

A gem from July 1991 issue:

*How To Bridge The Gap Between
The Elder And Younger Generation*

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We often come by complaints of the elder generation against the younger generation that it is not following old traditions such as showing respect to the elders and it is not interested in religious rites and rituals. The younger generation, in turn, complains that in spite of devoting much time in worshipping the images of TEERTHANKARS, listening to religious discourses, reading the scriptures, doing penance such as observing total or partial fasts, it finds no change in the conduct of individuals towards society. This is the reason for the younger generation being indifferent towards or disenchanted with religion and its observance. This results in the 'generation gap' that consists of feelings of mistrust between the elder and the younger generation. How does one bridge this generation gap?

As stated above, the generation gap is a consequence of the differences between the teachings of religion and the conduct of individuals. Here is a story that illustrates the real cause of this evil. Once upon a time, a man owned a grocery store in a small town. He and his son used to go to the temple regularly. There they listened to religious discourses and lectures given by monks and scholars. Once the man had to go out of town and so the son had to manage the store in his absence. As usual, the son got up early in the morning, visited the temple and opened the store. During their visits to the temple, the son had learned to always speak the truth and be straightforward. Therefore, he conducted the business accordingly. He revealed the quality of various goods to the customers and charged reasonable prices. When the father returned, he learned what his son had done. He was mad at his son. He said to his son, "This is not the way to run a business." The son calmly said, "I have acted properly during your absence. I have followed the teachings of the monks and scholars to whom we have been listening at the temple." The father said that he too was aware of the discourses in the temple. He listened and understood them. But he always washed off his hands in order to get rid of the advice given. He did not retain anything to be brought home. Thus he did not follow the teachings of religion in business. In the shop, he had been following unscrupulous practices. The son was disillusioned. He was puzzled to find that two

sets of rules existed, one in the temple and other in daily life. He saw no rationale for this double standard. As far as the father was concerned, he continued to devote adequate time to the religious activities. He did not change his business practices. The son loved his father but he did lose some respect for him. The kind of religion practiced by his father did not seem to make any sense to the son. For studying and understanding the scriptures, the son had adopted the following four steps that have been suggested by Acharya, Umasvati:¹

1. Reading of scriptures (VAACHANA).
2. Inquiry and discussion of the concepts (PRICHCHHANA), which consists of asking question of scholars and monks about the interpretation of the statements.
3. Thinking over the concepts (ANUPREKSHA) that are learned through reading and discussion.²
4. Remembering the concepts, making them a part of one's nature and practicing them in daily life (AAMNAAYA).

In general, we do not make any endeavor to go through the above steps while studying the scriptures and listening to religious discourses. We tend to listen to sermons or read scriptures simply as a routine or as prompted by some other worldly motives.³ That is why we do not understand the true nature of our religion. We do not understand the true nature of reality as depicted in our scriptures. If we study the scriptures properly, we will have sound conviction that it is important to practice the teachings of our religion in our lives. We will discover the inner self. Thus the difference between our intentions and outward conduct will disappear. When our youngsters observe that our external behavior conforms to our religious convictions, they will understand the virtue of religion. When they see that our personal and professional life follows the teachings of TEERTHANKARS, their respect for us will grow.

One more word for the elder generation. Once a person asked a learned man, "How can I influence others?" The scholar said that you could achieve your goal by demonstrating that you are their true well-wisher.

¹ VAACHANA PRICHCHHANA ANUPREKSHA AAMNAYA DHARMOPADESHAH: 9-25:
- TATTVAARTHA SUTRA.

² In Jainism, this is truly meditation for householders. D. C. J.

³ In many instances, the scholar or the monk giving the lecture has the motive of inspiring the audience to support his favorite project. D. C. J.

The man said, "How can I do that?" The learned person replied, "Your pure intentions should be reflected in your consistent actions." All parents instinctively love their children and have a sincere concern for their welfare. The youngsters should understand this and the elders should express their concerns not in anger but with love and through rational exchange of ideas.

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How To Deal With 'EVIL' Through Nonviolence!

Many people ask: How can any nation be defended if all of its people adopt nonviolence? It is rather difficult to answer this hypothetical question. However, an emperor ruled over India with nonviolence and compassion in the third century B.C. Ashok was the emperor - emperor of peace and social justice. He did not rule by force or by accumulating goods and means of comfort for himself or by pomp and show. He ruled by sacrificing material comforts and by treating all his subjects equal and with justice. His example can guide us, rulers and administrators, politicians and civil servants, religious leaders and laymen, to establish peace, justice and harmony in present-day world.

- From 'Ashok - Emperor Or Monk'