

WHEN A CHILD IS LOVED

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"WE are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait but the child cannot." Right now his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, his senses are being developed. To him we can't say tomorrow. His name is today. The above quoted observation of noble prize winner Gabriela Mistral could very well apply to India, "the land of children." There are hundreds, thousands and millions of them. They are there in every corner, in every small village, in every street, every home big or small, everywhere. Many of them die without seeing dawn of their first birth day. The survivors, because of the acute poverty and adverse environmental conditions will not enjoy the fruits of good health or develop their full human potentials.

The child stays in his mother's womb nine months. This physical symbiotic relationship ends when he enters this wonderful world, but the psychological bond still remains. The ecstasy of happiness a mother experiences when her baby is placed in her lap for the first time by the nurse is impossible to explain. And when the mother holds her child to her breast she gives him some of the warmth he has been devoid of since he left her body. The mother clasps the baby to her heart, while feeding him which makes her feel that he is the heart of her heart, bone of her bone and blood of her blood. By breast feeding the mother and the baby weave a web of closeness between them which will largely help in laying the foundation for a healthy

and happy life. In modern societies where women have a lot of job opportunities and social life, they leave their babies in their home and go for work. The pangs of separation assails the baby too much. The child like a small bud can grow and blossom brightly if he is loved. He can also wither and die in the absence of love.

The child when he is loved sings song composing them in his own words in rhymes, by movements of hands and feet, sometimes with the head and hands as well. The parents who lull him to sleep can hear music in his muteness, see rhymes in his movements, and sweetness in his smile. But few parents have the time and leisure to listen to this music and to ponder over this beauty. They have to be away at work in order to make both ends meet. In affluent families while material things are in abundance the child may be deprived of this love, affection and attention which he is in need from his parents because they are far too busy with their social life. Lack of this warm family feelings which mean so much to children is the cause of physical retardation and mental imbalance. 'UNICEF' strongly believes that a country's development lies in the development of its children which is the first resource of every country. But parents are in the pursuit of economic welfare at the cost of their children's mental health. They have no time to see the tears that lurk not far from the joyful eyes of their children, no time to pick them up and hug them.

A child has an insatiable curiosity about his surroundings every thing within the reach and sight is worthy if investigated. His mental and physical development directly depends on his capacity and inclination to explore. It would be unwise to try to curb this instinct too much, constantly admonishing a child with 'no' and 'don't touch' often results in making the child stubborn. Do you ever stop to consider the far reaching effects of the single syllable 'no'? We rarely stop to explain why a thing has not been allowed. The child's world is filled with forbidden objects and deeds for reasons that are beyond his understanding. Unnecessary interference should be avoided but timely instructions should be given. For this the parents would need counselling and education about child care. Treat the child as an individual who develops at his own pace; deal with him with love and with common-sense and then everything would go as it should.

'Child' is now the world's central figure. He is talked of, written about, filmed and portrayed all over the world. All these can do no good in the world where politics takes priority over the moral laws. Unless sustained action is taken to improve the quality of childhood through love, affection and understanding. While declaring 1979 as the year of the child HENRY R. LABOUISE, Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund, stated "why an year for the child"? To make 4,000 millions of children scattered across the globe the object of the universal love affection and attention is the only answer.