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STREETISM AS A SOCIAL TRAGEDY IN AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the issue of the street child, which has become a menacing characteristic of the modern society with all its vaunted air of sophistication, pride and civilization. Streetism is a worldwide phenomenon. Haunted by poverty, abuse and brutality at home, many teenagers seek comfort in the streets. But the freedom offered by the streets is actually no freedom as the boys become bullies with funny aliases like "Macho" and "Poison" while the girls are either lured or coerced into prostitution with its attendant negative consequences which range from contending with unwanted pregnancies, engaging in abortion to contracting sexually transmitted diseases. In spite of the daunting nature of streetism as a social malaise this paper contends that it is not insurmountable. This is the artistic significance of Kabria's family and MUTE, the non-government organization saddled with the rehabilitation of street girls. The paper concludes, however, that a lasting panacea to the problem of streetism lies in bringing love back to the family unit, parent's control of their urge for a robust procreation and responsible government, which should not be found wanting in doing the needful to support planned parenthood organizations, equip welfare homes and equipping law enforcement agencies to create an enabling environment for all citizens.

Keywords: Streetism, Love, Phenomenon, Social tragedy, Children, Africa, Family, Street, Teenagers.

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Contribution/ Originality

The main contribution of this Article is in the area of greater awareness of the need for all in society to contribute to the eradication of streetism in all its ramifications before it becomes an uncontrollable epidemic

1. INTRODUCTION

Beyond the klieg lights and the glittering razzmatazz of many urban centres are murderers, rapists, thieves and the rest of humanity's dark underbelly like street children. Street or homeless children are a social menace that questions modern society's claim to sophistication and civilization and a huge dent on the developmental edifice of modern man. Often found on the streets, uncompleted buildings and sundry alleys, street children are a bane of many densely populated urban centres and unstable regions of the world. The issue of street children is a worldwide phenomenon. According to United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), the concept of street children refers to boys and girls under eighteen years for whom the street (including occupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home and or their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised. Referred to as throwaway children in more developed nations, an estimate of one hundred million children are found on the streets of many economically unstable regions of Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. According to *The Broom Street Project*, a Charity organization which helps poor children, "streetism is a broad term used to encompass the desperate situation of children who are forced to spend most of their time outside their homes, engaging in menial income generating activities in order to survive, and often having to sleep rough on the streets"(1).

The history of the consciousness of the idea of street children dates as far back as 1848 when Lord Ashley referred to more than thirty thousand naked, filthy roaming lawless and deserted children in and around London, United Kingdom. By 1922, says *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, there were at least seven million homeless children in Russia due to the devastation from World War I and the Russian Civil War. During these wars, abandoned children formed gangs whose preoccupations were petty thievery and prostitution. In his introduction to his book *And Now my Soul is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930*, Alan Ball states:

Orphaned and abandoned children have been a source of misery from earliest times. They apparently accounted for most of the boy prostitutes in the Augustan Rome and, a few centuries later, moved a church council of 442 in Southern Gaal to declare: "Concerning abandoned children: There is general complaint that they are nowadays exposed more to dogs than to kindness" In Tsarist Russia, seventh century sources described destitute youths roaming the streets, and the phenomenon survived every attempt at eradication thereafter.

The presence of street children in towns and cities has been adduced to many and varied factors. These factors range from the economic to the domestic. Domestic violence, which include constant beating, sexual and parental abuse often embolden many youngsters to run away from home to the streets where they hope to be safer amidst their mates without any social inhibitions.

Some children run away from their home as a result of oppressive poverty which makes them to ironically find their dwellings on the streets while others unable to tolerate their family breakdown abandon their homes to find succor of a sort in street gangs.

Many teenagers who find themselves pressured into forced marriages often run away from their homes in order to escape into the “freedom” offered by the street. In the south eastern parts of Nigeria, some children end up on the streets because they have been driven away from their homes on the allegation of being witches or wizards while in the northern part of Nigeria “almajiri” children are forced to the streets in search for their daily livelihood through alms begging. These children are often compelled to make returns from their daily proceeds to their “masters” and failure to do so means severe punishment. Apart from these factors, social and political unrest could bring about disruption in society which brings about physical disconnect between children and their families, thereby making the former to find temporary shelter on the streets.

