

EXPLORING GENERATIONAL GAP THROUGH CULTURAL SPECTRUM IN NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POEM, "THE PROFESSOR"

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the concept of generational gap through cultural lense in Nissim Ezekiel's poem, "the Professor". The study embodies the extensive examination of the poem that how the notions and values of the two characters of different generation in the poem contradicts each other. This study is the intermingling of cultural studies with the concept of generational gap to find out how they are interrelated and implicate the ideologies and norms of the two characters. The study has not been confined to a restrictive domain to be studied but a universal overlook has been given, that how the conversation of the two characters relates to our mundane problems. By contemplating the poem's depiction of the conundrum and trifle between tradition and modernity, which is related to the mundane problem, this study unveil the intricate and complex dynamics lies beneath the relationship between disparate generations. This paper mulls over how the poem manifest the Indian socio-cultural problem, exemplifying the repercussions of cultural identity modification in post-colonial India. This research aids to the contemporary polemics on generational gaps, cultural identity, and the part of literature played in concocting and modifying societal values, that give us extensive insights into the contours through which literary scripture could vivify our comprehension of intergenerational relationship, cultural change and the impending evolutions.

Keywords: Generational gap, cultural values, cultural evolution, intricate intergenerational relationship, evolving norms and values

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the study:

In the complex mix of human experiences and emotions, generational differences weave intricate patterns of understanding, conflict, and transformation. The term "generational gap" refers to the differences in opinions, values, behaviors, and cultural norms that exist between different generations. This gap arises from varying life experiences, historical contexts, and technological advancements that shape the worldview of each generation. Older generations may have grown up in a time with different societal expectations, work ethics, and

communication styles compared to younger generations, who have been influenced by rapid technological changes and evolving cultural norms. The concept of the 'Generation gap' was highlighted by sociologist and psychologist Karl Mannheim in his essay written in 1928 named as, *Das Problem Der Generationen (The Problem of Generations)*. Karl Mannheim defines generational gap as,

"Individual who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension fo the social process (Manhnheim, 1952, pp. 157-185)".

However, the term, Generational gap itself was first originated by American journalist John Poppy in a 1964 article in the New York Times Magazine. Additionally, the concept of cultural studies originated after a theoretical work of Richard Hoggart, a British academic, and another Raymond Williams, a Welsh academic and novelist. However, the foundation of the field is often attributed to the centre for contemporary cultural studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, which was founded by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall in 1964. In his work, *The Uses of literacy* (1957), Richard Hoggart explores the impact of mass culture on traditional people's ideals and norms of life. In the same book, he wrote,

"The younger generation, more than any other, is at mercy of the dominant cultural influences; and the most powerful of these influences today is the mass media, particularly in its more popular forms (Hoggart, 1957, p. 205)".

So, cultural Studies are an interdisciplinary field that emerged in the mid-20th century, primitively in UK, focusing on understanding culture as a complex and dynamic system of meanings and practices. It examines how culture binds and is modified by socio-political context, often emphasizing the relationships between various cultural forms one of the main themes in cultural studies is that culture is not static. It evolves and reflects the power dynamics of different groups and lived experiences.

Accordingly, the poem, "*the Professor*", is a relevant text for analyzing the generational gap and was written by Nissim Ezekiel, an Indian poet, playwright, and critic born in 1924 in Mumbai to a Jewish family of Bene Israel descent. He was educated in India and later moved to the UK for higher studies, where he encountered various literary movements. Ezekiel's writing often reflects his experience of living in both Indian and Western cultures. "*the Professor*" is a significant text for exploring the generational gap because it portrays the conflicts and misunderstandings between different age groups. Like the poem features a college professor who is portrayed as out of touch with the newer generation of students, this disconnect illustrates how younger people

often challenge established norms and values. The character of "the Professor" embodies traditional values and methods, which clash with the evolving perspectives of his students. This portrayal reveals societal tensions as "the Professor" grapples with feelings of inadequacy and relevance amid changing ideologies.

So, the poem illustrates how generational differences rooted in culture lead to misunderstandings and challenges, reflecting a broader commentary on the struggle between maintaining traditional values and embracing modern influences. Through this exploration, Ezekiel captures the intricate nature of human relationships against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world.

