations here, because I find that my views receive support from Freud. The perennial Indian concern over authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading, the four factors mentioned by Freud, which help repression, expresses a genuine need in us to develop a strong ego-ideal to overcome basic weaknesses in the ego.

In the end, I thank you once again for giving me this opportunity and for your patient hearing.

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EGO IDENTITY, IDENTITY CRISIS AND IDENTITY DIFFUSION—AN EXPOSITION OF THE ERIKSONIAN MODEL

GAURANGA BANERJEE

At the outset, I would express my gratitude to the Indian Psychoanalytical Society for inviting me to address this learned house. The subject of the symposium today is "Psychology of adolescents". I shall discuss the psychosocial phenomena of Ego identity, Identity crisis and Identity diffusion, all of which occur in adolescence. To understand these phenomena one must trace the evolution of the concept of ego on which these phenomena rest. In doing so we shall confine ourselves within the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis as propounded by Freud and his followers.

The evolution of the concept of ego runs parallel to the development of the psychoanalytical theory of Freud. Three phases of development of the concept of ego can be traced in the writings of the master and a fourth phase has been developed, after his death, at the hands of Hartmann, Kris, Rapaport, Erikson and others.

In the first phase (upto 1897)—containing the early concepts of the ego—the ego was not always precisely defined. It referred to the dominant mass of conscious ideas and moral values which were distinct from the impulses and wishes of the repressed unconscious. The ego was regarded as an agent that erected a defence against certain ideas that were unacceptable to consciousness. The functioning of this early ego was, to a degree, contradictory, since its primary purpose of reducing tension was jeopardised by the process of repression which led to a damming up of energy and the conse-

quent production of anxiety. (Freedman et al 1975). The clarification of this contradiction required further elucidation of the function and nature of organization of the ego.

During the second phase (1897—1923) Freud grappled with these problems and gradually approached with more definitive resolution by the structural theory. He postulated the concept of cathexis and counter-cathexis and logically arrived at the idea that ego was a structural entity separated definitively from the instinctual drives. Still the ego was considered to be weak and dependent on the id. The ego was the helpless rider on the id's horse, more or less obliged to go where the id wished to go (ibid).

During the third phase (1923—37) the view of the ego underwent a radical change. It was in this later part of his life that Freud gave the final shape to his idea of the ego. In accordance with his idea ego may be defined as a substratum of personality, comprising an organisation of functions which share the task of mediating between the instincts and the outside world. Freud had hinted at the importance of reality in the adaptive function of the ego and finally made explicit the assumption that ego has independent roots of inheritance distinct from the inherited roots of the instinctual drives.

It brought the ego into prominence as a powerful regulatory force that was mainly responsible for the integration and control of behavioural responses. The rudimentary idea about the autonomy of the ego was formulated at this stage.

The fourth phase developed after Freud's death (in 1939) concerned itself with two aspects of his later notions of the ego—viz the autonomy of the ego and the problem of adaptation. One of the important aspects of the fourth phase is the development of the idea that the adaptive functioning of the organism is intimately connected with the requirements of external reality and that it must adaptively interact with the personal and social environment.

This concern with reality has led Erik Erikson to pose the question of adaptation of the personality through the whole of the life-cycle. He has viewed the progressive elaboration and integration of personality in terms of the resolution of life-crises that arise in various phases of human experience from birth to death. The stimulus given by Erikson has shifted the emphasis from the operation

of ego functions themselves to the broader social and cultural contexts within which the ego develops and functions.

To fulfil the aim of the discussion being held this afternoon, I would venture to say a few words about Erikson's contribution to this area of the psychology of adolescents.

Erikson brought Freud's psychoanalytic theory out of the bounds of the nuclear family, shifting his attention beyond the moulding power of the child's early life in the family set up to the wider milieu of the social world, where children interact with peers, teachers, national ethics and expectations. He added to Freud's theory of infantile sexuality by concentrating on the child's development beyond puberty, thus rejecting the notion that personality development is firmly fixed in early childhood.

