Why Are You Afraid To Hold My Hand?

SHEILA DHIR
Why Are You Afraid To Hold My Hand?

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dedicated to Radhika and Devika who are not afraid to ask questions
People say
all sorts of things

I limp, I lispe, all this and more,
Sometimes I feel so sad and sore.
Folks make fun, it's nothing new,
If you were me, what would you do?
She drools all the time

Yes, I have a problem.
No, it will not go away.
Take me for who I am: a child
Who simply wants to play.
so sad
Please don't cry
Or feel bad.
I'm doing fine,
So why be sad?
Here, let ME do it for you

Don’t smother me.
Give me space
To live my life
At my own pace.
Isn’t it our D.U.T.Y.?

I know you care.
I know you can.
Just be my friend,
Accept me as I am.
You look so . . .
so different!

I'm a person, I feel shy.
From staring eyes I want to hide.
i was only trying to help

You want to help?
I'll tell you how.
Let me help myself
Always from now.
What to say? What to do?
I don’t know!

Don’t be confused.
It’s simple, see.
You be you
And I’ll be me.
Is her mind okay?

Just because
My legs are wobbly,
People think
My mind is wobbly too.
But you're so helpless!

I don’t like it when you fuss.
It makes me feel so small.
Let me do it my own way,
So what if I should fall?
I feel guilty

Don’t be silly,
Don’t feel bad.
For what you have,
Just be glad.
I sure mind when you are mean. It hurts, and so I say: What if this — it can, you know — Happened to you one day?
Why are you afraid?
I know I seem at odds to you,
Even angry, but that’s not true.
Still, I cannot understand:

Why are you afraid
to hold my hand?
I am grateful to the children and staff of the Spastics Society of India, Mumbai, who inspired this work, and to Manish for his assistance with illustrative creativity.

Sheila Dhir

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A must-read for everyone... a definite eye-opener.
— The New Indian Express

Why are you afraid to hold my hand? is a book about attitudes. People react in the strangest ways to children with disabilities. Most times they simply don’t know what to do. This book is a differently abled child’s silent dialogue with society. The child in this book has cerebral palsy because the part of the brain that controls the muscles and movement has been damaged. Fifty per cent of people with cerebral palsy have average or above average intelligence.

The book describes reactions of people, their questions and misconceptions, their doubts and fears and preconceived notions. The child responds in verse — simply and straight from the heart.

As she/he says:

Just because
My legs are wobbly,
People think
My mind is wobbly too.

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