1.2 Background of the study:

When we explore the generational gap between the Medieval Age (approximately 5th to late 15th century), the Modern Age (approximately late 18th century to the middle 19th century), and the post-colonial age (mid-20th century onwards), we recognize significant shifts across various dimensions. In the Medieval Age, the social structure was predominantly a Feudal System, and it was divided into classes: nobility, clergy, and peasantry. As Marc Bloch, a French historian, quoted in his book, *Feudal society* (1939) as, "few societies have been more systematically hierarchical than that of medieval Europe (Bloch, 1939, p. 145)". There was a strong sense of community tied to land and local lordship, with limited mobility. In this age, there was dominance of religious institutions, particularly the Catholic Church. Life was heavily influenced by religious doctrine, and education was largely limited to the clergy and the wealthy elite. Literacy rates were low, and the bond between parents and children was shaped by social, cultural, and economic factors. As well as the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the society, but it was expressed differently than in modern times. In this age, the families were hierarchical, with the father being the head of the household. Therefore, the father patronizes his whole family.

So, the cultural values and traditions dominated the medieval age while at the same time neglecting

the significance of individualism. Therefore, the scope of generational gap was eclipsed by adherence to patriarchal values and culture in the medieval age as compared to the modern times; which was marked by the prominence of look after, dutifulness, and discipline. The longevity of modern age was between 15th century to 18th century, in between the renaissance came, which emphasizes the scope of educational prospect, personal intelligence and reason. Universities proliferated, and literacy rates increased. It was the age of flourishing arts and literature focused on the human experience. In this age, parents became more nurturing and emotionally invested in their children, the children were encouraged to pursue their interests. The children were encouraged to become more independent and self-reliant. So, this age saw significant changes in values, with a growing emphasis on individualism and democracy. Social mobility increased, and the children had more opportunities to pursue their goals. This was the age when traditionalism ended and modernity emerged. As Zygmunt Bauman in his book, *Liquid Modernity* (2000) writes in the theme of generational gap through cultural studies spectrum that,

“In the liquid modern world, the generation gap acquires a new meaning. It is no longer a matter of youthful rebellion against the establishment, but of the different modes of existence, of different worldviews, which no longer overlap, but exist side by side, each with its own cultural capital and its own cultural logic (Bauman, 2000, pp. 134-135)”. Furthermore, the Post-colonial Age starts in the mid-20th century to the present. In this period, there were struggles for independence and self-determination in formerly colonized nations, along with the emergence of new national identities. Increased accessibility to education through technological advances and globalization, as well as the internet, has changed how knowledge is acquired and shared. Global influences and cross-cultural exchange became more pronounced. Parents began to prioritize emotional intelligence and empathy in their children, and children were more encouraged to express their opinions. This age also saw an increased focus on individuality, meaning

children were encouraged to develop their unique interests and talents. The post-colonial age has seen a growing gap between traditional and modern values. As Jean-Francois Lyotard in his book, *The post modern condition* (1979), wrote as,

“The postmodern condition is characterized by a crisis of narratives. The grand narratives of modernity, such as the enlightenment narrative of progress and the Marxist narrative of emancipation, have lost their credibility. In their place, we have local narratives, of micro-narratives, which are specific to particular communities and cultures (Richard, 1979, pp. 37-38)”.

Therefore, through the poem, the poet masterfully captures the complexities of the generational gap in post-colonial India. “the Professor”’s struggles to reconcile his traditional values with his Westernized education and aspirations serve as a powerful metaphor for the tension between cultural heritage and modernity. By employing a cultural studies approach, this analysis has demonstrated how the poem reflects the broader societal shifts and cultural negotiations that characterized post-colonial India. The generational gap depicted which seeks to examine the intricate relationship between tradition, modernity, and identity.

1.3 Research Objectives:

- . To explore the complexities of inter-generational relationships influenced by cultural shifts from one era to another.
- . To analyze the representation of generational differences in the poem, “*the Professor*”, and investigate how cultural context modifies the perceptions and behaviors of different generations.
- . To examine the impact of societal changes on the values and beliefs of the characters and to understand the implications of these generational shifts and dynamics within the contemporary cultural discourse.

1.4 Research Questions:

- 1 How the poet, Nissim Ezekiel portrayed the concept of generational gap through cultural spectrum in his poem, “the Professor”?

2 What are the factors that led to generational differences between numerous ages that led to non-compliance of younger with elders?

3 How culture difference influence and models the outlook of each generation on various aspects of life?

Literature Review

Generational gap refers to the difference in values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors between people of different age groups, often shaped by the unique experiences and social changes each generation faces. In the cultural studies approach, this gap is significant because it highlights how cultural norms, traditions, and identities evolve over time. It shows how traditions are passed down, challenged, or transformed by younger generations. By studying these gaps, cultural studies explore issues like identity, power, and the domination of history and social changes on people's lives, highlighting the tensions and transformations within a culture. The cultural studies explore how cultural Mannerings and notions are impertinent in and dominate social sub-structure, norms, and relationships.