In traditional Africa, little or nothing was heard about the phenomenon of street children as every community took care of its inhabitants. The celebrated African solidarity which stipulates that everybody is nobody without the community ensured that nobody lived on the streets, as even the mentally challenged persons were communally dragged to healing homes where they were given treatment to be part of the whole community again. The emergence of the modern African states, however, brought in its wake social problems like unemployment and rural – urban migration. The lure of city life and family break-ups in turn brought about other social problems chief among which is the vexatious issue of streetism.

In the face of worsening economic conditions in rural Africa today occasioned by little or no support for farming and unemployment, many young people and even children are migrating to the cities giving rise to countless street children in several centres. In Kenya, for example, over two hundred and fifty thousand children live on the streets with over sixty thousand in the capital Nairobi alone. The extended family network that once acted as a support has broken up leaving many abandoned children to find solace of a kind in “glue sniffing”, a street culture that has made many of the city children habitual solvent users. Close to fifty thousand children rely on the streets for survival in Sierra Leone while in Egypt, tens of thousands of street children are found on the cities of Cairo and Alexandria. The Broom Street Children Project reports that, “there are at least forty thousand street children in Ghana, with over twenty thousand children and six thousand babies living on the streets of the capital Accra alone”. In order to survive, these children do menial jobs which range from selling dog chains, plastic bags to iced water. They are easier to employ and easier to exploit too.

“Fiction”, says Monica Bungara (2006) “in one way or another reflects the tensions and preoccupations at work in society”. It is no exaggeration to say that away from post independence disillusionment, war, terrorism and feminism, the phenomenon of street children has become one of the major preoccupations at work today in modern African society. This

burning social tragedy which has become a major preoccupation of the creative imagination of many African novelists is itself the major preoccupation of this paper as explored in Anyidoho (2013). The justification for this research is hinged on the absence of a full article that is dedicated to the treatment of the phenomenon of street children in this novel even among the few critical works on it. For example, Adjei (2009) singles out the men mainly whom he takes to the cleaners in his “Male-bashing and Narrative subjectivity in Amma Darko’s *“Faceless”*”. Awuyah (2013) on the other hand in his article “Faceless: Amma Darko’s Face for the Faceless” initially focuses on a cadre of very young persons who eke out a living on the streets of Accra before concentrating on feminine sexuality, which he sees in terms of a complex trope of transformation from voicelessness to voice and movement beyond facelessness to attain face or personhood.

2. THE PHENOMENON OF THE STREET CHILD IN DARKO’S *FACELESS*

In his introductory note to Darko’s *Faceless*, Anyidoho (2013) states:

Students and scholars of African literature who, like me, have often wondered about the apparent absence of any major female Ghanaian writers following the remarkable pioneering work of Efuia T. Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo can now rest assured that a worthy successor has emerged in the person of Amma Darko.

While Anyidoho’s submission is true, perhaps it is even more true to say that a worthy successor has emerged in the person of Amma Darko to continue the artistic tradition of portraying the social malaise in Ghanaian society which started with Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth My Brother* (1971). In her trilogy so far – *Beyond The Horizon* (1995), *The Housemaid* (1998) and *Darko* (2013) a diseased society is Amma Darko’s canvas. Society is diseased because the family is diseased. The home front is a shadow of itself because parents have discovered an uncanny delight in eating sour grapes thereby setting the children’s teeth on edge. It is diseased families that spill over to the wider society with its inability to hold onto the lives of its children. Streetism is one of the many consequences of a diseased society.

On parade on the streets of Accra in *Faceless* are Fofu, Baby T, Odarley, Macho, Poison and other ill-clad and malnourished children that include the Kayayas, those Northern Ghanaian girls who come down South to work as porters in the markets. Without any preamble, Darko launches us into the world of the street child. It is a world where the struggle to live defeats the essence of living itself and where the semblance of comfort remains forever an illusion. The street child merely exists rather than live. Fofu’s bed is an old cardboard in front of the provision store at the Agbogbloshie market. Her new job of which she is very proud is washing carrots at the vegetable wholesale market. But for this rare job she would have been idling her life away with her fellow street children at the squatters’ enclave of Sodom and Gomorrah where they quaff the local gin

