

WORLDWING

Should There be Sex Education for the Young?

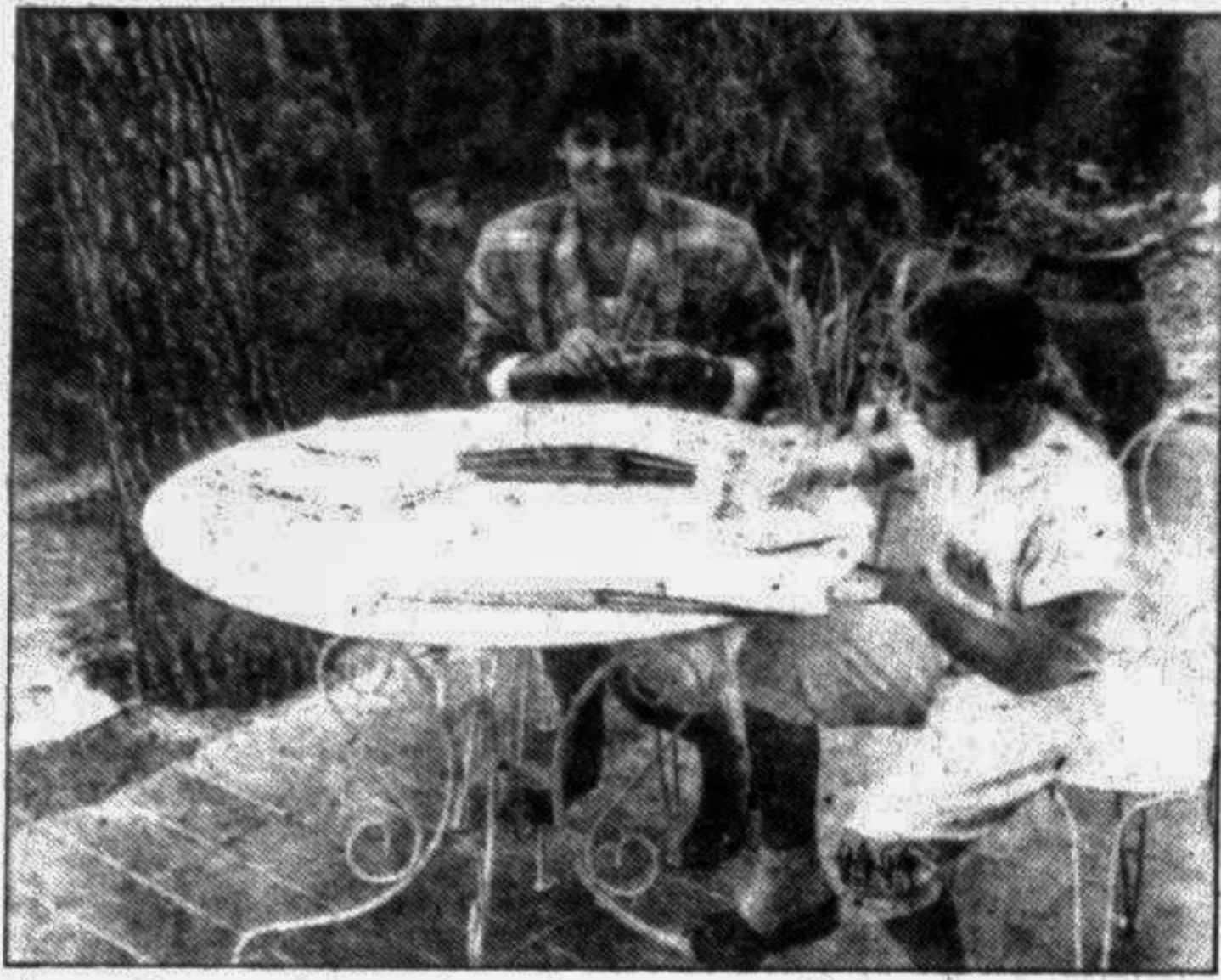
by Fayza Haq

OUR youth are told little beyond a few garbled versions of how babies are born, how to cope with the changes and embarrassment of adolescent changes and how to guard oneself, as a girl.