Accordingly, Nissim Ezekiel's poem, "*the Professor*" is a sarcastic monologue that captivates the reader with the repercussions of generational disparities and cultural evolutions in the post-colonial India. Nissim Ezekiel, a famous poet, dramatist, detractor, and editor, is regarded as one of the domineering figures of the modern Indian English poetry. Born in 1924 in Mumbai, India, Ezekiel's writing often emphasize the intricacy of modern urban life in India. The poem illuminates over the life Professor Shetha's life after having taken his retirement. He feigns to be jovial with his sons' success and his walloping family. The inclusion of his health alludes to a kind of pride in maintaining a healthy living throughout his life journey. His discussion of changing values and progress indicates his acceptance of progress indicates his openness to the evolving world around him. "the Professor"'s reliance on outdated idioms and formal speech reflects a bygone era. This highlights the shift from rigid colonial-era English to a more fluid, globalized mode of communication in modern India.

According to Frank Giancola, cultural and societal changes may affect generational traits, such as advancements in technology or shifts in social norms. He also looks at studies on how career stages (e.g., early career vs. nearing retirement) impact behavior, rather than focusing on generational labels (Glancola, 2006). According to Irina, there is a resistance to rapid cultural changes brought by modernist ideologies. It showcases the older generation's desire to preserve cultural heritage amidst the transformative forces of modernity. Lucian Blaga embodies a cultural philosophy where tradition values mystery and the unknown, while modernity seeks to explain and clarify complex ideas. This tension can represent a generational divide, with older generations valuing cultural and philosophical roots, while younger generations lean towards scientific and rational explanations (Livezeanu, 2002).

According to John D. McPherson, there is a gap in technology and expertise related to massively parallel sequencing. The generation gap metaphorically reflects a broader cultural gap where rapid technological progress (common approaches) tends to overshadow traditional skills or knowledge (older methods). This mirrors generational divides in cultural studies, where newer generations often adopt and excel at advanced tools, while older generations struggle to adapt. The challenge lies in bridging these gaps by fostering communication and collaboration between generations, ensuring that both tradition and innovation are preserved and utilized effectively (Macperson, 2009).

According to Pawan Kumar Dhiman, Jain emphasizes bridging the gap between parents and children. High expectations and social or economic pressure from parents can widen this gap, causing children to stray from their values. The study examines the reasons for this disconnect, noting that excessive criticism can lead to conflicts in relationships between adults and children. Understanding these dynamics is vital for enhancing family connections and addressing generational challenges. Illuminating these issues can promote better communication and understanding between parents and their

children, ultimately fostering healthier family relationships (Jain, 2016).

Furthermore, Carbery, Kelly, Fredericks, Elizabeth, Mishra Bharat, and Mishra Jitendra, in *Advances in Management*, study the challenges of generational gaps in the workplace today, where different age groups collaborate. As the oldest generation works longer, communication issues arise among veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y due to differing values. Younger workers are pursuing different careers, leading to conflicts. The focus is now on how these generational differences impact recruiting, teamwork, motivation, and productivity (Carbery kelly, 2016).

According to Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Atlantic-Boston* (1992) examines the study of conflict between older and younger generations in America, noting how it shifted in the 1990s. In the 1960s, generational conflict was mostly between twenty-year-olds and fifty-year-olds. Now, it is mainly between young people and those in their 30s and 40s. In both cases, the younger generation claims to be morally superior, while the older group is seen as stuck and out of touch (Strauss, 1992).

So, Nissim Ezekiel's poem, "the Professor" shows the generational gap through the way "the Professor" speaks, his tone, and the cultural differences he describes. "the Professor"'s language is formal but awkward, reflecting an older style of English influenced by colonial education, which is very different from how younger generations speak today. The tone of the poem is conversational, with "the Professor" proudly sharing details about his family, their marriages, and his old-fashioned values. This shows his attachment to traditions that younger people might not follow as strictly. Cultural shifts are evident in how "the Professor" talks about education, success, and family. He focuses on traditional ideas of status and arranged marriage, while the younger generation might prioritize modern, individual choices. The poem highlights how "the Professor" represents the older generation, holding on to traditions while the world around him is changing with new ideas and way of life. As we have gone through various

overviews over the concept of generational gap in which we have read the overview over the cultural aspect of generation gap, explained by John D Machperson, which we are going to apply on the Nissim Ezekeil's poem, "the Professor". Various other perspectives and spectrum can be investigated in the concept of generational gap, but here we are concerned with cultural evolutionary phenomenon that give raise to cultural differences, which implicates each generation, to be explored in the Nissim Ezekeil's poem, "the Professor".