and watch adult films which are not allowed for their ages by law. At night they strip off their clothes and with all the careless abandon that is laced with an ever increasing hopelessness they find an escape route in sleep. In many of the wooden shacks that dot this haven of Accra's street children, boys and girls sleep together and under the influence of alcohol they do naughty things with each other. Toilet is the nearby dump where everybody answers nature's call under the scrutinizing eyes of some early rising pigs and vultures. The whole of Sodom and Gomorrah boasts of only one public toilet. It is not only too far away, but also inadequate for the wretched street children of the enclave. No matter at what time one gets there one is bound to find a queue. This is why according to Odarley, "people sometimes do it on themselves while waiting for their turn" (11). Since many of these squatters do not want to end up like those who do it on themselves the better to empty their bowels on the nearby dump with all its health hazards. Even those who are lucky to get inside the public toilet are none the better, for they hardly finish before the guard people come to harass them out of the place with the excuse that others are waiting on the queue.

Street children are always at the mercy of bullies, rapists and ritualists who are themselves seasoned street children. The first lesson that every inhabitant of the slum of Sodom and Gomorrah learns is how to quickly empty his/her bowel at the dump before the menacing Macho and his bullies come around. This is because if caught in the act those bullies would line their pockets with the money they extort from them under the guise that they the bullies are determined to keep the environment clean. This claim is itself hypocritical for Macho and his bullies "also regularly unloaded their solid waste contents of their bowels onto the rubbish dumps and in the gutters and the open drains" (5). In one of his numerous raids, Macho stumbles on Fofó's plastic bag containing a lot of money. Rape is almost a daily occurrence in the enclave that many of its inhabitants have come to regard it as a social norm. Poison, another senior street boy with his scary scars-filled and intimidating build is every street girl's nightmare. For the gamines of Sodom and Gomorrah the fear of Poison is the beginning of wisdom as he gets what he wants anytime, anyhow and anywhere. That Fofó's determination not to be raped by Poison turns out successfully as she fights her way out of the monster's tight grip on her sex is an exception rather than the rule. This is why to Odarley, Fofó's strange experience in successfully fighting off Poison sounds like a tale from the never-never world of romance.

The tragedy of street children is that while the boys degenerate into street lords and bullies like Macho and Poison, the girls are lured or coerced into full time prostitution and soon become victims of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Teenage girls end up with some influential women who partner street lords for security. Under the pretext of teaching these girls some trades, these women introduce them into full time prostitution. The hapless girls daily remit money to these women after working at a Circle where roughness and aggressiveness are used to fish out clients and potential clients if they must earn their living. The hazards attached to

working at the Circle are so deadly that many of the girls will rather give all they have than go there:

Occasionally, there were police swoops, which in themselves were very disconcerting. A girl could sometimes make the mistake of misjudging a very regular man for a potential client and receive for her misdirected efforts, insults and threats or occasionally even some slaps. Then there were the catfights between the girls themselves over clients. A few times a girl had gone off with a client only for her body to be later found dumped somewhere. A client a girl went out with could also be a “broke man” on the lookout for some fast money. After satisfying himself therefore, with her, not only would he refuse to pay for her service but would rob her of her earnings too (3;4)

Baby T is typical of the street girls who are occasionally found dead and dumped somewhere in the slum. Sexually abused by her stepfather Kpakpo and the supposedly generous Onko, Baby T is handed over to Mama Abidjan by her mother Maa Tsuru, possibly to prevent her from further sexual abuse. Unknown to Maa Tsuru however, Mama Abidjan is not really into recruiting young girls like Baby T for any work in cheap bars and households. Once a prostitute, always a prostitute. Mama Abidjan was a prostitute and still is in spite of her hypocritical claim to the contrary. In no time she holds a conference with Maami Broni on a possible way to make money through the innocent Baby T by initiating her into fulltime prostitution. To prevent Maa Tsuru from knowing about her daughter’s kind of work, Maami Broni regularly sends an envelop of money through Kpakpo to her. This money is actually part of the earnings from Baby T’s prostitution. Poor Maa Tsuru, she never really gets to know the nature of her daughter’s work until Maami Broni’s news to her that the dead body that was dumped behind the blue Rasta hairdressing Kiosk at Agbogloboshie market is really her beloved Baby T’s. She is even terrorized into accepting her fate. Some mothers really must be strong enough to bear so much suffering.

