

# Giving a Hand

*Giving a Hand* was produced by Sri Lanka Rupavahini (TV) Co. This story is woven around the life of a boy named Ajith. His family makes toddy for their living. Nobody, even his teachers at school, cares about this poor child. One day the headmistress takes Ajith to task. A new teacher notices it and feels sorry for him. Determined to make a good citizen out of this poor child the teacher helps Ajith to overcome his difficulties. Ajith becomes a highly respected person in society. One day he receives an invitation to participate in an opening ceremony of a new school building. He meets the teacher who formerly took care of him and made him a good citizen. This tele-drama depicts a way to express gratitude to our teachers.

*Giving a Hand* was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010 finalists in the 7-11 Fiction category.



Figure 1: Ajith is invited to a school inauguration ceremony.



Figure 2: Ajith recognizes his former teacher; yet, the teacher could not recall him.

## International experts' opinions

There were mixed opinions about the program among the international experts. Many of them were not happy with the narration of the program. “But *Giving a Hand*, I don’t think that was the best example of classic storytelling, to be honest . . . This program has too much talking, too much giving information about education or kind of etiquette for kids. They say something about what you have to learn, enforcing stuff. So, I didn’t think that was the best example” (female expert, Korea). However, there were other experts who tried to give the producers the benefit of the doubt. “Yes, I think we agree that it is not a classic way of storytelling at all, but I think at the beginning of it they are starting to get into this visual telling of the story. They are not so equipped at the moment. So, it is just good to see that they are progressing” (female expert, Slovenia).

More specifically, there were further doubts about the script of the program. “I think that it is a problem with the script. It is a bit like a soap opera, and you can find a much better story than that. They filmed it so badly but that is not the problem. The problem was the script, I think. The story is good, the story has an idea. It is the problem of how they told it (...)” (female expert, Chile). However an Asian perspective was provided that helped explain the low quality of the program. “But with all the trouble in Asia – as there a lot of good drama directors, movie directors – they do not work for children dramas. Especially broadcasting companies, at least they made an effort to make children’s drama. That is a good thing, and I want to encourage them, but still that is not the quality that children might want to have, because they can watch a lot of American dramas or European dramas on the Internet, that is



Figure 3: Ajith brings a piece of blade to school and plans to take revenge against the kids who bullied him.



Figure 4: The principle physically punishing Ajith.



Figure 5: Ajith fighting with another boy during class break.

why we should compete to make especially better local dramas” (female expert, Korea).

Some experts were really moved by the program in spite of the technical difficulties in viewing the program. “There were many difficulties in viewing it. But I was moved by the program, it really touched my heart” (female expert, Scotland).

Many international experts discussed the relationship between teachers and students in their respective societies. A female expert from UK elaborated, “I think it was quite nice that it tended to portray the relationship between the child and the teacher. It reminded me when my teacher rang me up, because my son had fallen over – she was just checking that he was ok. She said: *I am not allowed to touch him*. In the U.K, nowadays, you are not allowed to put a bandage on the kid or do anything, because they are so scared of being accused of abuse. That struck me that maybe in some countries we don’t have that trust between

adults and kids. There is always fear that the adult is some kind of enemy or criminal.” Another male expert from Poland shared the trends in his country. “We have the same in Poland; normally the teacher would not stay alone with the kids in the room. Normally, there should be a third person.” So the program served an important role in eliciting such a reflection.

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Figure 6: The teacher showing sympathy for Ajith after learning that Ajith was bullied due to his poverty.



Figure 7: The teacher helps Ajith with homework.



Figure 8: Ajith invites the teacher to inaugurate the ceremony.