Though Freud, in his later years, paid attention to the psychosocial developments of the ego, it remained for Erikson to take the focus of psychoanalysis from pathology to health. In considering the healthy personality, he selected the ego as the tool by which a person organizes outside information, tests perception, selects memories, governs actions adaptively, and integrates the capacities of orientation and planning. This is the positive ego, whose functioning produces a sense of self in a state of heightened well-being.

We shall follow the stages of ego development along the path laid down by Erikson. It is he who has pointed out that this development covers the entire life-span from birth to death.

Erikson has postulated eight stages of ego development. The stages are Oral-sensory, muscular-anal, locomotor-genital, latency, puberty, young adulthood, adulthood and maturity. The first stage covers the first year of life and the other stages cover the older age-groups in that order. The first four stages upto the stage of latency account for the prepubertal age group. We shall touch upon these stages briefly and discuss the fifth stage—"the stage of puberty and adolescence : ego identity versus role confusion" in greater details as this is of primary interest to us today.

The oral-sensory stage is the stage of trust versus mistrust. Depending on what happens between the baby and mother, the baby develops a basic feeling of trust that his wants will be frequently satisfied. If his basic trust is strong he has an in-built and life-long spring of hope, instead of a doom.

Muscular-anal stage is the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt. If the parents allow him to function with some autonomy and if they are supportive without being overprotective, he gains a certain confidence in his autonomy by age 3. Autonomy overbalances shame and doubt. But if he is over-restrained, he feels enraged and shamed. Once shamed he mistrusts his own rightness and comes to doubt himself.

The third stage is the locomotor-genital stage (upto 5 years) which is marked by initiative versus guilt. At this stage the child can initiate activities both motor and intellectual. If these initiatives are encouraged, they will be re-inforced. If he is forced to feel lead about his initiatives, a sense of guilt will develop. Gradually the child extracts more initiative than guilt and turns happily outward from home.

The fourth stage is the stage of latency : industry versus inferiority (6-11 years). For the first time, the child can really use the tools that adults use. Industry is the key-note of this period. He can become confident of his ability to use adult materials. Alternatively he may forsake industry itself and conclude that he is inferior and cannot operate the things of the world.

The fifth stage—the stage of puberty—adulthood deals with ego identity versus role confusion. Here I owe you a working definition of the term "adolescence". Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. It starts with puberty and lasts till the age of 22 or so. There is some controversy over the outer limit of this period. For our limited purpose, it is needless to enter into that controversy. It is sufficient to point out that this period is of critical significance for the growing individual and for society. Growth proceeds very rapidly on biological and psychosocial levels.

The most conspicuous is the biological development. The child grows up in his body proportions and the physiological changes of sexual maturing accompany them. The endocrinological and musculo-skeletal growth is capped by the development of new cognitive capacities for conceptualization. These capacities enable him to appreciate his unique skill and talents, his values and ultimately his needs for choosing new attachments to people around him. These changes inevitably have their psychosocial consequence. It starts with the psychological separation from the parental support obtained

in childhood and proceeds to the development of new attachments which will be instrumental in the formation of a personal identity.

By the term "identity" Erikson means a sense of sameness and continuity in the inner core of the individual maintained amid external changes. The adolescent passes through a period of struggle to achieve this identity. In his search for identity, the youth cares a good deal about himself, worships heroes, espouses ideology and falls in love with members of the opposite sex. He talks a lot about himself and groups to get a clearer picture of himself. Still indecision and confusion persist. Erikson has coined the term "identity crisis" to describe this phenomenon. Identity crisis may be defined as a chaotic sense of the self, a disorientation regarding one's true self and one's role in society.

According to Erikson, everyone has to pass through this crisis in one form or another before the emergence of ego identity as a psychosocial phenomenon at the end of adolescence.

Here I would remind you of a famous poem written by Rabindranath Tagore when he was 21 years old. It is NIRJHARER SWAPNABHANGA. This poem is a super expression of the wonder, delight and ecstasy of an adolescent on the emergence of a sense of identity. Let me quote a few lines in original Bengali.