For hapless street children like Baby T, death is the cheapest commodity in town. And when it comes calling, the forever grumbling police inspector simply receives the post mortem report and files it away “just in case something comes up requiring further reference to it” (133). The Police inspector is surprised that the members of MUTE are interested in the death of Baby T who in his own view is nothing but a common street girl. “Bodies of street children”, he tells the bewildered Kabria, “are found at all kinds of places at all sorts of times” (132).

If Fofu is saddened by the helpless state of the street children like herself she is totally devastated by the death of her beloved sister Baby T. Even more nerve-shattering is the cavalier attitude of the police inspector. Fofu therefore, insists that she wants to see Government. But according to [Anyidoho \(2013\)](#)

What she doesn't know is that Government itself has lost its priorities, its sense of direction; it has become dysfunctional and deaf to the cries of children abandoned or sold to the merciless street lords of the Poison kind, and their equally heartless female collaborators such as Maami Broni.

The hopeless state of the police station is itself a testament to the hopelessness and utter helplessness that best describe Government. In the face of broken windows, leaking sewerage, cracked walls and peeled painting, confidential file cabinet with a handle missing and a gaping hole where a lock should have been and a dead telephone in an office without even a "battered Tico", one simply has no choice but to sympathize with the police inspector his surliness notwithstanding. This is because the resources for fighting crime and criminality are not there to use. The police inspector is, therefore, capable of doing just one thing for MUTE: nothing. If indeed the future of any nation can only be directly measured by the present prospects of its youth in the time-tested submission of J.F Kennedy, it is only logical to conclude that many nations have no promising future because their youths have converted the streets riddled with prostitution, stealing and hooliganism into their abode. This must be a major reason columnists like (Abaka, 2014) are firmly convinced that streetism has become "a worrying phenomenon" that urgently begs for government attention. Like Mrs. Kamane, one is deeply concerned that the street child of today is being bred to become the kind of future adult with a psyche that has little or no comprehension of basic respect for human life.

The street children of Sodom and Gomorrah are not born as such. Their unfortunate state is the result of a conspiracy of several factors which range from poverty at home, family break-up to brutality at home. The fragile peace at Maa Tsuru's home, for example, takes a turn for the worse when Kpakpo steps in as the children's stepfather. Unable to bear the nightly creaking bed and the moanings from their mother as Kpakpo makes love to her right in their noses in the one room shack, MaaTsuru's two sons leave in frustration. Kpakpo and Onko's sexual abuse of Baby T soon forces her and her sister Fofò out of the house to find solace on the streets. With lecherous men whose weakness begins and ends with their inability to button up their trousers in the presence of teenage girls, who really can afford to blame the much maligned gamines of Sodom and Gomorrah? Even so, according to Darko, this urge to seek shelter on the streets is not restricted to the fairer sex.

May be it has to do with the faceless formless masculine thing, whatever that "thing" is. What appears to be the case though, is that it is more difficult to break the "streetness" in boys from the streets than in girls. Abused young males, in particular, are also more prone to becoming abusers themselves (202).

The scar-faced, but soft-spoken Poison ran away from their two-by-four room shack to hit the streets of Accra at the tender age of eight. There was nothing really homely about their home in which his stepfather's only achievement of which he used to boast was his constant lashing of Poison with his leather belt. His facial scars which run sharp and diagonal through his left eyebrow disrupting his hair-flow are silent witnesses to his stepfather's brutality. Graduating from stealing car-tape-decks to running errands for a brothel supervisor, Poison is not called "the street lord" for nothing. By age fifteen he had mastered the rudiments of pimping to enable him form a gang of his own with a control of a major part of the streets. With this, he became confident enough to embark on an aggressive recruitment of girls. Ever since, Poison has made a brutal mark and a name for himself on the streets. Having received brutality from his stepfather, Poison has long embraced jungle power and brutality as his trade marks. As the undisputed lord of the streets, Poison is not ashamed to tell whoever cares to listen that since his life is not on the right track, he would ensure too that the life of others never land on the right path. For the ever watchful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah therefore, the fear of Poison is the beginning of wisdom. Any of them who flouts his authority like Baby T hardly live to tell their story as he enforces it with utmost brutality that is commensurate with his name.

