

The changing times

Suchita Malik gives two examples of the generation gap

Surabhi, my 13 year old daughter is a student of 8th standard and is learning French these days. It was her own decision to learn French during the summer vacations. I did not have to coax her into it. And now she plans to continue with it side by side with her school studies, having some gorgeous plans about it.

She casually remarked the other day, "Mama, all I want is to learn French and then leave for France one day," leaving me dumbfounded at the audacity of her statement.

This small event set me thinking about my own school times. We were also ambitious, wanted to do so many things in life but generally it would be only after we had finished school. And of course, we never forgot to consult our parents, rather take their permission and abide by their wishes.

But this new generation certainly reflects more independence in their thinking. They differ from parents and take their own decisions without caring for their elders. They consider their parents and their ideas rather obsolete, just as we did when we

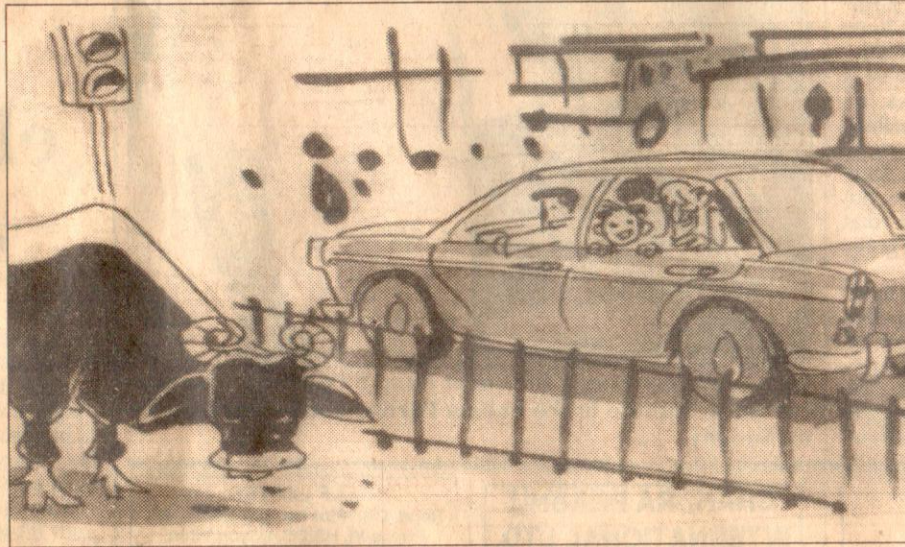
were young. But we were much careful to vent it in so many words.

I suppose times have changed and so have we, adding one more layer to the proverbial generation. Here I recall two interesting incidents related to us by an old family friend. He had a terrific knack of narrating these incidents.

It happened to be 1940 when his father-in-law, a Civil Surgeon in Punjab and the proud owner of a car in those days, landed up in a dak bungalow in the interiors of the Himachal Pradesh of today. The officer was on tour and had been driving for a long day through the hilly terrain, of

course enjoying the picturesque beauty all around. When he reached the rest house, the civil surgeon parked his car and went inside for the night.

As the Doctor came out in the morning, he found the attendant standing profusely apologetic with folded hands. The innocent fellow brought to his notice that



the iron-horse was not eating any stuff. It was a puzzle till he saw a huge bundle of green grass stacked in front of the car.

The attendant knew only about the horse as the Sahib's sawari and also that he had to feed the horse. The car was an enigma for him but had to be fed in any case.

The officer looked at him for a few moments, realised his ignorance about the animal known as the 'Motor-car', got the hay-stack removed and left thinking that the poor chowkidar represented a primitive generation.

This family friend then went on to narrate another incident he had encountered about a

couple of years back. This one involved his grandson. His daughter is married into a respectable family and stays in a posh area of South Delhi. Her six year old son accompanied his grandfather to a park where they happened to walk past a buffalo.

Seeing the creature for the first time, the inquisitive child asked him, "Nanaji, what is this?" He replied in Punjabi, "Beta, eh majji hai. (Sonny, this is a buffalo)." The child wanted to know more about the animal. And our old friend started explaining that the animal was the source of milk that he drank.

The boy looked up and down at the animal for a while and then asked rather curiously, "But nanaji, How does the milk come out? Where is the push-button?"

The bemused nana, who spanned five generations with these two incidents had a roaring laugh and told his puzzled grandson, "Son, you wouldn't understand this. This is what we call the generation gap. Maybe your mother can explain it better."