Stories: A Tool to Rejuvenate the Culture of Generation Z and Generation Alpha

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Abstract:

Being the first social generation to have grown up with the internet and portable digital technology from a young age, Generation Z and Generation Alpha are seldom aware of affections, devotions, traditions, relationships, and cultures that form the basis for a convivial and serene life. They run in this digital world to cope with the current scenario, failing to take in love and affection. The literature reviews furnish the details that Generation Z and Alpha are bestowed with abundant knowledge and information by technology, but they fail to look at the essential parts of humanity. Hence, this paper aims to use stories as a tool to bring back the beam of happiness in the lives of future humans. The surveys that have been taken show that stories are loved by people of all ages, and so it is easy to educate and revive morals, mannerisms, traditional ideas, and cultures through them. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to rejuvenate these groups through stories to lead a peaceful life, which is the ultimate aim of birth. Stories also provide pleasure and activate the mind to think in the right way since the listener is out of the box.

Key words: *Stories for revival, Generation Z, Generation Alpha*

Introduction:

"Storytelling awakens us to that which is real. Honest. . . . it
transcends the individual. . . . Those things that are most personal
are most general, and are, in turn, most trusted. Stories bind. . . .
They are basic to who we are."   - Terry Tempest Williams (quote/375495)

The true happiness in life lies in helping others with what we have, no matter how much we have but a heart to do it. That sort of satisfaction and smile that one gets while seeing others smile with the help they got is equal to no happiness and no gift received. But these days, this quality of human gradually disappears because of the commitments and cut- throat competitions that exist in each and everyone's life. It is the need of the hour to redeem the bond and get unified in this broken and ever-changing world. Our ancestors on the same earth led a serene life filled with pleasure and peace, whereas we struggle a lot to attain them. The reason behind this is that the current generations, with all their facilities and ever-growing technologies, forget tradition and culture, which has resulted in selfishness that keeps happiness

far away. These young people are obsessed with machines and have no regard for relationships. In the long run, with machines, these younger generations do not hear the sounds of the other people who ask for helping hands, and so there arises a question of being human with humanism. That's why nowadays the number of old age homes and orphanages is creeping out day by day. If this situation persists, then one day humans may become robots and do not know the real value of life or even love. Hence, it is the foremost duty of the previous generations to pass on the ethics of love, principles of culture and tradition, and moralities of relationships to the current Generation Z and Generation Alpha. This can be done with the effective tool named stories, which form a medium for conveying civilizations, customs, morals, facts, and concepts from one generation to another, as pointed out by Rossister:

> Stories are effective as educational tools because they are
> believable, rememberable, and entertaining (Neuhauser 1993).
> The believability stems from the fact that stories deal with human
> or human-like experience that we tend to perceive as an authentic
> and credible source of knowledge. Stories make information
> more rememberable because they involve us in the actions and
> intentions of the characters. In so doing, stories invite--indeed
> demand--active meaning making. (Rossiter, 2002)

Stories not only provide happiness but also pave the way for all the types of thinking like analytical, critical, creative, and cognitive, as in the words of Rossiter, "In short, stories enable us to engage with new knowledge, broader perspectives, and expanded possibilities because we encounter them in the familiar territory of human experience." (Rossiter, 2002).

Generation Z and Generation Alpha:

Parry & Urwin defines a generation as "a set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap". They say that the identification of a generation requires "some form of social 'proximity' to shared events or cultural phenomenon" (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Generation Z, or simply Gen Z, is also known as Zoomers, the demographic cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. Researchers identify that the starting years of Generation Z are from the mid-to-late 1990s and the ending years are the early 2010s. Several authors have pointed to Generation Z as Tweens, The Founders, Plurals, Homeland Generation, Generation 9/11, iGeneration, and Post-Millennials (Merriman, 2015; Williams, Page, Petrosky & Hernandez; 2010). Generation Alpha covers a period from 2010 to 2025. They are also called Net Generation, the Onliners, Global Generation, Generation Tech, Technos, and Generation Surf. In the current decade, Generation Alpha's age ranges from zero to 10 years old, and Generation Z's ranges from 11 to 21 years old. Tootell and Freeman indicate Generation Alpha as "descending from "Z" generation it represents the crossing of the "Z" generation with this new era, the digital era" (Tootell; Freeman; Freeman, 2014). As Thompson Augusto dos Reis specifies, "It's possible to observe that although the generations are different there are characteristics that are inherited. As an example we can highlight the familiarity of the "Z" generation with technology and this has made the "Alpha" generation, its successor, inherit this characteristic but in a potentialized form." (Thompson Augusto dos Reis, 2018). Therefore, these two generations form the future society and the

happiness of the world rests in the hands of these young minds who roam with iPads and smartphones in their hands. They are so interested that they drown themselves in the electronic things in their palms. If Generation Z gears towards love and peace, the following generation Alpha will also attain contentment in life. Hence, it is necessary to restore and transform the virtuous of the earlier generation through stories and make Generation Z understand its present position and responsibilities towards humanity.

The optimistic characters of Generation Z and Generation Alpha:

The positive qualities of Generation Z and Alpha are remarkable in that they are easily adaptable to changes and can move towards the goal of transformation where they respect all. Schwiege and Ladwig have compiled a list of the characteristics of Generation Z as:

- They value hard work that is duly rewarded.
- They are independent, resilient and realize they must work hard to achieve.
- They value trust, fairness, loyalty and respect from their employer.
- They are ambitious, self-starters and entrepreneurial.
- They are creative and appreciate personalization.
- They plan for the future and are willing to learn on their own. (Schwiege and Ladwig 2018)

Many authors have come out with different ideas about the present generations. The five overall insights that Adobe emphasized from their study are:

1. Gen Z students see tech and creativity as important and intersecting aspects of their identities.

2. Gen Z students are excited but nervous for their futures. They do not feel fully prepared for the "real world".

3. Gen Z members learn best by doing and creating, and that students and teachers alike want more focus on creativity.

4. Creativity will play a critical role in the future workforce.

5. Technology will set Gen Z apart in the future workforce. (Adobe Gen Z Report, 2016).

Seemiller and Grace say, "Using technology provides so many benefits and makes life easier and simpler. Generation Z has been able to get news quickly and communicate efficiently with people around the world" (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Thompson Augusto dos Reis notes on the positive quality of Generation Alpha as, "the "Alpha" generation as well as protagonists in the development of technology tend to become the key players in the evolution of thought. This generation indicates a reform of reflection and a critical sense, pointing to a very progressive and transformative generation." (Thompson Augusto dos Reis, 2018). Furthermore, the authors, Daniels, Brooks, Babson, and Ritzhaupt, state that the values of Generation Alpha are, "These online digital environments enable groups of people with similar interests to communicate, develop and connect, thereby promoting and enhancing their learning through informal experiences" (Daniels, Brooks, Babson & Ritzhaupt, 2010). Generation Alpha is highly enthusiastic and eager to collaborate. Toledo, Albuquerque, and Magalhães claim this quality of the students of Gen Alpha as:

> The dynamics of the world will depend of the "Alpha"
> generation for breaking the idiom barrier, for example with
> a greatest knowledge of the English language. These individuals
> will have an easy access to foreign countries and cultures due
> to the growing and global communication and there are a
> possibility to have a substitution of teachers in the classroom
> for "avatars" in a world that is increasingly technologically
> connected." (Toledo, Albuquerque, and Magalhaes, 2012)

The pessimistic characters that degrade Generation Z and Generation Alpha:

Some authors have come out with the negative aspects of Generation Z, which require alteration for an authentic life. Twinge highlights, "However, this can also come with a disadvantage for Generation Z if the technology is used as a replacement for social interaction versus an enhancement" (Twenge, 2017). Turner adds, "Some people use video games, social media, and smart phones to avoid their struggles in the real world and the pervasive use of technology has caused a decline in face-to-face communication" (Turner, 2015). Regarding their emotions, Twenge claims, "GenZ appears to be more scared of adult social interactions than physical injury, which could be the reasoning for an increase in depression and anxiety" (Twenge, 2017). They expect all the solutions to be on the internet and lack problem-solving skills. In the words of Turkle, "The time available for young people to sit and think, uninterrupted, has shrunk over the years, as the current culture of communication no longer allows sufficient space to ponder complicated issues" (Turkle, 2010). Moreover, irrespective of age, Generation Z and Generation Alpha look at all the irrelevant things that are readily available on the internet and thereby waste their time and become lazy. Wallis puts this as, "Although Generation Z youth demonstrate an apparent ease and familiarity with computers, they rely heavily on search engines, "view" rather than read, and may not "uniformly possess" the skills to assess the information they find on the web" (Wallis, 2010). Firat mentions their inefficiency as, "Continuous partial attention may lead to full engagement in nothing while trying to follow everything—an inefficient and a highly stressful process" (Firat, 2013). Regarding the concentration power of Gen Z, Rainie and William note a specific term, "*absent presence*, which means that people may be physically in one place while their social attention and communication focus is elsewhere, is a part of the ever-changing etiquette of rapid technological advances" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Carter sees Generation Alpha as, "the most pampered and wealthiest in terms of materialistic possessions and gadgets, making them an instant gratification seeker, selfish and overindulged cohort" (Carter, 2016). In his article 'Understand Generation Alpha' Amrit Kumar Jha has come up with the negative characters of Generation Alpha, in which he declares: Gen Alpha life started connecting more with Alexa or Siri (voice

> box assistant of Amazon and Apple) than with their parents or
> friends. More than enjoying the outdoor activities or real life
> play, they hop upon mobile games like PUBG, Xbox, and
> Pokemon, within their comfort zone inside home. Such has
> been the widespread use of online gaming that American
> Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization have

classified them as disorders, namely Internet Gaming Disorder
and Gaming Disorder, in DSM-5 and ICD-11, respectively (APA,
2013; WHO, 2016). (Amrit Kumar Jha, 2020)

When Generation Z and Generation Alpha are deficient in concentration, confidence, and filled with unpleasant thoughts, will it be possible for them to be creative? To answer this question, Adler announces:

Only such persons who are courageous, self-confident, and
at home in the world can benefit both by the difficulties and
by the advantages of life. They are never afraid. They know
that there are difficulties, but they also know that they can
overcome them. (Adler, 1930/2011).

Stories: A tool for resurrection:

Stories are the ties that bind and pull the youth in the right direction. As Wallace notes, "The phenomenon of storytelling actually becomes a common language that facilitates meaningful communication; we can hear and understand each other's stories because we can usually recognize ourselves in the stories of others- no matter how varied our cultural backgrounds" (Wallace, 2000).

Rossiter defines storytelling as:
Storytelling is a form of communication that predates written
human history as a means of teaching lessons and passing
history down from one generation to another. Storytelling
techniques can humanize learning. They offer students the
opportunity to communicate as minded characters. Stories
touch students emotions and make them laugh, cry, fear, and
get angry. (Rossiter, 2002).

So, the device stories can be taken in hand to educate the vibrant generations, Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Stories play a vital role in the transformation of information, as Jackson states, "Stories educate as instruments of transformation, as well as information" (Jackson, 1995). Nauhauser remarks, "Stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, rememberable, and entertaining" (Neuhauser 1993). Barzaq assures that storytelling is an educational tool because it gives "moral lessons, positive ideas, styles, good models and entertaining" (Barzaq, 2009). Bausch has listed many characteristics of a story and two of them are given below to understand the effectiveness of stories:

- A good story can establish the feeling of connecting to religion
  and for a believer to the God.
- Stories could have a binding power and enhanced people to
  understand the all part of a universal, regardless of race or
 color. (Bausch, 1994)