Having run away from their trouble-infested homes, the street children of Accra have come to make the slums of Sodom and Gomorrah their new home where they are at least free to live their lives no matter how miserable. Here, many of them engage in all kinds of menial jobs and prostitution to survive. And when business is low they find salvation of a kind in stealing. According to Fofu, one can do anything and everything in peace here so long as one follows the rules. Over the years, therefore, the faceless scums of Accra have learnt to "live in peace, trade in peace, steal in peace, cheat in peace and sin in peace by doing nothing to upset them" (251) Here they live and dream about the life they never had and may never have because the scale of society is perpetually tilted in their disfavor. It is highly ironic that these unfortunate kids on the streets do not crave for material things but love and care of their parents to truly belong in the family. Their "freedom" notwithstanding, they truly want to be loved, hugged and kissed as little darlings of the home.

3. TACKLING THE MONSTER OF STREETISM IN *FACELESS*

From the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, comes the name of the setting of Darko's novel Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible represents moral degeneration and sexual perversion. This is the reason the almighty himself insisted that the twin cities must be destroyed to prevent the rest of the world then from being infected. And destroyed the two cities later became. At the risk of committing intentional fallacy, it is no exaggeration to say that Darko's choice of setting is deliberate. Like the Biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah the setting of *Faceless* is the epitome of a diseased society that urgently needs to be cured. God's solution was complete destruction, but

since man is not God he can at least fashion out ways in which to reduce the incidents of street children in society. Darko's *Faceless* is not short on this.

In a subtle artistic ingenuity, Darko hints at one of the solutions to the menacing social problem of streetism. A reporter from one of the private FM stations asks some street children during a survey about their most passionate dreams. His dream, the boy says

is to be able to go home one day to visit my mother and see a look of joy on her face at the sight of me I want to be able to sleep beside her. I wish her to tell me she was happy when I came to visit her. Whenever I visit her, she doesn't let me stay long before she asks me politely to leave she never has a smile for me. Sometimes I cannot help thinking that may be she never has a smile for me because the man she made me with, that is my father, probably also never had a smile for her (3,4).

The girl's reply is even more emotionally revealing

One day a kind woman I met at a centre made me very happy. Before I went there, I knew that by all means she would give me food. But this woman gave me more. She hugged me. I was dirty. I smell bad. But she hugged me. That night, I slept well. I had a good dream. Sometimes I wish to be hugged even if I am smelling of the streets (4).

What can be inferred from the responses of the children interviewed above is the inescapable fact that street children are first and foremost from loveless homes. Children need love and care in order to develop naturally. A home devoid of these vital ingredients of human development is nothing but a huge prison to the child. He or she therefore, sees the open streets as an escape. This is especially common during teenage years when the urge to take to the streets to celebrate one's "freedom" is rampant. "Having a teenager in the house", says the book, *The Secret (1996)* "is very different from having a five-year-old or even a ten-year old". Adolescents experience emotional ups and downs. Teenage boys and girls may want to be more independent, and they may resent limits placed on them by their parents. An honest and open communication between parents and their teenagers is of vital importance at this stage, even when the latter find it difficult to talk with their parents than they did when they were younger. A home devoid of this communication, love and care automatically drives the youngster into the waiting "hands" of the street where bullies and rapists coerce him/her to take part in stealing, cultism and prostituting. Before he/she discovers that his/her freedom is actually slavery he/she would have gone far into the world of moral debauchery, social degeneration and ruin. A home where children are regularly tongue or belt-lashed or where they are subjected to sexual abuse by lecherous fathers, stepfathers and uncles like one finds in *Faceless* can never be a welcoming place for children

neither can such be regarded as conducive for their development. To keep children off the streets therefore, love must be brought back into the family. Parents must learn once again to be responsible for the children they bring into the world in their hour of passion. After all, the little bundles of joy never asked to be brought forth in the first, place. Indeed

Beyond the delight of tears, beyond the passionate intensity of countless orgasms, the future of our children, of our own morality and ancestry awaits our constant vigilance and careful nurturing. No seed grow into harvest joys without the planter's diligent labour of love. Until we come to this understanding as parents, as family, as community, we will forever stand condemned by the anguish in the eyes and the voices of our children, forever guilty of the nurturing of... prospective soul(s) into the devouring jaws of the streets (Anyidoho, 2013).

