

# ADOLESCENCE DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOUR, SELF-REALISATION, AND INTERNET INFLUENCE IN MOHIT PARIKH'S *MANAN*

RITESH<sup>1</sup> & DR. ARUN GULERIA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of English, HPU

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of English, ICDEOL, HPU

## Abstract

This research paper examines Mohit Parikh's novel *Manan* through the perspectives of teenage behaviour, introspection, and the influence of the internet. The story explores the difficulties of puberty, examining at how adolescents deal with problems including communication barriers and inferiority complexes. The juxtaposition of reality vs. speculation, especially concerning adult sex, adds depth to the protagonist's journey. In addition, the study investigates into how much peer pressure influences teenage behaviour and how the internet can be both a beneficial and harmful resource for self-discovery through an interdisciplinary analysis encompassing psychology, sociology, and literary criticism. This paper contributes to our understanding of the complex interplay between adolescence development and digital influence in contemporary society.

**Key Words:** Puberty, Identity Crisis, Barrier of Communication, Peer Pressure, Inferiority Complex, Adult Sex, Internet, Self-Analysis, Self-Realisation

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of emotional, mental, social, physical, sexual, and behavioural development. It can be labeled as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Georgette Paulson considers it as “a culturally constructed period that generally begins as individuals reach sexual maturity and ends when the individual has established an identity as an adult within his or her social context” (174). “The term adolescence,” Elizabeth B. Hurlock states, “has a broader meaning and includes mental, emotional, and social as well as physical maturity” (173). Maturity in all spheres of life leads an individual towards an adult stage and marks a shift in his/her identity.

Especially, the beginning of adolescence is associated with puberty, which according to Paulson is “a period of several years in which rapid physical growth and psychological changes occur, culminating in sexual maturity” (177). Puberty is characterised by those developmental changes that “lead [adolescents] to confusion, to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and in many cases to unfavourable behavior” (Hurlock 153-4). Such changes also influence the relationship between children and their parents. In most cases, these changes cause communication barriers between adolescents and their parents and sometimes between adolescents and their colleagues.

In addition, adolescence signifies a transformation in the behaviour, identity, and roles of a person in society. Entering this stage, individuals face manifold transformations approximately at the same time. For instance, besides undergoing growth in their body and mind, they have to deal with new people, responsibilities, and situations (Paulson 174). However, Hurlock says that during such period individuals feel confused regarding the roles

they are expected to perform. In fact, their status is vague and they, in Hurlock view, are neither children nor adults. Hurlock states, “This ambiguous status presents a dilemma for the teen-ager that contributes greatly to the adolescent ‘identity crisis,’ or the problem of ego-identity” (174). Thus, they are confronted by identity crisis and find it difficult to cope with this shift in their status and identity.

During this stage, issues such as self-esteem and self-identity also trouble individuals. As a result, they “evolve their own self-concepts within the peer context. In their attempts to become more independent adolescents often rely on their peer group for direction regarding what is normal and accepted” (Paulson 175). Sometimes, this reliance on peers causes the feelings of inferiority complex in adolescents. In fact, they are very sensitive and the feelings of inferiority complex in them is occasioned by the lack of support from and the ignorance by peers. Adolescents also come under peer pressure due to their dependence on and blind faith in their peers. Peer pressure leads adolescents astray and puts them in difficult situations.

Moreover, adolescence is marked by speculation and unrealism that pose other challenges in front of adolescents. Nevertheless, their growing experiences, such as social, personal, intellectual, etc., and logical thinking lead them towards reality and they see their families, colleagues, and lives realistically. Hurlock asserts that after inclining towards reality adolescents become happy and suffer “less from disillusionment or disappointment” (175). They begin to adapt themselves as per the new situations and accept the stark realities of life and world.

Furthermore, media, internet, expectations of society, and so on play their significant role in the lives of individuals during this stage. Concerning this, Paulson says, “young people are bombarded by images of violence, sex, and unattainable standards of beauty. This exposure, combined with the social, emotional, and physical changes facing adolescents, has contributed to an increase in school violence, teen sexuality, .” (175). Nevertheless, internet, media, societal expectations influence adolescents both in positive and negative ways. The internet has become an integral part of life in recent time because it “carries a vast range of information resources and services, such as the interlinked hypertext documents and applications of the World Wide Web (WWW), electronic mail, telephony, and file sharing” (“Internet”). Especially, it enables a person to obtain information concerning all aspects of life including social as well as personal. Adolescents employ this resource for getting information regarding such issues that trouble them and attract their attention, for instance sex.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although there are many authors and philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, etc. who have given their views on the developmental phases of children. However, in the field of psychology, the systematic study of adolescents began towards the end of the nineteenth