And all this is told by parents in half-swallowed or hushed tone. It is seldom in depth, for fear of the youth knowing too much at too early an age and so misusing their knowledge. Moreover, the illusion of the concept of the innocence of youth is needlessly worshipped at a self-created altar, with its shockingly declining followers. There is the constant fear of so-called polluting the young mind. Traditional and natural inhibitions and generation gap prevent parents from satisfying the youth as regards their biologically unavoidable curiosity about sex. Thus, they seek the knowledge in books and magazines hidden between text book volumes, stored in their secret shelves, niches and under the paper sheets on their book shelves.

Parents and even teachers side-track about sex and dole out a routine dosage about naive information of the birds and the bees, at the most. This too in an abstract fashion and they stop when questions become too pointed and demand more explanations.

There are times, too, when parents have occasional indiscreet flings of their own, when they have little time for the care and training of the inquisitive young ones. There are also the over-enthusiastic and over-anxious manual-oriented adults who overdo their children and students. The youth are then overawed by the bombardment of information and being merely precocious does not make the child conscious of the finesse and essence of the values and beauty of sex.



A mother and daughter chatting over breakfast

Courtesy: Paris Match

The keen interest in sex does not come on suddenly entering the teens when the voice cracks, pimples appear on the cheeks, stubs spring on the teenager's chin or on his hips, or when the girl is urged to wear the 'dupatta' and play or talk less often with her coeds in class or her male cousins and elder brothers. Consciousness of sex begins at an early age, as most adults know by reading the books, magazines and feature items in newspapers. It is hence up to the parents and teachers to accept sex as a natural part of the youth and to teach the youth to respect and treasure it, or even being too conscious about it like some ugly scar on the face.

Adults often prevent the youth from adventuring and finding out the answers to their questions on their own, even though they do not quite check their shocking flowery phraseology — typical of gut-

tersnipes — picked up at random. There is no doubt, there is a formal education and elaborate lectures on biology and health science, with special chapters on reproduction, which the youth accost at the age of 15 or 16, and the brimming talk and airing of view on women's lib, and even surreptitious reading of 'Lady Chatterly's Lover' 'Fanny Hill' and 'Tome Jones' at an early age, yet the youth is still at sea as regards the details and realities of sex and sexuality. When the high-school or college girl has to face the thought of getting married, sex is often repellent — all because she is untutored in sex, as is perhaps the man chosen to be her husband too.

Authorities do not have to spell out the essence of sex in the words of Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis or Margaret Meade. They must, however, explain it as something pleasant, precious and an element to be handled with precise

care. One cannot expect the youth to learn the answers to their curiosity of sex from any other source than the one naturally and completely supplied by parents and teachers. It is these adults who have enormous influence on the development of the character, tendencies, likes and dislikes of the youth.

The growing boys and girls, specially during their awkward teenaged days, should be taught the gentleness and emotional needs of give and take. Sex is not to be condemned as something to be swept under the carpet but something to be valued and even glorified. All this is essential, surely, to mature the youth into adults who do not have to take to the pot or hard drinks or even tranquillising pills for support, in times of emergencies and crucial points in life.

There are again the objectionable double standards when a boy of 14 is not discouraged from having girl friends even if it means cousins in their teens and early twenties. Meanwhile, his sister of 16 is constantly warned not to be seen with every Tom, Dick or Harry and to be ware of Romeos of all shapes and sizes. While the young woman is burdened with too much of the responsibilities of the use or misuse of the knowledge of sex, the young man is not carefully checked about the casual philandering. This limited concept, too, is highly questionable, specially by the hyper-sensitive teenager.

The youth should indeed be given the right introduction and guideline by the often too hesitant and timid adults — at least as regards the elements of warmth, tenderness and love — which remain integral ingredients of sex. The young should be taught to respect sex and not grab at it greedily, selfishly or even slyly. The young one must know his or her inner powers, needs, responses, control and should surely also be taught to accept the duties and responsibilities that go along with the knowledge of sex. This should be with grace and suavity in both the male and the female.

BREAKFAST is my favourite time of the day. It is still cool, I sit in my garden house, birds twitter, and my servant brings me my daily ration of corn-flakes with nuts, raising and milk. Next, I experience a "small dip". The newspaper is also delivered. I know I am going to have to struggle for at least fifteen minutes before I know what is going on in Bangladesh, and the world at large.

