

Generation Gap

POINTS TO DEVELOP

What is a generation gap?

Two aspects-chronological and psychological.

Tug-of-war between two generations.

Peer group pressures.

Friction mellows in later life.

Conclusion

The generation gap is another of those characteristic features that set Homo sapiens apart from other animals. It is doubtful if ever the most intelligent of apes ever blamed its juniors for their wayward ways! Over the years people have tried to analyse it, explain it, understand it, even ignore it, but it remains, ready to confront each generation as it tries to formulate its own perspectives about life and living.

A dictionary defines 'generation' as "all persons born about the same time" and also as the "average time in which children are ready to replace their parents-about 30 years." This definition in itself contains the seeds of the rift, chasm, cleft, call it what we will, that translates into the generation gap. Not only does it establish a definite group of contemporaries but it also categorically states that the said group will 'replace' an earlier group-and no one likes to be 'replaced'! Hence the ensuing 'gap'!

From this definition we come to the two aspects of the generation gap-the chronological and the psychological. The chronological gap between two generations is an irrefutable fact of life that stares us in the eye like adolescence and menopause. It has to happen, and happen it will. And given the mortality of humans it is but natural that since one must grow old and one day cease to be, there must be someone following ready to take over, to whom one can hand over the baton. It need not be replacement but inheritance, even if the inheritors do not follow in the predecessor's footsteps but walk their own road.

The life and times of two generations cannot be identical or even similar, thanks to modern research, progress in science, faster and easier communications and even distasteful things like inflation and population explosion. All these ensure that the world we live in grows a new skin every few years. These changes in

due course affect our thinking and influence our attitudes, expectations, behavioral patterns and values. These influences do, of course, work on humankind but they have the greatest impact on that section of society which is on the threshold of discovery-discovery of the self, of life and of living. For someone who has already measured swords with life a characteristic lifestyle is already in place. So, such persons, used as they are to living on their own familiar terms, see no real need to change their habits every time a new product hits the market to make their lives that much more easy. A younger person would probably reach out for it in all eagerness.

In essence, therefore, the generation gap is a tug-o'-war of change versus stability, new versus old, modern versus traditional. It does not have to become (and this is Important) a tug-o'-war of age versus youth. In fact, it need not take on the complexion of a confrontation at all. As

Tennyson wrote

The old order change the yielding place to new, And God fulfills himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Therefore, change is a must for society to survive, whether or not we accept it as part of God's will. The new must replace the old to retain freshness in living. It need not mean that those used to an earlier lifestyle should sink. There is no ultimatum involved. Ideally, the best of the old and the new ought to be integrated for the true and smooth evolution of humankind. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done and each generation continues to feel threatened by the next, causing much heart-burn and tension and the generation gap takes the blame.

This friction is born out of the psychological factors influencing the generation gap. The generation gap can be observed in the smallest unit of society, the family, in the confrontation between parent and child. Although according to the dictionary definition children take 30 years before they are ready to replace their parents, signs of the eventual take-over become manifest much earlier. And what is true for the family holds good at all levels of society. One group's enthusiasm for, and another's resistance to, change is prevalent at all social strata and has a unifying effect among members of the group.

The generation gap, to begin with, is hardly evident in relations, whether between two individuals or between an individual and society where one individual is below the age of five. The tantrums of a two-year old or a toddler's refusal to drink milk can hardly qualify as difficult behaviour associated with the generation gap. It is at a more social stage, when peer group pressures begin to exert their influence on the individual, so much so that he or she develops a feeling of

belonging to one generation as opposed to another, that the generation gap takes root. Peer group pressure plays a major role in determining attitudes, values, likes and dislikes, even speech, appearance and behaviour. From the early school-going years to, say, puberty, parental pressures do manage to carry the day, though diminishing annually in strength. It is from adolescence to adulthood and maturity that the chasm between the generations is at its widest. During this period the adolescents strive to strike a balance between their innate personalities moulded by nature and nurture and outside dictates that demand conformity as a price for acceptance. It is this struggle within, coupled with a very strong desire for acceptance without, that prompts an outward show of 'courage and defiance'. Parents or guardians of society symbolise restrictions and discipline and in the attempt to establish individuality and independence there is an urge to break free of what seems the shackles of discipline. As D.H. Lawrence has said, "We have to hate our immediate predecessors to get free of their authority." With the onset of adulthood and maturity much of the restlessness and rebellion mellows and the individual learns to appreciate the need for both stability and change. On the other hand, the older contenders, who were earlier overzealous in their aspirations to rear a perfect individual, too, have aged and become increasingly aware of their own mortality. They learn to lower their defences and the friction eases considerably.

A leading newspaper once launched a rather intelligent advertising campaign in which it pit its increasingly larger readership against that of a much older, traditional trusted name, and called the differences in their sales-the generation gap. Each successive generation has stuck out its tongue at the preceding one, just as the latter has struck its palm against the forehead, bemoaning the loss of morality and predicting dire reprisals. It remains a case of "If Youth only knew and if Age only could". The advertisement only hammers home the fact that that was then, and

this is now!