century. Many important figures played their significant role in this direction. They analysed adolescence period in their own distinct ways and, on the basis of their analysis, offered their opinions on the personality and behaviour of adolescents. Especially, G. Stanley Hall was the first to see adolescence as a distinct phase of human development. Hall's contribution to the study of adolescence lies in his two-volume work which was published in 1904 under the title *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Religion and Education*. Besides Hall, other prominent psychologists who analysed the developmental periods of childhood and adolescence include Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and others. Freud, known for his theory of psychoanalysis, introduced the concept of "psychosexual stages of development." He also emphasises the role of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* in the development of an individual by considering "libido" ('sexual energy') as the motivating force behind all human behaviour. Similarly, Erikson is known for introducing the eight stages of psychosocial development.

The psychological and social issues pertaining to adolescents and adolescence are also highlighted and discussed in many literary works. The genre of literature which deals with the life and character of adolescents is known as Young Adult Literature. Especially, the stories that revolve around the period of development marking a transition from childhood to adulthood are classified as coming-of-age novels or problem novels. Another important genre which lays emphasis on the life journey of adolescence is Bildungsroman. Bildungsroman, J. A. Cuddon says, "refers to a novel which is an account of the youthful development of a hero or heroine (usually the former). It describes the process by which maturity is achieved through the various ups and downs of life" (77). Similarly, Chris Baldick defines Bildungsroman as "A kind of novel that follows the development of the hero or heroine from childhood or adolescence into adulthood, through a troubled quest for identity" (39). Cuddon highlights the ups and downs in the life of the hero or heroine of a literary work during adolescence. Whereas Baldick puts emphasis on the hero or heroine's quest for identity. Thus, Young Adult Literature addresses and portrays various problems, situations, and issues associated with adolescents such as peer pressure, inferiority complex, behavioural changes, identity crisis, communication barriers, etc. It also focuses on other aspects of adolescent behaviour including introspection, self-realisation, friendship, puberty, sex, and so on.

In addition, the representation of adolescence period and adolescent characters is found in other genres of literature. Adolescents are depicted as important characters in many literary forms including drama, poetry, fiction, etc. Highlighting the role of adolescent characters in literature Monu Bhujel says, "there is hardly a literary form, be it poetry, drama, fiction, short story and ballad where adolescence/adolescents do not appear in various design or as reinforcing elements" (1). Even adolescents also figure in Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Other works in which adolescents have been depicted as major and minor characters include Henry Feilding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*

(1860), Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), and so on. Indian English writers including R. K. Narayan, Ruskin Bond, Anita have also focused on lives and characters of adolescents in their works. Important Indian literary works dealing with the adolescent characters include R. K. Narayan's *The Vender of the Sweet* (1967), Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) and *The Village by the Sea* (1982), Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrell* and *The Room on the Roof*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Mohit Parikh's *Manan*, and Himanjali Sankar's *The Lies We Tell*.

Literature presents the past and present events and circumstances in an imaginative way. Authors of literary works, such as novels, short-stories, poetry, plays, etc. try to portray such incidents and issues in their works which can draw the attention of readers on account of their resemblance to the real life and world. Literary works focusing on the contemporary scenario depict those characters that perform the same activities as people perform in their day-to-day life for example, driving a car, going to workplace, school, and temple, using internet and social media, reading books, and so on. The use of internet and social media has become an inseparable part of life nowadays. This is an emerging theme in literary works at present. Especially, Mohit Parikh's novel *Manan* is an important work in this regard because it tries to explore the theme of the positive and negative impact of internet use in society.

## **METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES**

This research paper utilises the qualitative research methodology for analysing Mohit Parikh's novel *Manan* by adhering to the rules and guidelines of MLA 9th edition. Besides Parikh's novel, it employs secondary sources for instance books, journal articles, and web sources. The paper studies the novel through an interdisciplinary analysis encompassing psychology, sociology, and literary criticism. However, much emphasis has been laid on the psychological approach in order to investigate the dilemma of the teen-age protagonist of the novel. Especially, it tries to explore issues such as behavioural changes, introspection, self-realisation, inferiority complex, communication barriers during adolescence through a critical analysis by focusing on the protagonist of Mohit Parikh's novel *Manan*. In addition, the study investigates into how much peer pressure influences teenage behaviour and how the internet can be both a beneficial and harmful resource for self-discovery.