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Method:

Research method can be defined as "a set of fundamental principles collaborated among researchers about how a researcher is supposed to be apprehended and handled (Kuhn, 1962)".

Therefore, the qualitative research method has been applied on the theoretical context of the poem due to the outlook of the investigation, which requires data investigation for questions. The researcher takes an extensive examination of the Poem, "the Professor", in order to examine the implication of generation gap on culture that is depicted in the poem, "the Professor".

3.2 Data Collection:

Primary along with secondary data is been garnered for the research in the data accumulation process.

3.2.1 Primary Data:

The student's first collected data is the primary data. The researcher initiated garnering data for this paper by reading the Poem, "the Professor". The Poem's verses worked as the initial source for data gathering.

3.2.2 Secondary Data:

The post sources of the data collection for the research include other books, research papers, thesis and websites, which are relevant to this thesis.

3.3 Data Analysis:

Data analyzing is a qualitative data procedure that reveals the subtle and hefty meanings, structures and functions that exist in a work. "When we do data analysis of a text, we generally make an implied guess at some of the most probable explanations which can be made of the selected text (McKee, 2001)". The original text of the poem has been meticulously analyzed in this research. After the study of the poem, the theme has been derived by pondering over the generation gap between "the Professor" and his students during their conversation.

3.4 Theoretical framework:

The theory of cultural difference and evolution in the generational gap has been applied on the Nissim Ezekiel's poem, "*the Professor*". This study is intended to find out the causes of the complexities and intricacies that the generation gap causes during the conversation of "the Professor" and his student when they meet after a long time. Through the course of this study we have to contemplate over the remarks of the two characters of the poem to analyze the contradiction caused by the conundrum of generation gap through cultural spectrum. In their remarks, the student's caricature nullifies and flouts the thoughts of his teacher as outdated to his age, and tries to prevail his conception on his teacher. So through the course of the discussion, we have to elicit the cultural spectrum of the generational gap between the two characters of the poem.

Discussion and Analysis

"The Professor is a dramatic monologue that humorously yet critically captures the mindset of an elderly Indian academic reflecting on societal and cultural changes. It also critiques middle-class aspirations, social values, and the generational gap between the elderly and younger modernized generations. In the poem, Ezekiel captures the generational gap, highlighting the conflicts between tradition and modernity. "the Professor", representing an older generation, is both proud of progress and hesitant to fully accept change. The poem begins with "the Professor" saying, "That member? I rang up Geography and I am retired

now, but I still think of those days...", which is an important part of the dialogue. Actually, "the Professor" is addressing a former student, attempting to re-establishes his relevance by recalling his past role as a teacher. This also reflects how older generations often struggle with their diminishing influence in a rapidly modernizing world. Both daughters are married; no problem there, their husbands are very nice boys, both having well-settled lives. So, his assessment equates a woman's success with marriage. His viewpoint highlights the gender-based generational divide, where older generations viewed marriage as a woman's ultimate goal, while younger generations increasingly emphasize careers, independence, and personal choices.

Subsequently, "the Professor" remarks to the student, "You were so thin, like a stick. Now you have become a man of weight and consequences. That is good, very good." This reveals a cultural shift in values. Like in the past, being well-fed was associated with prosperity. Today's fitness is more valued. Obesity is often linked to an unhealthy lifestyle. This also symbolizes power, status, and respect – a traditional belief that contrasts with modern ideals of fitness and health consciousness. Accordingly, "the Professor" went on to say, "Progress is progress, no? One must adjust; old values are going, new values are coming." This line captures the Professor's internal conflict between modernity and tradition. He acknowledges the need to get adapted to novel progress but still emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural traditions. It also represents that older generations struggle to balance modern achievements with their deeply rooted values. Younger generations embrace more but may be criticized for abandoning traditions. In contrast, the younger generation's silence in the poem hints at their disengagement from this performative adherence to colonial norms. The younger generation's caricature and beliefs implied modernity, shaped by globalization and shifting cultural priorities, positions them as critics of this neurotic and cultural mimicry, creating a rift in intergenerational communication. The Professor pride in his sons' conventional achievements (one is a sales manager, one is a bank manager, and

both have cars) underscores a generational divide in defining success, which reflects an older generation's belief that stability and professional success define personal fulfillment. For modern cultural perspectives, individuality, personal growth, and diverse career choices create a generational conflict in defining success. One of the most striking elements is its use of rigid English, which reflects the Professor's outdated linguistic style.

