

# The realistic reflection of adolescent outlook in Bhabendra Nath Saikia's Antareep : Study

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## Abstract

Creative writing is a dignified expression of human life and the world. It reflects the thought process of a writer and mindsets of the different classes of society. From birth to the old age, there are many different stages of human life cycle. Among them the childhood can be called as the primary stage and the adolescence as the secondary stage. The age span ranging from birth to the puberty is known as the childhood period and the next period from puberty to legal adulthood is known as the adolescence period. Adolescence plays an important role in the development of human life. In this period the behaviors and cognitive styles of an individual undergo many changes. Therefore the adolescence period has been analyzed by the psychologists in a distinctive method of analysis. Similarly in the field of creative writing, different writers have portrayed the outlook of the adolescence period through their writings. In Assamese literature besides writings for children and teenagers, the reflection of the adolescent outlook is vividly apparent in other literary genres as well. The realistic reflection of adolescent outlook in the literary works of 'Bhabendra Nath Saikia' provides a clear evidence of this aspect. Therefore we see that although psychology and literature are two different fields of study, the interrelation between these two autonomous subjects necessitates an interdisciplinary analysis.

**Keywords-** Adolescent, Assamese, Literature, Novel, Outlook, Psychology.

## 1. Introduction

Bhabendra Nath Saikia is one of the most prominent writers of Assamese Literature. Besides the writings for adolescents, the meticulous depiction of adolescent mind can be found in other writings of Bhabendra Nath Saikia as well. Through the portrayal of the thought the process, behaviors and activities of the characters, Bhabendra Nath Saikia highlights in his writings the deepest emotions and feelings of the adolescent mind. In the novel 'Antareep', the various adolescent characteristics are reflected in the character 'Indra'. On one hand, the mental diverseness of the deferent literary characters and on the other hand, the significance of adolescent age determined by theoretical analyses, the similarities and differences between these two aspects clarify the necessity of the proposed study with an interdisciplinary perspective.

## 2.Aims and importance of the study

Different psychologists have provided theoretical analysis regarding the significant characteristics of the adolescent period. In Assamese literature, however literary experimentations are not taking place on the basis of such theories. Therefore, in the proposed discussion the psychological outlook of the adolescent characters of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia's novel 'Antareep' will be examined on the basis of theoretical framework of the

adolescent mind. In this discussion the relationship between literature and psychology can be perceived through psychological aspects of the adolescence and its reflection in literature.

Through the proposed discussion it will be clear how psychological theories are reflected in creative writing, moreover, keeping in mind the importance of the interdisciplinary perspective the necessity of psychological study in the field of creative writing will also be evident. The various aspects of adolescent mentality reflected in creative literary works will help to identify the causes of increased criminal tendencies in adolescence. It will also pave the way for methodological study on adolescence psychology in the world of Assamese creative writing.

### ***3. Source, dimension and methodology of the study***

Among the different psychological stages only the adolescence stage is discussed for the need of the proposed study. In the 'Cognitive development theory' of psychologist named Jean Piaget (1926), the idea regarding development of adolescent psyche through its interaction with different elements of social and conceptual environment has been discussed. On the basis of his theoretical framework in the proposed discussion the psychological aspects of the adolescent characters in the novel 'Antareep' have been discussed. The novel 'Antareep' is considered here as the primary source of study. Books related to adolescence psychology, different books related to the topic, the interview of Bhabendra Nath Saikia, newspaper, magazine and resources collected from websites etc are considered as the secondary sources of study. While preparing the proposed research paper the primary importance is given upon the adolescent psychology. In the different stages of study different methods are used as necessary. Taking into consideration the opinions of different scholars the ideas regarding definition and significance of adolescence psychology have been elaborately discussed. Keeping in mind the interdisciplinary perspective an elaborate analysis has been presented regarding various significant characteristics of adolescent psychology as categorized by psychologists.