That a functional and conducive family capable of restraining children from the streets is possible is the rationale for Darko's story of the Adades. This family may not be perfect as witnessed the eccentricities of the elusive husband and father, Adade. Yet the family is intact without any of the children thinking of seeking shelter on the streets. There is room for all including the old and battered Creamy. The children are in school and together the family members can sit together for meals daily. That in spite of her tight schedule of work Kabria can still go the extra mile to keep the family together not minding Adade's familial indifference is a testament to the fact that a workable family is not beyond the reach of single parents like Maa Tsuru.

If keeping children off the streets is possible as demonstrated by the family of Kabria, rehabilitating those already on the streets is not an insurmountable task too as seen in the narrative. This is the significance of MUTE, a non-government organization that is basically into documentation and information build-up and where Kabria works. MUTE is a four-member all female organization dedicated to keeping female teenagers off the streets. Together with other organizations and Harvest FM Radio Station, which helps in the publicity of their work, it helps in the training facilities for these teenagers willing to learn a trade and improve themselves. It is MUTE that rescues Fofu from her depth of almost social and psychological damnation after the death of Baby T. Through MUTE, she is convinced to abandon the streets stop associating with/her street friends and undergo a series of check-up at the Korle-Bu Hospital for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

As stated by Kabria, MUTE's approach is not to judge or condemn any person for his/her past behavior but to rehabilitate such a person to face the future with confidence and optimism that are firmly anchored on a meaningful existence. For the MUTE people, every street child has a future that can still be made as rosy as possible. With hardworking people of the organization,

we certainly believe that such optimism is possible provided the street child is willing to be rehabilitated like Fofo. Thus, *Faceless* is a clarion call to all in society to do the needful by beginning with the reconstruction of the home front to make it attractive to children the supposed future of society.

4. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of Darko's *Faceless* it is obvious that an unhealthy family is a major reason most children take to the streets. An unhealthy family manifests itself in poverty, insecurity, brutal parents whether foster or biological, and general lovelessness at home. Due to poverty and too many mouths to feed by their parents many children take to the streets where they indulge in all kinds of menial jobs to eke out a living for themselves and even send some money home to enable their parents care for their siblings. Like Poison, many children find solace on the streets to escape brutality at home while teenage girls often abandon their home to hit the streets to escape the lecherous advances of incurable rapists only to ironically fall into the hands of bullies and sex perverts who not only rape them at will but also prostitute them to earn a living for themselves. Apart from being exposed to the elements and unhealthy lifestyle which make their situation even worse, not a few of them are lured into gangsterism, cultism and armed robbery which begin with petty stealing and the use of hard drugs. The girls are especially prone to contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted pregnancies and abortion.

In spite of the daunting nature of streetism as a social malaise, Darko is optimistic that it can be curbed or even totally eradicated to make society a better place. This is the artistic significance of Kabria's family and MUTE. Darko insists that love must be brought back into the family as a unit of society. This love also extends to the need for the parents to control their urge for sex which often makes them to bring into the world children they cannot honestly cater for. Planned Parenthood organization must wake up to its responsibility of educating parents on the need to control their family, for gone are the days when our traditional parents regarded uncontrolled procreation as an index of wealth. While the interventions of non-government organizations are welcome, government must realize that it is its duty to care for its citizens whether at home or on the streets. Welfare homes must be properly rehabilitated before they can be made to rehabilitate the children on the streets. On the whole, a lasting panacea to streetism is a responsible government which will not only eradicate poverty and provide resources for its units to fight rapists and other social criminals but also to provide education and proper orientation to its youths to guarantee a better future for all in society. Mansfield (1994) was right in his "The Everlasting Mercy":

He who gives a child a treat
makes joy-bells ring in Heaven's street,

and he who gives a child a home builds palaces in kingdom
come.

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