

Guest Editorial

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Of the various stages of life, 'childhood' generally evokes a picture of unsullied joy, of innocence and all that which is quite opposite to the life of an adult. Oft heard words, *keep the child in you alive*, say a lot in the direction of leading a more quality existence. No wonder, Rajesh Reddy, a poet, beautifully captures the inner voice of an adult as he writes, *Mere dil ke kisi kone mein ek masoom sa baccha, bado ki dekh kar duniya bara hone se darta hai* (An innocent child in some corner of my heart, seeing the world of the adults, fears to grow up as an adult). A poet's vision of a ubiquitous beautiful childhood notwithstanding, the real world gives a reality check, as a section of children drag on with life without experiencing any such ideal childhood of blissful happiness. The lifelong trauma of being victims of rape and molestation, of sexual abuse within the "safe" environs of the house and school – are injuries which leave an ineradicable scar in the psyche of a child.

We curse the times we are living in, but on second thought, the present time is a rather interesting period to witness, something reminding us of the perfect paradox reflected in Mark Twain's famous lines from *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times... ." Why is the present age, the best and worst at the same time? When we look at the escalation of gruesome crimes against children today, we are forced to agree that human society could not have degenerated any further. But, this is also the very age when such crimes are being reported, spoken about and openly discussed. Such evils have probably always been in society, but seldom brought out in the open. However, over a couple of decades, we have been advancing towards becoming a people who are no longer willing to be in a state of denial and

are finally accepting that our children can be and are victims of abuse at the hands of their so called biggest protectors.

Several programmes on television victims sharing how they were abused in their childhood and why they feel the need to talk about it now as adults. What is even heartening to see is that such venting out finds all empathy and no surprise look from the patient audience whose countenance is all about, *I understand and I am in this with you*.

"Children and childhood" has emerged as an independent field of academic discourse, and this speaks volumes about the conscious acknowledgement of the fact that it's high time, children, their fears, their worries, their stress, their dilemma and insecurities are no longer brushed under the carpet as just another childish stuff. Researches in this direction need to be further encouraged to holistically understand the lives of juvenile delinquents, children in orphanages, differently enabled children and the like, and we the adults need to walk that extra mile to reach out to these struggling children and give them a better world.

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