### ***4. Adolescent psychology***

Adolescent psychology is an important part among the various part of psychology. In English, the term adolescence is synonymous with the teenage period. The term 'adolescence' is derived from the Latin word 'adolescere', which means 'to grow up'. According to *Webster Comprehensive Dictionary*, adolescence is a process that moves to maturity. It has been also called a process from the beginning of the sexual growth to the age of maturity. The term 'adolescence' is used for the first time properly in 1440 CE, a century before the use of the term 'adult'. According to *Samsad English Dictionary*, adolescence means teenage or puberty and adolescent means a young person who is developing into an adult, one who is in the state of adolescence.

It is very important to determine the age level in the case of determining the adolescence period. Taking into consideration the various activities and behaviors of a child, the period from birth to the age of 10 to 11 years is called the childhood period. The behavioral transformation of the childhood period becomes clearer during the period when an individual reaches maturity. During this period, physical changes cause a great impact on the psyche of children. This results in various changes in the childhood characteristics. These

types of changes separate man from children and hence this age level containing these diverse characteristics is considered and studied as the adolescent period. The psychologists have determined the age level of adolescence period on the basis of physical, psychological and intellectual development.

According to Luella Cole and Irma Nelson Hall (1936), the term adolescence signifies the period in which physical transformations take place along with maturity of the reproductive organs. In the case of girls this period lasts for six months and in the case of boys it lasts for two years or more than that. Some adolescent characteristics such as behavior and conduct, personal relations, emotional, linguistic and academic development, religious and moral development etc. differ considerably from that of the childhood and maturity.

Through such kind of characteristics, it becomes easier to determine the level of human development. Modern psychologists have meticulously discussed the various stages of human development. On the basis of such discussions, Cole and Hall have categorized adolescence period as given below -

Preadolescence	:	11 – 13 years (Girls) 13 – 15 years (Boys)
Early adolescence	:	13- 15 years (Girls) 15- 17 years (Boys)
Adolescence	:	15- 18 years (Girls) 17- 19 years (Boys)
Late adolescence	:	18 -21 years (Girls) 19- 21 years (Boys)

They say that age classification differs between boys and girls during adolescence. Because girls become mature two years earlier than boys. Moreover they have also clarified that each stage of human life contains different problems and almost all individuals except the differently able ones solve those problems by themselves.

Another psychologist Elizabeth Hurlock considers the age twenty one as the actual time for maturity and the last stage of adolescence. Like Cole and Hall, she also considers that boys mature slower than girls. Psychologist Elizabeth Hurlock discusses the characteristics of the adolescence on the basis of adolescent development. She has classified the aspect of adolescent development in the way given below–

1. Physical changes during Adolescence
2. Emotionality during Adolescence
3. Social changes in adolescence
4. Interests of adolescence in some particular fields
5. Moral changes in adolescence
6. Sexual curiosity and experiment
7. Family relationships in adolescence
8. Personality changes in adolescence
9. Depression in adolescence
10. Happiness in adolescence.

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget created highly influential theories under stages of mental development in children. He considered the stage that reaches adolescence succeeding childhood as the last stage of a child's cognitive development. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the ages of eleven and older fall into adolescence period. He termed this stage as the formal operational stage. Piaget opined that the formal operational stage begins at approximately age eleven. In this stage they gain the ability to think in an independent, disciplined and scientific way. Piaget divided this period into two categories.

1. Hypothetico - deductive reasoning
2. Propositional thought.

Moreover he has also discussed about the adolescent mentality developed due to the influence of adolescent cognitive changes.

1. Self- consciousness and self-focusing
2. Idealism and criticism
3. Decision making

The discussions of the psychologists give a clear idea about the time period of adolescence. Also on the basis of observation it can be said that physical changes lead to psychological changes. For example happenings like menstruation in girls, changes in the male voice in boys etc. evoke questions in their own mind. As the primary stage of entering into youth hood the period from approximately 11 to 13 years can be called last childhood or early adolescence. In this period the students pass the classes of secondary school. Secondly, in the period between 14 to 17 years of age, an individual crosses the puberty, becomes aware of the psychological changes and during this period while studying in the high school classes they become physically active. This period can be called the early adolescence. Thirdly the period between 18 to 21 years of age individuals become mature and aware of the biological differences. During this period they participate in higher studies and get answers to the questions about biological changes. As the last stage of adolescence this time period can be called as the late adolescence period. Taking into consideration the opinions of different scholars for the benefit of the proposed discussion the adolescence period is classified on the basis of biological changes as shown below-

