

IMPORTANCE OF SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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Sex education for children is much discussed topics among parents and educators. When I think of the subject I am reminded of two questions which some people of good will have asked me. First, "Fr. Varghese, you are a Catholic Priest and a bachelor. What do you know about sex?" Second, "What experience you have of sex and sexual relationship between a man and a woman?" Both the questions are just and proper. I confess that I do not have the experience of intimate sexual relationship of a man and a woman. It is a sacred relationship of married couple. I can not write about sex education with such personal experiences of sexual relationship.

But I can tell a few things to those who pose me such questions. Dear friend, you have the experience of sexual relationship with your partner and of family life. Your personal experience is limited to you. But as a Catholic Priest and counselor in an atmosphere of confidentiality and intimacy many young women and men as well as older people share with me their sexual life and relationship or lack of it and seek counsel. Young men and women put their trust in me and confide with me the secret world of their sex-life.

To tell you the truth, the inspiration to write this article on sex education comes from a young 'virgin' woman's sharing with me. Answering my question she said that she have had no guidance about sex neither from her parents nor from the convent school where she studied. She had come for counselling to me after her traumatic experience of leaving her lover and an abortion.

Many years back a young friend confidentially shared with me that he came to know how a child is conceived and born only after his marriage! Today I believe that through television, glossy magazines and cheap phonographic literature the teenagers and youth come to know not only about sexual relationship of men and women but also about same sex relationship and other sexual perversions. Many a times small children learn about intimate sexual relationship on the wrong way and hold false notions. In these situations we see the great need of sexual education through schools and the need of parental guidelines about sex.

The parents have the primary responsibility of giving sexual education or guidance about sex to their children. As children grow many changes take place in their body according to their age. The boys and girls do not understand these changes occurring in their body. The teenagers between the age of 13 to 19 years become confused and puzzled about the changes and growth taking place in their body. The teenagers feel much confused also in their mind.

The behavior of teenagers also changes as their body changes and develops. A small child who was studying in same school where his mother teaches, goes to school walking with her and holding her hand. The teacher told me her experience. When her son reached 13 years old, he would still walk with her to school holding her hand, but as soon as they come in the view of the school her son would leave her hand and run on to the school alone. When the mother noticed the new development and inquired about the new behavior, her son told her that he was afraid that his classmates see him holding mother's hand, then they would ridicule him calling him names like 'mother's child' and 'small baby'! The parents can give appropriate guidance about

sex as they notice bodily developments taking place in their children according to their age and maturity.

Unfortunately in most cultures and languages in India the word 'sex' is taboo! The parents feel inhibited to speak to their children about sex. So the children get hardly any understanding about sex and body changes from their families.

After the parents the responsibility to give sex education to children rests on the teachers in their schools. Recently I read in an English periodical published from Mumbai about a tragic incident which took place there. A teacher in her 10th standard noticed in her class the misbehaviour of a boy and a girl. The teacher warned the boy and the girl about their misbehaviour. But the boys continued to pursue the girl and harass her in the class. When her many warning failed she took the boy to the office of the principal. The principal asked the boy to bring his school calendar to make a note to call his parents. The boy gave his calendar and went out of the office. The boy then ran to the terrace of the three storey school building and threw himself down. He died on the spot. "Everything took place within three minutes," the teacher said.

Most schools do not have any arrangement to give sex education to their children. As a consequence, even though no such tragic incidents take place, many teenagers and young boys and girls go astray and misuse their sexual powers. So it is common today premarital sex, pregnancy of teenagers and young girls, abortions, premarital sex and teen-age mothers. All these show the urgency and importance of giving sex education in schools.

Sex education can bring personal growth and maturity of teenagers. Without sex education our children easily fall prey to perverse sex and go astray from ethical and moral sexual life. The teenagers and the youth need to learn that human sexuality as a good and holy thing. God has created human as sexual being – male and female and what God has created is good and noble.

God has given the gift of sex to men and women with specific purpose. Sexuality is not merely for enjoying sexual pleasure. Sexuality is more than sexual union of male and female. So the young people who understand the sexual ethics and morality keep their virginity till their marriage. The boys and girls who have received proper sex education and understand sex as holy and noble, refrain from sexual union till their marriage. They are careful and earnest not to misuse their sexuality and positively keep their virginity. (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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