Essay No.02

Generation Gap

The gap between old people and young boys and girls is called the generation gap. While the young people are inexperienced, rash and impatient the elders are endowed with wisdom, prudence and caution. This gap between the two generations is not a new phenomenon. It has existed since time immemorial.

The people belonging to the older generation always wonder as to what has gone wrong with the new generation. They feel that during their time, young boys

and girls were better behaved, more obedient, and had greater respect for their elders. They feel that a lack of respect for the old will bring ruin and spell disaster for the young. Young people on the other hand, feel that they are capable enough to learn on their own rather than lean heavily on the older generation for any guidance. Young people do not like to be spoon fed by their elders.

The gap between the old and the new generations is widening day –by- day due to various reasons. First of all, the young people feel that the present system of education has little relevance to the realities of life. It is not job oriented. The result is that even after completing their schooling, they are not able to find any employment. They feel highly disillusioned.

Secondly, life has become so busy and fast that parents find little time to devote to their children. Efforts to promote intimacy and understanding between the old and the young are lacking.

Thirdly, the young also find there is a difference between what they are expected to do and what is actually happening in the country. The talk of duty, dedication, morality, etc. leaves the young in a quandary. Young people are not prepared to follow whatever their elders tell them. When the young people find that corruption has entered into every sphere of life, they feel disgusted. They fight against social and economic injustice. They demand a change.

In India, tradition is still dominant. Tradition kills the initiative of younger generation. In order to express their disenchantment with the existing state of affairs, young people often resort to violence. They wear what they like. They behave in a very unconventional manner. They have no respect tradition, custom, manners etc. they develop an aversion to hard work.

The generation gap has widened to such an extent that the old and the young people appear to be living in two separate worlds without any interaction. In order to bridge this generation gap, elders should adopt a more sympathetic approach towards the young, and try to understand the emotions, the aspirations and the problems of the young. The youth should realize that they have no experience of life. They should, therefore, value the advice and counsel of the elders. If the youth have any difference of opinion, they should put across their viewpoint before the elders in a very polite and respectful manner.

In the western countries of Europe and America, the generation gap is so much that the young and the old do not like to live together. The young people start living separately as soon as they are able to earn their livelihood. Similarly, the old people also start living separately in their own houses or in pensioner Houses

or old age Homes in their old age. Thus, this generation gap results in the break-up of homes and joint families.

Although under the influence of the western education the problem of generation gap is also creating a lot of problems in India, yet its effect is still limited in our country due to the influence of the joint family system prevailing in India. There are definitely a lot of advantages in the joint family system. Therefore, we should not follow the western system blindly at the cost of the well-tried Indian social and family tradition.

But this does not mean that the youth are always at fault. The real meaning of 'Generation Gap' is the lack of understanding between old and new generations. It should be the duty of both generations. It should be the duty of both generations to try to understand and respect one another's view. Only then this problem can be solved.

Essay No. 03

Generation Gap

There always has been generation gap since the dawn of civilization. The older people and the younger population complain of generation gap. There is a great hue and cry raised by the elders and the young both that the communication between them has broken down. They attribute it to generation gap.

The elders are more critical of the younger generation with a big inventory of complaints against the young and the young mostly tend to ignore the complaining, speechless and occasional loud protestations of the older generation.

But now and then they do protest. They resent the petting attitude of the elders.

The younger generation naturally differs in dress, food, habits etc. as all these were not available to the older generation. These changes are indicative of progress. With the passage of time when the society, right from the basic unit of the family through society and the entire humanity, is changing, how can the new generation be asked to move backward to the ancestors' way of life? It will be generally agreed that most fathers want their offspring to adopt the same profession that they themselves followed without giving due weight to the aptitude of the offspring. This causes tension between the elders and the children. People are fixated on the music of their youth. The film songs, for example, of one's youth are still attractive and the later music is rarely appreciated. The same is the story about art and literature or the type of reading available in a given age. The tastes keep changing and no one should complain

about this change. It is unavoidable and can't be stopped. The ways people relax also change from age to age. Traditions, culture, moral definitions keep changing. If one persists in it, one widens the generation gap and certainly has no business to criticize the youth. Those who are young today will face the same mess when they will reach their age. At least a quarter century separates the older generation from the younger one. In most cases the gap is of over half a century. Naturally an unnoticeable biological evolution takes place and the nature wants the survival of the fittest. The young generation can't survive if it doesn't change. No power on earth can prevent the natural gap owing to this evolution. Nature equips each succeeding generation with mechanism to survive the rigors of the new environment. The old have to leave early after having lived their lives. They would be wise not to interfere in the pace of development of the new

It was high time they stopped complaining. The young should see this mess of the old and be tolerant and respectful towards them. It will ensure harmony in the society and add joy and peace to the daily life. But every rose has a thorn. The younger generation shot train with I d also be on their guard against the evils coming in the fast life. Stress, depression, frustration as a result of a race for ascendancy shouldn't be ignored or they can rob them our the fruit of their labour and their dreams. The young are future, the future of humanity, of the human race on Mother earth.

