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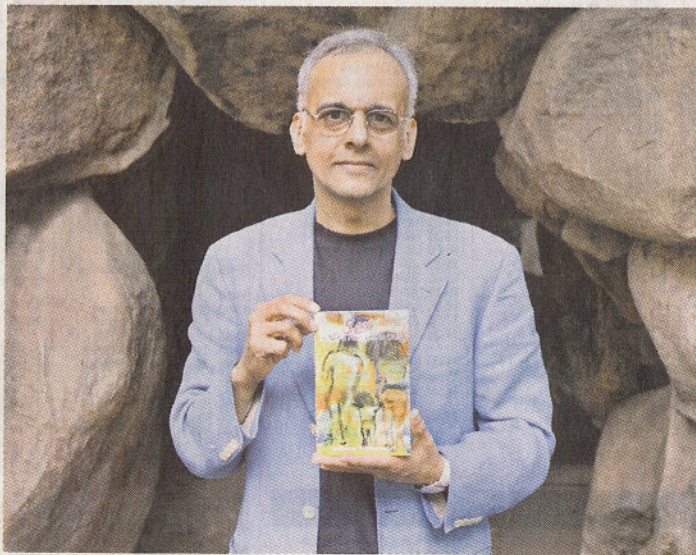
Music . People . Youth

A problem of perspective

BOOK Andrologist Sudhakar Krishnamurti stresses the need to talk about sex in a more open manner

There is a ridiculous double standard in our country," says andrologist Sudhakar Krishnamurti almost as soon as we begin our conversation. "We pretend as if a population of one billion people was created through asexual reproduction or immaculate conception. And yet the media routinely displays explicit body shows. Meanwhile the child's immediate vicinity is so sterile, it is no wonder he or she does not know how to handle the sexual freedom that comes with age."

Dr. Krishnamurti, arguably India's most successful expert in the field of male sexual health, and the author of "Sex(x) is not a Four Letter Word" argues that with the growing sexual revolution in the country, there is an urgent need to address this hypocrisy and talk about sex in a more open manner. "That's why I have given that title to my first book, the first of a proposed series. The problem is that adults make sex look like a four letter word, like a swear word. If the adult does not have a clean slate in his mind, every time he uses euphemisms like making love he is still thinking of the f-word. Dirt comes from the head and not



IN THE OPEN Sudhakar Krishnamurti: 'The problem is that adults make sex look like a four-letter word' PHOTO: BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

from the subject of sex itself."

Heartening changes have begun to come about in the attitude towards sex and to gender relations within the domain of sex, he insists. Indian women have begun to stand up for their rights, he points out, and a new generation of men are learning to cope with these

new gender relations. "There are now men who welcome with open arms the changes in gender equations. There has been a true attitudinal shift," he says, surmising that one of the reasons could be the greater proliferation of nuclear families. "The old gender equations are not there to confuse in-

puts that children receive at an earlier age."

Where change has not come about it is more out of ignorance than stubbornness, he adds. More men today are willing to accept that they have a problem. Not every man is in denial. Some men just don't know better because most of our sexual behaviours are learnt through mimicry, from mimicking fathers, uncles, other older acquaintances and peers. Most men don't spend their time judging their own attitudes and analysing if they are correct."

It is precisely such populations that must be targeted for programmes on sexual awareness, says the doctor, whose first book has dealt with the issue of male sexual health from the adult perspective but also plans to write for children in a format borrowed from fables and fairytales. The primary problem with the manner in which sexual awareness programmes have been conducted in the country, he says, is that crucial decisions have remained in the hands of politicians and educationists, who might have the legal sanction but not necessarily the credentials to make decisions about the issue. "Policy making

should be done by people with a proper understanding of sexual health at all levels, from the medical to the social."

The other primary difficulty lies in the very construction of programmes as sexual education. "The word education is too didactic and implies an up-down process. We need sexual information programmes where we share information with each other. That is a more equitable process. And receptivity is higher when we provide information than education."

Sex, says the good doctor, is a lot more than just a reproductive function. The WHO, he points out in his book, has classified sexual health as a basic right. "It's about a lot more than just sex. It's about society, civilisations, generations... Sex pervades all aspects of life without humans knowing how it does so. Sex has not been overrated, it has been either misrepresented or underrated. Our preoccupation with matters sexual has not matched our efforts to improve them or better one's lot. That has to change."

For more on "Sex is not a Four Letter Word", log onto www.sinaflw.com

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