



RISKY BUSINESS

Sex is a difficult subject for both parents and children to deal with. Everyone, from the government, health agencies, schools and teachers, must approach this subject with sensitivity and care.

Some parents are opposed to sex education because they see it as promoting sexual relations outside marriage. For some sex is a taboo topic, full stop. And sex before marriage is another subject some parents think is immoral and wrong and shouldn't be discussed in the classroom, or anywhere else.

But two things should not be overlooked in any debate. One is that sexual health is incredibly important – if you fail to look after yourself, it could lead to very serious consequences for yourself or for a partner. Second, education is important. Parents should educate their offspring on the subject or entrust it to someone they trust and whom young people relate to and respect.

Sex education needs a context – that can be religious, moral or emotional, if that's what parents want. But at the same time, young people also need facts about what is safe and what isn't. Some are going to experiment and explore whether their parents know about it or not. That is part of the learning process, but if they do, they should do so knowing the facts and making decisions as fully informed individuals. Our story suggests not enough is being done, and that is something that has to be addressed by Asian communities and others.

CELEBRITY CRICKET

For some, there are two very distinct Asian passions – cricket and Bollywood. The Indian Premier League (IPL) combined the two in what many have come to see as an unbeatable formula. Indeed, on Monday (6), Lord's got a glimpse of what an IPL game might be like if ever any were held here. The Rajasthan Royals came, saw and conquered in the charity match against the Middlesex Panthers. The enthusiasm of the crowd, the allegiances of supporters, the number of families at the game, were all heartwarming. Shilpa Shetty not performing may have been a disappointment for some, but there were cricketing performances to admire. The final verdict has to be, bring it on! IPL – are you listening?

Tell us what you think

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Climate change is a really hot topic

WORK MUST BE DONE TO HELP POOR NATIONS



PROFESSOR TORD KJELLSTROM

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IN highlighting the latest impact of climate change on the world's poorest people, Oxfam's new report, *Suffering The Science*, has highlighted an imbalance in science.

Despite the fact poor people and poor countries will be hit first and hit hardest by a changing climate, much of the research on the impacts of climate change, and how best to deal with them, is focused in the rich world. This rich country bias is apparent in my own area of research on the impacts of heat stress.

Even if governments take the action urged by scientists today, we are still facing the prospect of living in a world which is two or more degrees hotter than it is today and the implications for how we live, and how we work, are enormous.

The effects of heat waves on mortality rates and health systems are well-studied in the rich world. Yet research is far patchier when it comes to developing world, where heat stress is already a big problem during the hot seasons and is set to get even worse.

The recent heat wave in India resulted in fatalities and demonstrations as the added demand for electricity caused power cuts climbed into the mid-40s. Power cuts affect not only the air conditioners of the rich, but also stops refrigerators, fans, lighting and other necessities for the not so rich.

Just as troubling, and under researched, is the impact of heat on worker productivity and the economy. We have known for decades that small increases in temperature affect human beings' capacity to work. None of us, no matter how well-acclimatised, can do heavy work effectively and continuously above 35 degrees centigrade or so, and a couple of degrees higher than that, our bodies soon get exhausted.

Poor people and poor countries are most at risk, partly because many developing countries are in the world's hot tropical zones; partly because they lack the resources such as air conditioning which those of us in the rich world turn to when the temperature rises; and partly because millions of people income is directly related to how much they can produce in an hour – for them slowing down due to too much heat leads to economic losses.



THE HEAT IS ON:
Southern India is one place at risk

In Delhi we may see a 30 per cent drop in productivity compared with 1980 in outdoor workers purely because of the lengthening of hot season and the rise in average temperature predicted under a global two degree temperature rise.

Workers in South India and Central America need to take rest from the heat for the whole afternoon. It might sound attractive to start early in the morning and have a long "siesta", but the result is less potential to earn income, and less time left for engaging with family and carry out household tasks.

There are serious health risks as well, especially to workers untrained in the dangers of heat stress. This means almost all commercial agricultural labour in the developing world, many of whom are under pressure to work as hard as possible because they are paid by results, are at risk of heat exhaustion, heats stroke and even death.

A high heat mortality rate among immigrant agricultural workers in the USA was reported recently and studies in Central America have shown that seasonal sugar plantation workers suffer high levels of kidney malfunction due to heat related dehydration. Again, it is shocking that the climate change analysis and discussion to date has almost totally ignored this crucial issue.

Is it because it is an issue that affects poor workers in tropical countries more than the rich workers with air conditioning? Heat at work has implications for heat-reducing ur-

ban planning and urban design, as well as workplace production and occupational health management. Traditional materials and designs for building construction need to be reviewed, and new protection technologies designed.

To assume that air conditioning will solve the problems is too simplistic – many jobs are such that they can only be done outdoors, or they are carried out in indoor spaces where air conditioning cannot be supplied. Air conditioning also contributes to greenhouse gases, so alternative means of providing heat relief are needed.

Without pro-active thinking about the heat and work relationships in the future, many of the dwellings and workplaces that are built now may be too hot during parts of each day, and health will be at risk and productivity will be suppressed.

It is a global issue where the source of the problem is the high greenhouse emissions of the rich, while the result of this problem is health risks and less economic potential among the poor.

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■ *Suffering the Science: Climate Change, People and Poverty* is published by Oxfam. It can be downloaded at www.oxfam.org.uk

The views expressed in this editorial do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper

REVIEW
OF THE WEEK



LONDON CALLING: *Her Story* gets capital date

A STORY OF LOVE AND VENGEANCE

BURNING love and vengeance gripped the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Centre for the performance of a play which is thrilling crowds across the globe.

Her Story, directed by Usha Raghavan, was put on at the famous art centre in London last weekend as part of the dance drama's world tour.

The play, consisting of two dancers, is based around the lives and epic personalities of four women in Indian mythology and literature.

The protagonists are given a voice through dance to challenge the perceptions about them.

by NADEEM BADSHAH

Unconditional love is the running theme, and a powerful opening scene sees the goddess Devi express her love for Lord Shiva.

Despite the absence of a backdrop and few props, her rage towards the goddess Ganga and disgust at the thought of other men was strongly depicted.

The scenes are beautifully explained by a narrator, resulting in a seamless transition between the stories. The highlight of Act II was the story of Kannagi, whose husband Kovalan was killed by the king of Madurai.

The tension was whipped up by the sitars, violins and lyrics inspired by Tamil literature as Kannagi talked about justice and her sense of wrongdoing, which culminates in her burning the city to the ground.

The final act had a lighter side and veered away from a feminist perspective to show that love is not just about raging emotions.

The result was some comedy moments, starting with an over-protective wife arguing and berating her husband for being seen talking to another woman, before confessing how much she loves him.

But the scene that prompted most laughs in the audience was the protagonist finding her friends gossiping about her husband. Pointing to certain members of the audience, she defends him and boasts of her husband's qualities and mocks all the other men as drunkards and philanderers.

The shift from gripping drama to comedy was the perfect way to round off an enjoyable two-hour performance, which was befitting for a grand venue like the Bhavan.

■ For more information, visit www.usharaghavan.com