Preadolescence	:	11 – 13 years (Girls)	12 – 14 years (Boys)
Early adolescence	:	14- 17 years (Girls)	15- 18 years (Boys)
Late adolescence	:	18 -20 years (Girls)	19- 21 years (Boys)

### ***7. Self conscious and self centered mentality***

As a person reaches adolescence after childhood the wide range of developments and experiences create awareness of various aspects in his mind. Due to such kind of mentality, adolescent mind becomes self-centered and self-conscious. As a result, a teenager wishes to be involved in what he likes. Moreover social awareness also creates impact upon adolescence mentality. In the novel *Antareep*, adolescent character Indra's leisure activities like reading war news on newspaper published from Kolkata at Pioneer Pharmacy, listening to lectures about freedom in open field ,poster writing with his friends, trying to talk with military when their gathers a convoy etc. are excellent examples of this aspect.

The surrounding environment affects the adolescent mentality. In the novel, Indra's willingness to be free from the problematic family environment and take steps to improve this environment is mentionable in this context. Although being a mute spectator of two traumatic events - father marrying for second time and mother's affair with another person, Indra tries his best to stabilize the family environment. Indra dreams of improving the condition through his studies. Considering himself as a rational person Indra decides to take his own responsibilities. Therefore he says to his father that he will study in Kolkata alone, there is no need for them to think about him. Indra, who desires to stabilize the family environment through education sincerely, devotes himself to his studies. However his dreams

remain unfulfilled. Discovering an escapist nature within him Indra succumbs to the situation. Therefore he says -"the fact that I only do well in examination is actually a sign of my crippledness". The different ideas of the strange psychic world of adolescence are manifested by the character Indra. Adolescents, due to their self-conscious attitude, pay close attention to the opinions of other people. This aspect is reflected by Indra's words to his father with a sense of regret and grief. Everyone knows about the talent of Indra in educational field but due to his father's ignorance of this fact, Indra regretfully says "All people know how I will pass only you don't care about it". The hero worshipping mentality developed in adolescence can also be mentioned here. Adolescents select their own idols. Generally, in the mind of most of the adolescents their fathers become the ideal person. Influence and support of father can be the key to a happy life for adolescents. In the novel adolescent Indra is also seen desiring his father's interest and care.

Generally adolescents think of themselves as rational and intelligent like adults. But the old beliefs of an individual may definitely change during the journey from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to maturity. During his teenage days Indra believed that his mother's affair with Madan has created troubles in their family but later facing different experiences, the same teen character Indra realizes that neither his mother's affair nor the second marriage of his father is responsible for this. The aspect that immature mentality grows up towards maturity with age is reflected by another significant event. Indra's feeling of hatred and enmity towards his stepmother has changed completely later in the novel through his mature mentality filled with real life experiences, due to which Indra has taken his mentality imbalanced stepmother to Kolkata for proper treatment.

Another significant characteristic of adolescence is attraction towards the opposite sex. Physical intimacy and emotions play a special role in the case of such attractions. In the novel Indra becoming speechless when the girl named Chitra grabs his hand and trembling like a wire for a long time etc. portray this psychological characteristic of adolescence. Day to day experiences of real life create wonder and inquisition in the adolescence mind. In the novel, events like Nikhil Mahapatra's metric appearing sister crying for Indra's departure, Mahabir Shukla's younger aunt telling him to sleep well by caressing his hair while he was about to go to sleep etc. are causing great curiosity in his mind.

Although teenagers consider themselves as intelligent and rational like adults, they are vulnerable to real life challenges. In the novel, the inability to face complex situations is reflected in Indra's character. He expresses to Chitra that he came to Kolkata for study in order to broaden his mind. Therefore, he says to Chitra "For the well-being of my mother and father, I need a... I don't know what... I need... that we find in the books... a vast mind, greatness. If we go home now we will all become even more ordinary and remain ordinary people forever". Staying away from home in search of vastness, Indra however has not been able to live a free life. Although trying to live the life in a positive way, Indra becomes vulnerable and agonized. Chitra shared an emotional relationship with Indra and her marriage to a doctor makes Indra recollect the memories of his old family environment "as if a hydrophobic patient running away from the fear of water arrives on the river bank".

