

A low-angle shot of two hands reaching upwards towards a clear blue sky. The hands are positioned on the left and right sides of the frame, with fingers spread. The skin tone is light, and the lighting suggests a bright, sunny day. The text 'Look At Me' is superimposed in the center, and 'CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT DISABILITIES' is at the bottom.

*Look
At
Me*

CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT DISABILITIES

Writer - Ritika Sahni
Rani Kaur Banerjee
Illustrations - Debashish Deb

© Trinayani
828/1 Block P, New Alipore
Kolkata - 700053
Tel: + 91 33 24007348
www.trinayani.org
email: trinayani.contact@gmail.com

Mumbai Office:
Gulmohar Cooperative Housing Society,
67/666 M.H.B Colony, Opposite Parijat Society,
90 Feet Road, Mahavir Nagar,
Kandivali West, Mumbai 400067.
Tel: +91 22 65340887, 28697390



Nothing about me without me

Talk to me and you will see

We're not so different, you and me.

Meet my eyes; don't look away

I'm on a hard journey; **meet me** half way?

Learn with me; play with me; work with me

Let's make a healthier society –

Where you can be you and I can be me

I'm tired of you deciding things for me

And that'll be enough for everybody.

I'm tired of you deciding things for me

Ask me what I want and how I want it to be

Say it with me, do it with me, help me be free –

Nothing about me without me!

There are a 100 million of us around you

Yet we don't exist in your daily life.

It is not that you want to ignore us.

It is just that we are made invisible to you as we live in our “special” homes and go to our “special” schools. We do not impinge on your social fabric and have no impact on your social and political life.

It is not that you want to pity us be cruel to us.

It is just that you do not have a frame of reference as to how to talk to us or conduct yourselves in our presence.

It is not that you want to be unnatural and uncomfortable around us.

It is just that you have never had to relate to us in everyday social situations.

We are a part of you. We're not so different from you. We could be friends. This is our way of trying to let you know that we exist.



Look at Me!

I've grown up with your sympathy.

I've grown up with words like handicapped, crippled, abnormal.

Your pity, fear or ignore me.

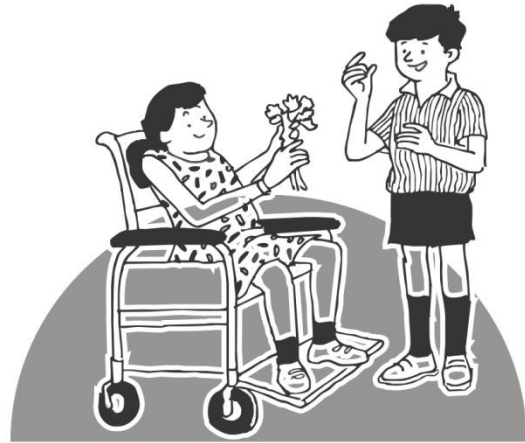
Your eyes talk to me even as you look away.

“Poor things” your eyes say.

You pointedly ignore my face, my arm, my leg,
my differences.

Yet that's the only thing you see in me.

**Look at me; look at the person in me, and
then my disability.**



Don't Label me!

Just like you're not “cancerous” if you have cancer.

I'm not “disabled” because I have an impairment.

Your cancer may not have a cure.

It may worry you, make your family anxious, shorten your life.

But it does not define you.

You have a life outside of your diseases.

You have a career, friends, parents, children.

You have moments of fun and laughter,

Periods of sadness,

Bursts of anger, pangs of hunger.

You have aspirations, ambitions, hopes and desires.



You have a life.

And so do I.

I am able in many ways and disabled in some.

When you define me, you confine me.

You have a life.

And so do I.

I am able in many ways and disabled in some.

When you define me, you confine me.



Ask me!

Me was so excited.

Her childhood school friend had moved to our town.

“We used to be like twins. I haven’t seen her for thirty years!”

Ma said.

We went to Ma’s friend’s house for tea.



She was very pleasant and cheerful.

As she served us, she asked Ma, “Does Minkshi like chocolate cake?”

That surprised me!

You know, I am 24 years old.

Still, people ask my mother about the smallest decisions regarding me.

When you do that, I feel invisible. I feel powerless. I feel I don’t matter.

**I know what I like and what I don’t like
Ask me!**



What's normal?

Everybody has something they can't do. That's a disability.

You can't control your anger. That's your disability.

I can't walk. That's mine.

You can't play chess. That's your disability.

I can't see. That's mine.

You can't keep your formulae straight in your head. That's your disability.

I can't keep my head straight. That's mine.

Everybody has abilities they can boast about.

You can sing well. That's your ability.

I can foot-paint. That's mine.

You can play cricket. That's your ability.

I can play the violin. That's mine.

You can make friends easily. That's your ability.

I can be a good friend. That's mine.



We're all disabled in some ways. And we're all able in others.

So what's normal? You're as normal as you can be. And so am I.

Listen to yourself!

I am not wheelchair “bound or confined it”.

When I use my wheelchair, I can be mobile. I can be free.

I am not “dumb”.

I speak and communicate. Maybe not with my mouth.

I am not “handicapped”.

I don’t beg for my living.

I don’t have a “birth defect”.

I’m not a machine that is defective and therefore useless.

I am not “crippled”.

My disability does not define who I am.

Listen to yourself before you take away my dignity with your words.

We can control the language we use as, what we say has serious effect on people around us.



Meet me!

I'm not "special".

I'm not a victim. I'm not a hero.

I'm just me.

I'm a parent, a daughter, an employee, a
friend, a neighbour—

I have my good days and my bad days.

I am nice sometimes and sometimes I'm
nasty.

I get angry at some silly things and I laugh at
other silly things.

I pay my bills and have responsibilities.

I'm a person. I'm an individual.

You have to meet me to know me.



Yes, I'm different aren't you?

Are all brown-skinned people the same?

Are all short people similar?

Are all scientists alike?

Are all women one?

Don't you hate it when people stereotype you?

Isn't typecasting a kind of discrimination?

"If you're an individual, not a category,

why are we "the blind," "the deaf," "the retarded?"



Live with Me!

You send me to “special” schools and homes where I can live and be
“with my own kind.”

You make me invisible and ineffective-you don't see me, hear me,
shop with me, work with me or go to school with me. Therefore, I
do not exist within your daily frame of life.

I am the beggar you pity from your car.
I am the relative you hide the world.

The most difficult barrier faced by people with disabilities can be
other peoples attitude.

Don't let yourself be a barrier to DISABILITY EQUALITY.

We are grateful to

Radhika Sahni
Sumit Samaddar
Abhay Tiwari
Sanjeev Kumar
Itishree Date
Rini Bhattacharya
Satish Kapoor

Rajeev Ranjan
Vilas Shardul
Niranjan Khatri
Shobha Sachdev
Asmita Huddar
Hiren Majmudar
Sudeep Dutta
Sanjay Bhattacharya

An Initiative of