Furthermore, the student's phonological speech is featured with grammatical fallacies and strange slangs, such as "My dad died some years ago" and "Everything is changing," earmarked a general generational non-concomitant in respective communication. The novel generation, replete by globalization and modernization, could perceive such language as outdated, emphasizing a linguistic non-compliance between the two generations. From a cultural studies conception, language is an emblem of identity and prestige. The Professor's way of speaking depicts his tenaciousness to maintain authority, and this linguistic bifurcation serves as a kind of metaphor for exclusive cultural and ideological inconsistency between the two generations.

Additionally, "the Professor" retain the glamour of patron in his tone and rhetorical questioning, such as "How many issues do you have?" This shows a vestige of hierarchical sculpture. Through this phonological procedure the older acquaint themselves with leverage over the younger generation. However, modern social structure is marching towards an all-inclusive type of relationships, taming the voluntary authority of elders. Cultural studies examines the way through which a subtle power surges and infirm itself within generational discourse. The Professor's endeavor to claim dominance is a manifestation of the recent era's social structure, when ages were equated with reason and power. In contrast, younger generations, having more exposure to education, multi-media, and globalized perception, questions with more vigor certain things and re-structure these power dynamics. Educational curriculum also fosters this vivid generational schism. "the Professor", in the poem, is bewildered to engage his student connotes the

difficulties faced by educators in a rapidly changing cultural arena. Moreover, the poem also forecasted the themes of identity and adherence. The younger generation is often featured by their annulment of traditional norms; they yearn to carve out their respective identities. This yearning for individuality can give rise to feelings of alienation among older generations who could conceive such changes as a betrayal of cultural heritage.

Conclusively, by mulling over the generational gap through a cultural studies lens, we have discovered the nuanced interdependence of communication, education, and identity. Ezekiel's poem fosters not only a critique of these disparities between generations but also an invitation for dialogue and empathy, urging us to embrace the complexities of our culminating cultural narratives. Through this analysis, we realize the importance of building connections across generational divides, fostering an environment where both tradition and modernity can co-exist and complement one another.

Conclusion

By analyzing the Nissim Ezekiel's poem "'the Professor'" from a cultural perspective, we have uncovered the unprecedented influence and evolutionary effect on generations from the generational gap, deciphering the complicated net of tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes that is subtle in the interpersonal relationships, societal norms, and cultural values. This study illustrates how the poem works as an embodiment of the Indian socio-cultural context, depicting the country's rift with modernity, tradition, and cultural identity. Through a speculative examination of the Professor's character, this study lime lighted the ways in which the older generation's oath to outdated values, customs, and beliefs concoct a struggle with the younger generation. "The Professor's pedantry, pretentiousness, and repulsion to evolution embody the longing of an older generation clinging to a vanishing cultural perspectives and conception. In contrast, the narrator's voice explains the delusions, skepticism, and perplexing thoughts of the younger generation, who are

grabbed between the traditional norms of their archaic elders and the modernizing domination of Western culture. The poem's contemplation of this generational schism fosters a tumbling narration on the challenges of cultural identity fabrication in post-colonial India.

Therefore, this study gives assistance to the contemporary discourse on generational gaps, cultural identity, and the role of literature in depicting and modifying societal values. By analyzing the intermingling of generation, culture, and identity, this study provides an extensive understanding of the complex algorithm that lies beneath the generational gap. The speculation of this study have significant prospect for our comprehension of the contours in which generational gaps mold individual cultivations, interpersonal relationships, and societal values. This paper suggests that mulling over generational gaps demands an innate speculation of cultural context, historical background, and individual experiences. Furthermore, this study highlighted the significance of empathy, compassion and assistance in forging the bifurcations that parceled various generations. By showing and demonstrating the greater comprehension and verification of the experiences, values, and beliefs of numerous generations, we could strive towards creating a more congenial and balance society.

Eventually, this paper illustrates the power of poetry to depict and vivify the societal values, and underscores the significance of perpetually maintained exploration and contemplation of the compound cultural fallacies and depth that lie subtly under the generational gap. By exploring the logarithm through which literature illuminates and shapes our comprehension of generational gaps, we can acquire a discernable understanding

of the intricate net of relationships that preludes our individual and collective caricature and identity.

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