Childhood events and incidents leave a deep impression on a child's mind. Therefore the commemoration of childhood memories takes place in adolescence or later stages of life as well. In the novel Indra's introvert nature which was born as a result of the domestic

conflict and pressure of the environment remains unchanged even by the hustle and bustle of the city Kolkata and its exciting lifestyle. Therefore like a worm inside the cocoon, he feels entrapped in his own mind. He feels crippled amidst the busy people of the busy city life. Indra feels as if he has not been able to have any fun or do any other activities in life like his peers except his studies. It is as if the memory of childhood has bereaved him of his freedom. Therefore he writes to his mother - "you know how you helped me grow up, but you don't know how I grew up. I try not to remember those things, but things keep coming to my mind again and again. Because I always remember you." The novel exhibits that childhood memories play a pivotal role in shaping the future phases of life of any person.

### ***8. Ideal and critical attitude***

Adolescents seek to forge their own principles. On the basis of such principles adolescents critically analyse the events and the people around them. The novel reflects Indra's critical attitude towards the activities of his parents based on the family environment that he has been witnessing since childhood. His father abused his mother so much only because of the power of money. Thinking about it Indra opened the door of his house for the thief Madan on that night. After going to Kolkata Indra wrote a letter to his mother telling her - "father abused you only with the power of money and wealth, therefore I opened the door so that the thief takes away all the wealth. Moreover Indra considers that along with his father, the affair of his mother withis Madan is also another reason for the disintegration of his family and therefore he also holds his mother equally responsible for that. So in the letter he questions his mother "Did you too make a mistake?"

In the adolescent world of thought, much such kind of decisions appears as both positive and negative. Ignorance about situations and illogicality can have a negative impact on the critical capabilities of adolescents.

### ***9. Decision making capacity***

Decision making capacity is developed in an individual during adolescence. Many such decisions of adolescent mind have both positive and negative consequences. In the novel Indra questions his father clearly when he comes angrily to take the maid Purneema to a new house - "If they are having any difficulty there, then why don't they come here?" After listening to this, while Indra's father conveys his doubt that Menoka, Indra's mother has advised him to tell this, Indra replies with the same clarity that "mother has not told me anything, rather I told her." At one point of time Indra was a mute spectator of everything for his fear of his father, but along with his advancing age the development of such kind of straightforwardness in Indra surprises his father. With the same determination and courage Indra has decided to go to Kolkata alone for his studies. After arriving in Kolkata Indra, who wanted to widen the horizons of his mind by studying there fails to decide to which member of his family he should write a letter. Finally with a hope to re-establish the relationship between his parents he decides to write the letter to his father in which he requests his father to share it with his mother as well instead of writing a separate one for his mother. In the novel, among different characters the adolescent mentality is clearly evident in the character Indra. Self-centered attitude, positive and negative sides of decision making capacity, ideal and critical attitude etc. are reflected by the character.

## 10. Conclusion

The reflection of adolescent mentality in the creative literary works of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia makes it clear that literary criticism can be used in literature on the basis of human psychology and the psychological theories. Although psychology and literature are two different fields of study, the interrelation between the two autonomous subjects necessitates an interdisciplinary analysis. During adolescence an individual learns to work systematically. In this stage the self-centered attitude and the capacity of assumption through imagination develops in adolescent mind. The novel reveals immature adolescent thoughts and curiosity regarding the causes and consequences of different events through the depiction of the mind of adolescent character Indra. In the novel Indra's character is found to be a frail and weak minded character. Under no circumstances he has been able to take a clear stance. The chaotic and helpless environment of childhood has kept him scared for the whole life. The realistic reflection of adolescent psyche in the creative literary works of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia clarifies two particular aspects - 1) Creative writing reflects the mentality of an individual 2) Creative writing helps to know the mental state and attitude of an individual. These facts clearly highlight the necessity of the study regarding the application of psychological aspects in the field of creative writing.

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