Generation Gap in India

Quite often do we come across situations wherein we have a healthy dispute with our elders (especially parents) about our low waists or probably the knee-cuts or maybe the late nights or one of the thousands of “issues”. Sports Vs TV Games, Home Made Vs Fast Food & so on – it’s a miniature battlefield out there! So what is all this about? The young getting careless – or the elders getting tougher? Well, practically, it’s none of these.

What we have here is a Generation gap. Technically, it is defined as occurring “when older and younger people do not understand each other because of their different experiences, opinions, habits and behavior”. So ultimately what comes out is a series of clashes running haywire all across the world.

Before concentrating on the Generation Gap in countries like India, let us have a look at its worldwide history. The 1920s introduced the newer generation to jazz music & dance halls, thus creating a so-called gap between them & their elders. But the real cause behind the widening of this gap lies in the 1950s (often pronounced as the age of Baby Boomers) wherein soldiers had just returned from the wars & had begun having families. The veterans, being slightly tough in nature, naturally detested the youth, who were highly influenced by the introduction of the rock culture. The next big gag was created in 1980s which gave birth to the MTV era. Pop, Rock, etc. just poured in from all sides, drowning the new generation altogether away from their elders. This gap then started widening drastically in the 1990s & today, it has expanded in leaps and bounds.

Now let us concentrate on the history of Generation Gap in India. Far back in the 1920s or so, the families in India lived by certain unwritten rules. Women (& girls) spoke back very rarely to their husbands or fathers. The youngsters too, rarely spoke back. It can be noticed that the condition of Indian economy (not to forget the reign of the outsiders) was directly responsible for such conditions. Most of the families were poor, many of the others were from the Royal blood, & the remaining were somewhat rich. Hence, overall, there was no such prominent gap between two generations, because, frankly speaking, there was no medium for such a gap.
As time proceeded ahead (around in the 1950s and 60s), India had just gained freedom & development was in the cradle. Western culture had jumped in minute quantities in the form of gramophone music, movies, etc. The elders at that time, being highly patriotic, highly detested the new medias of entertainment. One more reason for the same was that more and more people had started shifting to the developing cities (Mumbai, Calcutta, etc.) and there was a strong potential barrier between the urbanites & the rurals. The youth was naturally attracted towards the city life.

This gap started widening more & more & finally in 1990s, there was another big hit. The introduction of Mobile phones & pagers, TV games, Computers, etc. caused a drastic change in the lifestyle of people. The rise in economy led to more n more buyers of automobiles, gizmos. There began enormous spending on fast food restaurants, entertainment (movies, malls) and other media. Today, as we can see, the youth is totally dependent on these technologies. The elders however prefer the older ways of working. Though any of them have adapted to the new winds, there are many who still sail their own way. The elders detest the modern ways of partying, youth getting addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, etc. The youth, on the other hand, are fed up with the regular criticism of the elders. The youth prefer the fast & happening life, whereas the elders prefer the good old hard-working & stable life.

There are many other factors like globalisation, advancements in communications, India’s ever increasing prominence in the global marketing, leading to more & more International tycoons investing in the country, etc.

Technology has been the most valuable asset for causing this generation gap. So is technology bad? No – technology is not bad, but getting carried away by it is surely bad. Having fast food once a blue moon is a treat, but having it as a regular meal is surely a curse. Elders aren’t always wrong, nor are youngsters. Had there been no such big advancements in the country, the family picture would have been something different. The ever increasing popularity of run-away-and-marry fashion, living away from the elders, etc. is widening the scope of negative development of the family life in India.

Discussion of all the materialistic reasons for this huge devastation of the family life in India is beyond the scope of this article. But finally, I need to mention that, whatever may be the advancement in
the country, India, as a golden bird, has given us a marvelous historical and social culture. Ruining it for such trivial reasons will fetch nothing but serious consequences. Fighting over old & new is completely useless – maintaining equilibrium is what matters! At the end of the day, when you return back home, it is not your television that will welcome you but it is the contented faces of your people that will bring a smile onto your face. At that moment, you will definitely discover what it truly means being a part of the Indian family, a traditional treasure preserved for you all these decades.

**Bridging the Generation Gap**

**My child thinks I'm her enemy**

Parents, when their offspring enter the dreaded teen years, look back nostalgically on the days when their children hadn’t learned to speak yet, were cute and adoring, and hung on to every word that their parents said. One day, puberty happens and the sweet angels of yesterday begin to act like their parents are their worst enemies.

Kamini Sundaram says, "I don't know what's come over my daughter, Padma. She's always arguing with me about the silliest things. A single day doesn't go by without her screaming at me and storming out of the room. I don't know how to deal with her. In my day, I was not allowed to raise my voice to my parents."

Jacob Abraham is as confused about his son, Vivek. He says, "I've always wanted to give my son the best of things, but his demands never seem to end. He's constantly asking me for money to go out to pubs and discos and to buy the 'latest' clothes. If I say no, he makes me feel like a tyrant and says that none of the other parents object."

**Being 'grown up' isn't all fun and games**

Teenagers are a mass of confusion as they sit on the fence between their childhood and adulthood. Growing up can be quite scary. While being 'grown up' has many attractions, the responsibilities that go with it often come as a nasty surprise. For instance, teenagers want to stay out till all hours of the night, but when it comes to waking up in the morning in time for classes, it's a different story. Parents must make them understand that if they want to party hard, they must also work hard.
My child is ashamed of me

Parents may feel a little like discarded old shoes, as friends become all-important to their children. It's not unusual for teenagers to go through a phase when they feel ashamed of their parents, afraid that their might not live up to their friends' standards. This can be very hurtful for parents, but they shouldn't take it personally. Just be cordial to your children's friends and maintain a distance. However, do not brook any discourteous behaviour for your children.

I want my freedom

Teenagers are always talking about their freedom, usually in context of how their parents are obstacles. The minute you give children a curfew, or object to their clothes or hair, or do not allow them to go away for the weekend, you become the evil dictator who will never understand. Suddenly, 'generation gap' becomes a buzzword. It's as if one day you and your child find yourselves on opposite sides of the fence and there's no meeting ground. Each one feels that the other is speaking a foreign language.

Age is more than a number

However, parents don't realize that if they were to throw in the towel and let their teenagers run wild without any supervision, it would be a truly frightening experience for their children. Teenagers may not know it or admit it, but they need their parents to guide them about what's right and what's wrong. This is one area where age does matter and no matter how things change, parents should go with their instincts when it comes to deciding that some things are just not done.

Communication is the key

This is the time when teenagers try to become individuals in their own right and try to move out from under the protective wing of their parents. They will try out many things in order to be 'in' with the crowd whether it's smoking, drinking, wearing skimpy clothes or even losing their virginity. This is not the time to play the great dictator and alienate your children. Talk to them, but don't talk down to them.

The way to do it, is not by making yourself out to be the enemy and coming down on them heavily for every transgression (and there will
be many). Try to lay down the ground rules right in the beginning. It is difficult for anyone to interpret the teenage mind, but try to convey the fact that you're on their side. Parents tend to forget that they were teenagers too once and their self-righteousness doesn't win them any points with their children.

Most parents tend to forget that babies do grow up someday and when the time comes, they must let them go and find their own way in the world. You can't protect your children forever and they won't thank you if you try to.