Discussion and findings:

In maintaining human relationships, both Gen Z and Gen Alpha stand last in the line, and even some people from these generations do not constitute the queue. It is excruciating that the sprouting students do not have the trait of respecting their elders and even teachers. Students have forgotten the habit of greeting the teachers and they are not ready to smile too. When asked some questions, they respond mechanically without paying attention and they are not organized to have eye contact as well. Above all, they show different attitudes when their mistakes are pointed out. Instead of apologizing, they stare at the advisor, which indicates that they do not care about the right one, resulting in disrespect. Twenge exclaims about their anxieties as "not just of physical dangers but of the emotional dangers of adult social interactions. Their caution helps keep them safe, but it also makes them vulnerable, because everyone gets hurt eventually" (Twenge, 2017). Hence, it is necessary to drag these generations down to the proper path to make humans live a content life with dignity and amity.

To check the transmission of the unique qualities, a study is conducted among the teens and kids who belong to Generation Z and Generation Alpha respectively. Different children aged eight to ten from various locations are given a short story titled "The Foolish Donkey" and for adults aged eighteen to twenty are given a story, "The Four Smart Student". These two groups are asked to furnish their opinion and morals after understanding the story. The outcomes of the discussion are graphed below separately for Generation Alpha and Generation Z:
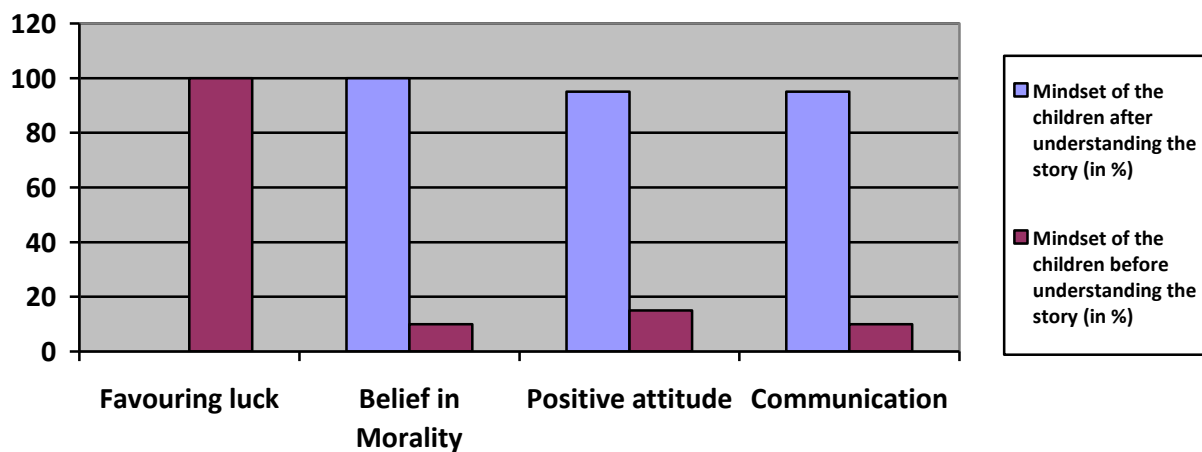
Graph 1: Generation Alpha's interpretation of the story "The Foolish Donkey"
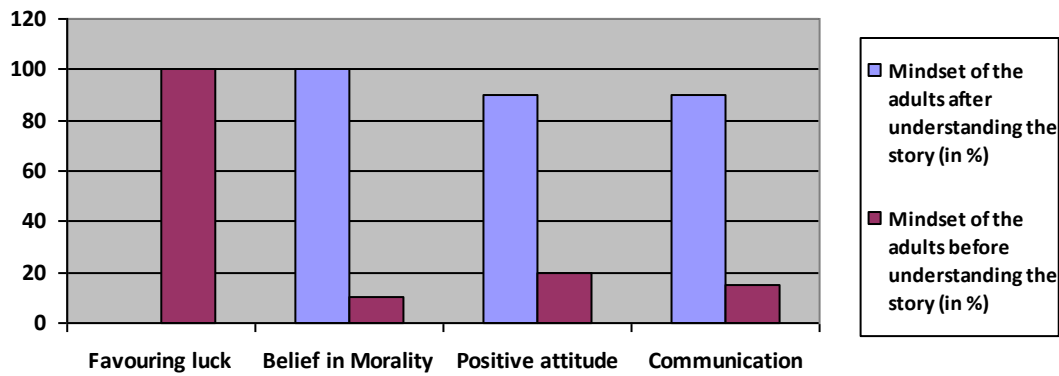
Graph 2: Generation Z's interpretation of the story "The Four Smart Students"