## **SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This paper brings into light the challenges and issues teenagers face in their lives. The relevance of the paper lies in its exploration of adolescence period by highlighting different aspects and issues pertaining to this period, including puberty, identity crisis, peer pressure, adult sex, behavioural changes, internet influence, etc. Especially, the paper contributes to our understanding of the complex interplay between adolescence development and digital influence in contemporary society. Internet has become an inseparable part of life nowadays

but its negative impacts on society and the lives of people cannot be ignored. Thus, the paper paves the way for further research on these issues and concepts for the welfare of society.

### **MOHIT PARIKH AND HIS NOVEL *MANAN***

Mohit Parikh is a novelist, short-story writer, and writing mentor. He was born in Jaipur, India, on 29th Jan. 1986. He is the first child of his parents Ajay Parikh and Verhsa. In his early years, he was introduced to the world of books by his parents. He an avid reader of realistic and psychological fiction. Especially, Arthur Conan Doyle's short-story collection *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* has left a deep influence on him. His interest in reading led him towards the journey of becoming a writer. He has written more than twenty short-stories that were published in many international and national magazines and journals including *Out of Print Magazine*, *Identity Theory*, *The Bombay Literary Magazine*, *Specs Journal*, and so on.

Mohit Parikh has gained reputation for his first novel *Manan*. It was published by HarperCollins Publishers India in 2014. In 2015, Parikh was awarded a Toto Award for Creative Writing in English for this novel. Besides in 2015-16, the novel received Honorable Mention for Best Book Fiction at The Hindu-Goodbooks Award. This novel is set in April 1998 in a small nameless town of India. Structurally, the novel has been divided into nine chapters and some chapters contain pictures which serve the purpose of creating visual impressions in the mind of the readers. The novel centres on the themes of puberty, identity crisis, inferiority complex, peer pressure, adolescence dilemma, adult sex, barrier of communication, internet influence, self-analysis, self-realisation, familial conflicts and tensions, social values, and so on.

### **BEHAVIOUR, SELF-REALISATION, AND INTERNET INFLUENCE IN MOHIT PARIKH'S *MANAN***

Mohit Parikh's debut novel *Manan* revolves around the character of Manan Mehta, the eponymous hero, and reveals his dilemma during the early stage of adolescence. The novelist has employed the third-person mode of narration to present the dilemma of the protagonist during the initial phase of adolescence realistically. As already mentioned, adolescence is a period which comes with many challenges for individuals. It marks a change in the behaviour, body, and psyche of an individual and leads him/her towards physical, mental, emotional, and social maturity. Manan is an adolescent of fifteen years and three quarters studying in tenth standard, but his age, voice, height, and weight do not confirm this fact. Regarding this the novelist says, "He, 140cm, 35kg, has been delayed by the weird whims of nature; puberty came to his classmates and modified their bodies one by one, stretching, dilating, warping them, while his remained as was" (4-5). Especially, the novelist highlights Manan state of mind at the initial stage of puberty. The opening of the novel describes the appearance of the first puberal sign on his body in the following manner:



He closes his eyes and finds today's date floating towards him. Shimmering in the darkness, swivelling - like the text on the Windows 95 screensaver. It seeps in through his forehead and gets absorbed. 23-04-98 is now a part of him. Today's date, a Saturday, when the first sign of what he so eagerly awaited has appeared. The day when, while bathing, he has noticed a hair on his balls, and all his life's problems are in the past. (Parikh 1)

However, puberty comes with many problems and developmental changes that bring a change in the behaviour of an adolescent. On account of physical, psychological, and behavioural changes, a teenager feels confused and finds it unable to cope with these changes. Similarly, the novel brings into light the challenges and confusions a boy faces at the onset of puberty. The appearance of the first pubertal sign on Manan's body comes with numerous problems such as confusion regarding the nature of puberty, identity crisis, inferiority complex, interest in adult sex, etc. He undergoes significant behavioural changes after the first pubertal sign appears on his body.

In fact, Manan is in such a stage of life when the issue of identity crisis troubles a person. He also faces the same problem because he wishes to remain a child with moustache and height without acting like grown-up. The novelist states, "he does not want to be a teenager who tries to act all grown-up. He wants to be a kid with a moustache, a kid with height, a kid worthy of tenth grade. And a person worthy of Hariya" (8). Moreover, Manan has many questions pertaining to puberty and its rules, conditions, and impacts on the behaviour of a person. Therefore, he decides to find the answers of these questions. Thereafter, he thinks to get these answers from his friends and other colleagues who have already gone through this period. Consequently, Manan tries to seek the answers of his questions from his friends Rajat, Shrey, and Kshitij. However, they do not take into consideration his question and ignore him. Due to their lack of response and ignorance, Manan gets overpowered by the feeling of inferiority complex. Describing the events that caused Manan's inferiority complex the novelist says, "They are in his head like Betaal on Vikram's back. Like Betaal they threaten to blow his head off if he doesn't pay attention. During flying disc this morning or videogame last evening or while he waited so long for sleep, they always, always replayed" (25). He comes out of this situation after a long time through the process of self-analysis and introspection.