Aji a Prabhaty Rabir Kar
Kemaney Pasila Praner Par.
Kemaney Pasila Guhar Andhare

PRABHAT PAKHIR GAN.

* * *

Ki Jani Ki Holo Aji, Jagia Uthila Pran,
Dur Hotey Suni Jena Mahasagarer Gan.

* * *

Orey Aj Ki Gan Geyechhey Pakhi,
Esechhey Rabir Kar.

The poet has found within himself the awakening of a singing bird that he is. The world has revealed itself before his eyes in a new light.

But he had his quota of identity crisis as well, in the form of uncertainty, confusion and restlessness.

Let me quote again.

Hethaya Hothaya Pagaler Praya
Ghuriya Ghuriya Matiya Beraya—
Bahiritey Chaya, Dekhite Na Paya,
Kothaya Karar Dwar.

* * *

Kenarey Bidhata Pachan Hena,
Charidikey Tar Bandhan Kena,
Bhangrey Hriday, Bhangrey Bandhan.

This crisis may be acute and prolonged in some people and less so in others. When individual identity is yet to be developed, group identity becomes much more necessary. Indecision and confusion often cause the young people to cling to each other in a clannish manner. If the development of group identity is retarded, identity confusion will arise and ego identity will be delayed. How the development of group identity may be retarded is exemplified by the life of the man who introduced the term "identity crisis".

Erikson was born of Danish parents and brought up by his step-father who was a German-Jew. Erikson's parents chose to keep his real parentage a secret from him and from others. As a blue-eyed white boy he was taunted as a non-Jew among Jews. At the same time he was called a Jew by his white class-mates. His being a Dane living in Germany added to his identity confusion.

Group values are implanted in childhood and group identity is developed in the early adolescence. The adolescent tries to integrate what he knows of himself and of his world into a continuum of past knowledge, present experience and future expectations. By working through the process of group identity and identity crisis, the adolescent approaches young adulthood with a strong sense of ego identity. One who has developed a strong sense of ego identity is capable of assuming independent responsibility for one's own thinking, decision-making, work, life-style, values, ideologies and sexual component of loving. He must be able to establish himself

as a person apart from his family and to live in a community setting.

The factors which adversely influence the development of ego identity are : (1) Failure to resolve the psychosocial conflicts of the earlier stages of ego development i.e. attaining trust, autonomy, initiative and industry. (2) Those whose lives have already seen rapid change between childhood and adolescence have trouble with the new change. (3) Minority group members see possibilities narrowing in a limiting manner. (4) Girls may have difficulties in some cultures where they are relegated to a reduced status.

When the development of ego identity is seriously affected, many adolescents pass into a traumatic state called "identity diffusion". It is a state of regression in which he experiences uncertainty as to just "who he is" and "what life is all about". (Coleman, 1964). In the height of this condition, suicidal attempts, drug dependence, various types of acting out and other behaviour disorders may occur.

Some experts have pointed out that many emotionally disturbed adolescents are not rebelling but rather searching for self definition and meaningful standards of conduct to follow.

The factors which are usually held to be responsible for the development of identity diffusion are : (1) Failed psychological emotional separation process from childhood attachment. (2) Failure to develop new attachment and conceptualization of oneself. (3) Lacking in preparation for the inevitable changes in his "self" and life-situation. (5) Conflict between the roles for which the peer group rewards him and those which his parents and society expect him to assume. (6) Loosening of family ties and lack of empathic support to the growing youth.

In fine, it may be pointed out that the stresses of this period are to a large extent rooted in the particular form of socio-cultural organisation. In certain societies, the adolescent reaches adult status without any undue emotional disturbances. These societies have a well-knit family system and offer well-structured social roles for the adolescent. The child is adequately prepared to face the problems of new interpersonal relationship (including heterosexual relationship) and changing status. If this type of social support is available, there is no reason to anticipate any unusual difficulty

during this period of physical change and emotional "storm and stress".

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