Recently, one morning, the newspaper gave me some doubts about my grasp of the English language. "Giggest wildlife sanctuary," read a heading. Giggest? I know the word giggle, but can it be a natural reserve that makes you obviously laugh? Should it be "Gigolo wildlife sanctuary," then? No, I did not think gigolos were becoming extinct. The text brought the solution. It should have been "Biggest." On the same page a headline stated: "US is entering a period of military self-dittance" and "The president of France ..." with an M and double t, is it not so?

Abbreviations are my next hurdle. If you know more than ten of the following abbreviations, you are a class-1 reader: addl. Aug. BB. BGMEA, CHT Cig. co. coop. DMCH, DU, dev. edn. govt. JU, KLM, ME, N'ganj, NGO. Are you still with me?

After the headlines the texts come. The sentences are sometimes difficult to comprehend, as they are as they appear to me of baby elephant sizes. In one of the English dailies of August 2, '94 there was an article with a sentence of 83 words. Did the Author want to be recorded in the Guinness Book of Records, like the Indian youth who pushed a mustard seed along a half kilometre route literally with

MMMIM

by Nico den Tuinder

his nose?

And look at those writers trying to be funny. There was recently a column on *Hartals*. "A rickshaw not emitting noxious gases". Ha-ha-ha-ha! How exceedingly comical. No, dear writer, an engine (in case: the rickshaw) pollutes the air, and not the vehicle. Commenting on Shukla Sarkar's performance at the National Museum, the same writer in another column later wrote: "I think events like this should be renamed. The performance ... Renamed what? Or did the editor of the newspaper mutilate the original text?"

The weather forecasts really drive me to despair. "Chances of temporary light to moderate rain accompanied by thunder-showers likely." Well, there is always a chance. Some chances are bigger than others. But a likely chance? The forecast also said, "the weather may deteriorate in the following week. I naturally ask myself, "Deteriorate for whom?" For those who like to be fried in the sun, or those who prefer to be soaked in the rain? What will I have to wear if it rains? A T-shirt or a heavy oil-cloth rain coat? Having finished the news-



An impression of the author reading a daily at leisure

British Fabrics Firmly in Fashion

by Avril Groom

GLAMOROUS fabrics like silk and linen are sent around the world from France, Italy and countries in the Far East. But for tweed and wool, the mainstays of most designers' autumn collections, there is nowhere to beat Britain.

In terms of clothes production, Britain's fashion industry is small compared with the giants of continental Europe and America. Yet its fabrics are worn by the "supermodels" on the catwalks at each round of international collections by the top designers. Both haute couture and ready-to-wear designers have a long tradition of close association with a small group of highly-respected British firms and mills.

Distinctive tweed checks made by Linton, in Cumbria northern England, have helped create the instantly-identifiable look of Chanel since the days of Mademoiselle Coco herself, and other famous design names have followed suit. Garigue, based in London and Yorkshire, has an equally illustrious client list, headed by Yves St Laurent.

Over the years, such long-established fabric makers have developed fruitful working relationships with the designers. The latter may be inspired by technical and aesthetic advances at the mills, or they may ask the mills to interpret their own ideas which, after a period of exclusivity, become part of mainstream fashion. Thus, the inclusion, at de-

signer Karl Lagerfeld's request, of a technologically-advanced, brightly-coloured cellophane yarn in fabrics for the Chanel couture collection two autumns ago gave a new look to tweed in clothes shops last autumn.

Refined Procedure

The complex and highly-coloured tweeds made fashionable over the past three years by designers such as Christian Lacroix and Gianni Versace have inspired a whole new breed of craft weavers, many based in Northern Ireland, who will weave special, highly luxurious individual lengths for an haute couture collection. They work closely with the designer to coordinate the fabric with the rest of the outfit and the concept of the whole

collection. Tim Roberts and Patricia Gavin are two young Northern Irish weavers who have recently come to prominence through the patronage of Lacroix and Versace and whose work has been exhibited, and sold, at Liberty, London's premier shore for fabrics.