Manan realises that puberty ends some troubles but gives rise to new ones. He acknowledges that puberty brings significant changes in the behaviour of a person. In his view:

Puberty has its own rules, its own set of conditions, and its victims, unsuspecting, conform to them even before they know it.... His friends were unprepared so they got captured. Possessed. They have turned into creatures who like long hair and metallic wrist watches that

have large dails and loose straps. They demand pocket money and buy tiny combs and follow girls. (Parikh 37-38)

Manan does not want to behave like his friends because his concern is to retain his identity as a kid. He is well aware of the fact puberty changes a person physically as well as psychologically. The novelst says, “puberty corrupts – that’s fact; and it corrupts without consent – that’s his concern” (38). Therefore, he wishes to save himself from the bad impacts of puberty and prepare himself to confront the challenges it poses without losing his identity.

As a consequence, Manan feels an intense urge to obtain knowledge about puberty. However, he does not obtain the knowledge pertaining to puberty from his friends and other people due to the barriers of communication. Even he does not find sufficient information about puberty in textbooks. He wonders:

. . . how is he supposed to know, why is it not common knowledge? He knows so many other things. He knows teachers – women – put on extra perfume because they smell bad during menstruation, he knows that when a woman gets pregnant her breasts get bigger and feet heavier, he knows that there is disease called piles and what happens in piles and that by drinking carrot juice piles can be cured, why does he know this? Why has this escaped him even if there is nothing in the textbooks, even if Biology Ma’am and his friends don’t talk about this? (Parikh 50-51)

In fact, his questions and confusion are occasioned by his *superego*. He pays excessive attention to social values and exhibits the influence of the *superego* (the moral governing agent of the mind as described by Freud) on his behaviour. He thinks, “If puberty is happening, how is a boy supposed to brace himself for it? How does he protect his thoughts from fouling?” (Parikh 51). Simultaneously, he shows the feelings of uncertainty, “Or does it even matter? Or does it even matter because what will happen will happen, and there is nothing he can do?” (Parikh 51). In fact, he is worried about the change in his behaviour because he knows that he is “going to change. . . Forever. From outside and from inside” (Parikh 68). Through self-analysis, he realises that perhaps all human beings face similar problems during adolescence. Therefore, he decides that he too will have to accept these changes like all people.

Moreover, Manan’s attention revolves around reproductive system and adult sex. He does not have proper knowledge of adult sex but he speculates about it. He is worried because he does not know whether he is ready to perform this act or not. As per Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, Manan’s interest in adult sex can be taken as an example of the activation of his “libido” which has been dormant so far. Also, it can be said that he is overpowered by his *Id* which is that part of mind which concentrates solely on seeking pleasure without regard to the social norms. However, this time Manan asks Ronak Bhayyia to tell him about adult sex but he considers Manan’s queries baseless. However, this time Manan’s friend Rajat and

Shrey listen to him patiently and tell him to visit Kshitij's house with them to find information regarding adult sex. When he visits Kshitij's house with them, they show him porn videos and images by connecting Kshitij's computer to the internet. He becomes uncomfortable and shocked at this discovery. For the help of his friends, he feels thankful to them because he finds the answers of all questions including those he has not asked so far. This incident leaves a great impact on his behaviour. For example, Manan comes under peer pressure because he begins to behave like his friends. The novelist says, "he has changed from the inside by his own willing." Regarding his behavioural changes, the novelist says:

He has seen Shrey and Kshitij make comments about girls from Girl's Polytechnic College and he has not scolded them. He has concurred with the offhand lies Rajat and Shrey told their parents about the money they spent. He has taken to the duty of suffocating the phone since Aunty does not permit Kshitij to use Internet. He has even uttered an expletive – a phrase for a non-existent male body part – and it has felt good. (131)

