

"LET'S go shopping Preeti," said Shivani.

"Yes we must. I'll walk for you and you see for me! We make a perfect pair," I remarked.

Shivani, at 24 is a charming young lady, a painter and at present is working in the computer section of the NAB. 1992 was a traumatic year for her. She broke her spine in a car crash, and ever since has been on a wheel chair.

Preeti, me, visually impaired, is an aerobic instructor, at present works for Granny's, as marketing incharge, and some times writes.

Our disability does not seem to prevent us from striving to live independently. We too wish to experience all the sweet and sour that independence has in store. Alas! when we did start off, the obstacles stood right out there, as if to say, "it is very well to want to go about on your own, ladies, how are you going to get around us?" For those who don't have any physical disability, stairs, uneven pavements, pot holes, and open drains and man holes, are no obstacle. Though for some one on a wheel chair or someone who can't see, these can be major hazards. Hardly any pavement in Delhi is accessible for a wheel chair. People with vision problems learn quickly to keep away from walking on pavements, as the unexpected dips and cracks have taught them to lay off these so called walking areas. Going out means walking on the main roads or wheeling your chair along the busy traffic, risking to enhance your disability.

It is an achievement for any able bodied person to get across a busy road. Can you imagine how tough it must be for a dis-

Spare a thought



abled person to do so? It is risky for a visually impaired person to get across the road even if it is at a traffic signal. As he has no idea when the signal changes. This problem could be solved if a sound signal could be provided when the road is clear for pedestrians.

Palav, another wheel chair user, drives his hand-controlled Maruti around town. Renewing his driving licence was an ordeal in itself. "All my work was done

on the ground floor," he said, "When it came to getting the photo taken for the licence, I found a nice long flight of stairs." There was no lift, so I had to wait around till four healthy youths could be mustered to carry me up and then bring me down."

"I have over come almost all the mobility hazards that confront a visually impaired person," says Dipindra. But what happens when he walks into a lift

to reach a certain floor? How does he read the numbers on the lift buttons? Different lift manufacturers have the buttons numbered differently. All they need to do is to have these numbers raised or the numbers be also written in braille on or next to the button. Talking about lifts. To reach most of the lifts in high rise buildings, one has to climb anything from two or more stairs. "What happens there? How does a person on crutches or

a wheel chair get to that lift? A ramp is all that is needed. This ramp will not only make it possible for a disabled person to get to the lift with the least amount of assistance, but also all our senior citizens will be more than happy, as climbing stairs is a real effort for many of them. Mums with prams also will benefit from these slight modifications. So why don't we start thinking seriously about providing these few facilities? Hardly any res-

Does that mean once landed with a disability, one must never wish to go out for a meal? If not so, then eating houses can be made accessible to disabled persons? The menu card also could be printed in braille, so that I could choose my own flavour of ice cream?

When it comes to paying a bill anywhere, be it at a shop or an eating house, counting money is near impossible. All the notes feel nearly the same size. Suppose you don't have a twenty rupee note to measure your ten rupee to, or a fifty to compare a hundred to, how does one manage? A one rupee coin looks like a two rupee coin and a five rupee coin. What prevents any one from cheating a sightless consumer? Can't someone do something about these problems? A note counting machine could be the answer.

It is so very important for disabled people to live study and work together with their able counterparts. But most of the educational institutions are not accessible. This gives the school authorities a valid excuse for not granting admission to disabled students in regular educational institutes. I don't see any harm in someone using a wheel chair instead of a regular chair behind school desk. Do you?

Why can't we make slight adjustments and live together? Most of the problems have simple solutions. All that is required is a little thought. There will be no need for any unpleasant struggles. Who know who is going to be disabled next? With the amount of road accidents that take place, and increase in other factors which are responsible for causing disabilities, any one could be the very person to benefit from these thoughtful changes that we help to make, to make our environment friendly towards those less fortunate.

How about giving it a little thought? — Preeti Sing