Conclusion:

All humans have four core relationships: God, parents, mentors, and friends. The two generations, Generation Z and Generation Alpha, own unique characteristics that render a promise of an easy change. Their missing qualities in this rapid world are loyalty, thoughtfulness, compassion, open-mindedness, and responsibility. These personalities can be inculcated in them by narrating moral stories which are abundant in all religious books. Great people, in their biography, have given their experience in all aspects to guide the upcoming generations. Hence, they can be utilized. These stories are also available in digital forms for the convenience of the present generations. It is the duty of Generation Y and Generation X to make the current generations understand the culture, tradition, ethics, morality, and humanism of their country by transferring their history through stories. Above all, in each family, the elders must pass on the past lives of their ancestors to every member so that they come to know about the right and wrong that have happened in their own home. To bring up first-class changes in society and individual life, it is enough if a slight adjustment is made in the attitude and approach of the present generations. This can be done only through stories because they are remembered forever as Ed Sabol quotes, "Tell me a fact, and I'll learn. Tell me a truth, and I'll believe. But tell me a story, and it will live in my heart forever". Thus, with proper parenting and guidance, the virtues and values of our life can be simply passed on from one generation to another by stories that have emotions to maintain relationships. Being human is more important than living as a human on this earth that is full of technology and stories give the feel of humanism.

Annexure:

Story 1: The Foolish Donkey (Source from the Internet)**:**

A salt seller used to carry the salt bag on his donkey to the market every day.

On the way, they had to cross a stream. One day, the donkey suddenly tumbled down the stream and the salt bag also fell into the water. The salt dissolved in the water and the bag became very light to carry. The donkey was happy. Then the donkey started to play the same trick every day. The salt seller came to understand the trick and decided to teach a lesson to it. The next day he loaded a cotton bag on the donkey. Again, it played the same trick, hoping

that the cotton bag would still become lighter. But the dampened cotton became very heavy to carry and the donkey suffered. It learned a lesson. It didn't play the trick anymore after that day, and the seller was happy.

Moral: Luck does not favor one at all times.

Story 2: The Four Smart Students (Source from the Internet)**:**

One night, four college students were out partying late at night and didn't study for the test that was scheduled for the next day. In the morning, they thought of a plan. They made themselves look dirty with grease and dirt. Then they went to the Dean and said they had gone out to a wedding last night and on their way back the tyre of their car burst and they had to push the car all the way back. So they were in no condition to take the test. The Dean thought for a minute and said they could have the re-test after 3 days. They thanked him and said they would be ready by that time. On the third day, they appeared before the Dean. The Dean said that as this was a special condition test, all four were required to sit in separate classrooms for the test. They all agreed as they had prepared well in the last 3 days.

The test consisted of only 2 questions with a total score of 100 points:

1) Your Name: _____ (1 Points)

2)   Which   tyre   burst? _____   (99   Points)

Options – **(a)** Front Left   **(b)** Front Right   **(c)** Back Left   **(d)** Back Right

Moral: Take responsibility or you will learn your lesson.

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Repository Details:

The data collected are new ones and they are not taken from any other resources. Further, the data are publicly shared in the repository and are available in the repository GitHup. The link for the same is https://github.com/thamilselvi-eng