Only they can save themselves by heeding early warning of the evils of the modern world and life based on their own assessment. The old can still tell them that they in their time faced these travails of transition and suffered now and then. They young should listen to the old but must take their own decisions with discretion and a balanced perspective. The coming generation will be better than each preceding one.

Essay No.04

The Generation Gap

Generation gap means lack of understanding and breakdown of communication, between two categories of people, belonging to different age groups. In other words, it refers to a situation which has arisen in the post war years in which the middle aged and the elderly people on the one hand and the youth of today on the other, find it difficult to work in cooperation with each other and to communicate with each other on vital issues. This situation has arisen on account of diametrically opposite views held by persons belonging to the two age groups. In this situation persons of different generations cannot see eye to eye

with one another and there occurs a clash of personalities on account of age-gap.

Whenever an old man and a younger person are unable to understand and appreciate each other's viewpoint, it is said to be a case of generation gap. The generation gap began to be perceived at work after World War II. The two World Wars, particularly World War II and then partition of India played havoc with the family lives of the people. The close-knit family system, as it existed earlier virtually broke down. The jet-age life has become so hectic and full of pressures and tensions that most people are unable to stay together with their children or build appropriate rapport with them. The result is that today people do not bring up their children. They simply finance them.

Today the world is changing rapidly. The world from the stone age to 1800 AD had not undergone so much change as it witnessed during the last two hundred years. Inventions and ideas of yesterday have become outdated and outmoded today. On the other hand, longevity has increased. People of all age-groups are around in sufficient numbers. As a result of this, we have now men belonging to different eras cherishing different value-systems. Approach and attitude to life of people in sixty plus age group is totally different from the approach of the people in the 30-45 age group and that of the youngsters are totally different from the not so young of today.

Formerly family affections acted like the gravitational pull and held everybody in the family in his/her own place. Now that gravitational force has weakened and the balance has been disturbed. The result is that there are planetary collisions so to say. Members of the families are falling apart. The use of drugs has destroyed whatever family bonds had survived the onslaughts of other manifestations of industrialisation and over population. Excessive propagation of the family planning methods has turned human relationships into a mechanical process. Everything has lost its sanctity. Today there is a recurrent clash of interests and egos among the older, the middle and the younger generations. This is change of times. The time is taking its toll with a vengeance.

Thus, in today's India, we can see people belonging to different eras—the pre-First War era, the inter-Wars era, post-War era, and post-independence era living under one roof. Among the women-folk we can find the ardent sati worshippers and anti-sati crusaders living in the same family. In theory it is possible to find Sita, Savitri, Anusuya and Pamella Bordes in the same family. In fact, we can see ancient India medieval India, modern India, as also ultra-modern India living under the same roof. It is possible to find a family in which the oldest man may be a strict vegetarian who may faint at the aroma of a non-vegetarian dish, a

middle-aged man who insists on eating meat slaughtered according to one or the other particular religious rites and a youngster who relishes a mix of beef and pork.

Such being the state of affairs, some difference of opinion between the various age groups is inevitable. All the same, the nation and the society can gain much if the generation gap is narrowed down or eliminated. If generation gap can be bridged, the old and the young are able to pool their energies and experience and skills, they would be able to contribute richly to the human welfare.

It would remove the feeling of frustration among the young. They would willingly share the responsibility of nation-building and improving the society. They would not be left out of the mainstream of the national life. Similarly, if the elders can get rid of their bitterness, they would cheerfully let the young partake of their experience, knowledge and wisdom. But it is not an easy task. There is need for the elders to understand the impact of new age on the youth and give up bitterness.

The youth, on their part, should also show a little more willingness to accept at least that advice which is for their own good. Rashness is bad, smugness undesirable. So, let the youth realise that they do not know the last word on everything. Let them understand that there is a lot which can be learnt only through temperance and experience. As long as they continue to think that only they are right and everybody else is wrong, they cannot learn much. They will continue to live in the cocoon of their smugness. They should also realise that age teaches a certain wisdom and that they should take full advantage of it from the elderly, without waiting to grow old themselves. The habit of caution, of the old combined with the enquiring and dynamic mind of the young can work wonders.

An important gain derived from bridging the generation gap will be that there will develop cordial relations between parents and their children. Father in the family will then cease to be a contemptible old foggy to his children. Nor will the old parents regard their exuberant children as aberrant and morally degenerated persons. The atmosphere in the families will be that of give and take, of understanding and sympathy. Family is the nucleus of a nation, being its smallest constituent. If the families are well-knit and harmoniously functioning, they will contribute to making up of a strong, stable and prosperous nation. The coordinated efforts of the old and the young are bound to carry the nation to new heights of glory.