Despite this, he is able to achieve a balancing state of mind, that is *ego* as per Freud's psychoanalytic theory, when he ponders over all the happenings from his first visit to Kshitij's house to the present time. He realises that he has left his true self behind. His feelings of love for Hariya, who herself is totally unaware of Manan's love for her, plays a pivotal role in his self-realisation. He sees Hariya during his journey to R K Cyber Café but she remains unaware of his presence. His behaviour undergoes significant changes after this. The novelist says: "He looks at the crowd with a feeling of fellowship, all of them witness to her presence. All of them purged by her grace; all of them cognizant at once of what love really is" (132-3). Also, he learns that "which he reads in books, which saints so often sermonize, is true: love is all. It is the fabric of the cosmos, the smallest indivisible thing, like atoms, an invisible force field, like gravitation. . . . This grammar of life not all can see. This grammar he forgot. This he remembered when he saw Hariya today" (Parikh 136). Manan realises that he "gave in to the basest of all lures, gave into lust" and feels sorry for it. Now, Manan is not worried about his masculinity, height, and weight rather he accepts himself as he is. He acknowledges:

People have heads and faces and limbs, and people have lust. It is inside him, it is inside them, and what it leads to is now out in the open for everyone to see. Through Internet, he has witnessed and understood. Internet has made the private obvious to him. It has brought out what was secret and suppressed in this world, just like puberty brought out what was secret and suppressed in him (186-7).

Thus, Manan draws parallels between puberty and internet because he thinks that both reveal suppressed and secret the latter in the world whereas the former in humans. The novelist says, "Internet is puberty of society. An external force working silently that might transform



society forever. From the inside and from the outside. It will spoil society, corrupt it with indecent thoughts, and society, unsuspecting, quite like X-A, will conform to its ways even before it knows it" (187). Thus, the novelist highlights the influence of internet on society. He emphasises that internet is both beneficial and harmful for society. It is beneficial because it provides information on every topic. By contrast, it is harmful because it can spoil and corrupt society.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Primarily, through this novel, Mohit Parikh wants to show that generally people do not have discussion about puberty and problems it causes with children, especially boys. Through Manan's character, the novelist shows that the lack of discussion regarding puberty and sex can be dangerous for children. Because when they reach puberty or adolescence, they are confronted by many questions that become the cause of their unhappiness, loss of faith in society and its values, gap between parents and children, inferiority complex, etc. In order to sustain social values and prevent children from taking wrong steps, it is important to discuss sensitive topics with children in a positive manner. If children are not made familiar with these things at a proper time it may lead them to indulge in harmful activities.

During this time, children face identity crisis and it becomes difficult for them to understand their role, place, and worth in society. They expect to get help from their parents, friends, teachers, and other people when they are confronted by psychological and physical changes. Puberty is that time which leads children towards maturity. But children find it difficult to lose their previous identity and adapt new identity as socially responsible citizens. Manan faces the same challenges in this novel and tries to find answers of those questions that bother him. He seeks the answers of these questions from his friends and in books but they do not provide satisfactory answers. Consequently, he, with the help of his friends, employs internet in order to find his answers relating to adult sex. Internet contains information regarding everything, but it has its own limitations too. It reveals everything as per the command of the user. In the novel *Manan*, Manan's friends employ internet to watch porn videos and images of naked women. When Manan visits his friend's home, he also gets involved in watching the videos and images pertaining to sex. This experience has a great psychological impact on Manan. He doubts the existence of social norms and values and sees everything with suspicion. Thus, internet is a powerful tool which can both corrupt and advance society.

## WORKS CITED

- Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 4th ed., Oxford UP, 2015.
- Bhujel, Monu. *Representations of Adolescence and Youth in Select Novels of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Chetan Bhagat*. 2017. Rajiv Gandhi University, PhD Thesis, Shodhganga, <https://hdl.handle.net/10603/246955>.
- Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Revised by M. A. R. Habbib, 5th ed., Penguin Books, 2014.



- Dutta, Indrajit. "Mohit Parikh." *Education World*, 15 March 2023, <https://www.educationworld.in/mohit-parikh/>.
- Guerin, Wilfred L., et al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 5th ed., Oxford UP, 2005, [https://archive.org/details/handbookofcritic0000unse\\_o8z0/page/n7/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/handbookofcritic0000unse_o8z0/page/n7/mode/2up).
- Hurlock, Elizabeth Bergner. *Developmental Psychology*. 4th ed., McGraw-Hill, 1975.
- "Internet." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet>.
- Parikh, Mohit. *Manan*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2014.
- Paulson, Georgette. *Developmental Psychology*. Larsen and Keller, 2019.
- "Psychosexual development." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychosexual\\_development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychosexual_development).
- "Young Adult Literature." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young\\_adult\\_literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_adult_literature).