Craft Village

The new young weavers, working almost at a craft level, like to have this "three-dimensional" input from the designer at an even earlier stage. Patricia Gavin, working from a newly-established craft village in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, is flexible and highly imaginative in her techniques, producing fabric that, though woven, is a long

way from the traditional concept of tweed. Her pieces often contain a variety of different yarns, including soft knitting-type wools like mohair, and are usually in vivid, contemporary colour-mixes.

Made at handcraft, rather than commercial production, level they are inevitably expensive, and her main commercial outlet for them so far has been as accessories like scarves or soft bags.

However, her combining of traditional Irish inspirations with the techniques and coloursense of weaving from Africa, where she was brought up, have made her a hit with the designers who use tweed adventurously.

(The author is a contributor to "The Daily Telegraph" London)

A Glimpse in Time of Rural France

by Anita Aparna Mueyed

IT maybe startling to realize that the French became part of a unified nation only in the later period of the nineteenth century. Before this assimilation, France was composed of many fragmented regions, each with little knowledge of concern about the rest of the country.

communes. They were largely unsuccessful and unwilling to consort with each other. This indifference to concerns beyond one's locality stemmed mainly from inadequate means of transportation. There were barely any roads available to the peasants; and if so they were very poorly built. Trade

the crevice, they did not have language, culture, mentality or morals in common.

Their living conditions were miserable with frugal diets, unfit lodgings while crime were every day realities. Many historians have depicted them as "savages", "primitive" and "child-like", and have stated

with; a portrayal of unfair prejudice distorting the farmers' traditional culture into something stoic, unlikeable and uncreative.

All of these factors brought urban values to the secluded farmers who, at first, brushed them off indignantly but later, welcomed them wholeheartedly. The railways brought excellent means of transporting goods and merchandise and increased the frequency of markets. The new roads expanded trade and curiosity between regions. Women farmers began to sell products weekly instead of a few times a year, which, in turn, improved diets and standards of the rural population. Fair's provided a new focus of interest: were busier and more numerous. As industrial products penetrated the rural areas, farm life changed dramatically. Luxuries, once homemade or done without, were purchased and rural industry began its decline. This was significant in both economic and social terms. The schools taught French and finally led the pop-

ulation to practice a common language which facilitated communication and ran its way to produce more of a nation. As for the army, it contributed to the process of acculturation and civilization. As these conditions evolved, isolations broke. Most farmers were wealthy enough to provide themselves with heat, and no longer needed to spend their time mending and sewing now that industrial, ready-made products were easily accessible. Gradually the old oral traditions and proverbs were put aside from the farming habit. They inevitably detached themselves from their past and let new urban ideas seep into their communities.

The farmers realized that their old ways were inferior to the powerful nationalization that had taken over. This shift of opinion took place gradually; but surely moved along the path to reach the changes. Hence, the process of urbanization was not a tyrannical one. The farmers were not forced to give up their traditions, but were given the good fortune to transfigure their troubled lives into a more easy-going one. Yet, there were some advantages to rural life, and it is feasible to assert that much tradition and culture was



A French rural 19th century scene

Courtesy: Alliance Francaise

An imaginary line can be clearly drawn from the Haute-Savoie to the Cotes-d'Normis, accentuating the southern underdeveloped areas from the northern developed areas. The fusion and association of these two poles was led by the process of modernization of the rural areas and their inhabitants via infiltration of urban values, namely economic progress and cultural assimilation.

France farmers, living in geographically isolated regions, failed to create strong links with their neighbouring

was uncommon not only because of these troublesome routes, but also because the Impeunious peasants had taught themselves to possess the bare minimum. Out of necessity they were self-sufficient. The only loose ties that brought them together were the markets and fairs. But even then, they sensed a feeling of fear (perhaps an innate fear of the unknown), which led to much mistrust and suspicion. They were reluctant to mingle with each other and thus, barely affected each other economically or socially. To widen

that there was nothing better about farming culture; that urban life was best in every way. The image that these historians have created comes most probably from the writings of the more elite, for then, peasants could not read or write. Those who wrote about them were mere observers watching from a higher pedestal, a different angle. Most of these essayists looked down on the farmers and perceived them, not as Frenchmen but as something similar to a hoard of wild beasts. These labels are obviously too strong to mark them



An orchid to accentuate the natural glamour

Courtesy: The Helena Rubinstein Beauty Book