

## The Theme of Disability in Indian Literature

with special reference to Children and Young People

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**Mahabharata is a narration to Dhritarashtra who could not be king because he was blind. This led to massive conflict.**



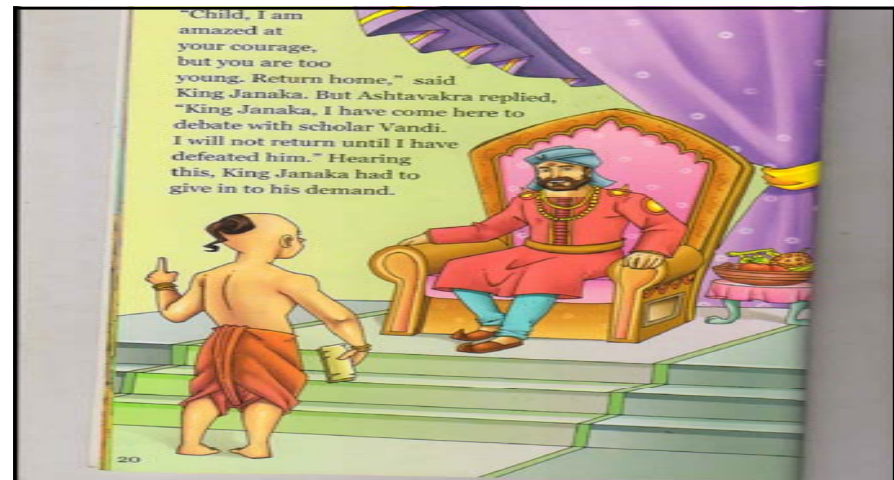
**Blind Dhritarashtra lets son Duryodhana play an unfair game of dice to trick his cousin Yudhishtthira.**



**Aged and blind Dhritarashtra leaves the palace with blindfolded wife and others.**



**Ashtavakra was born bent in eight places by his father's curse but still fought his way to the rescue his father.**



**Ashtavakra manages to get in and see the king. He succeeds in freeing his father.**

Vandi told Ashtavakra, "Son, take a dip in the river. With my father's blessings, your deformity will be removed." Ashtavakra did as he was told and with God Varuna's blessings, he was free of all his deformities. Later, Kahoda and Ashtavakra returned to their *ashram*. Sage Uddalaka and Sujata were happy to see Kahoda alive and Ashtavakra transformed into a healthy young boy.



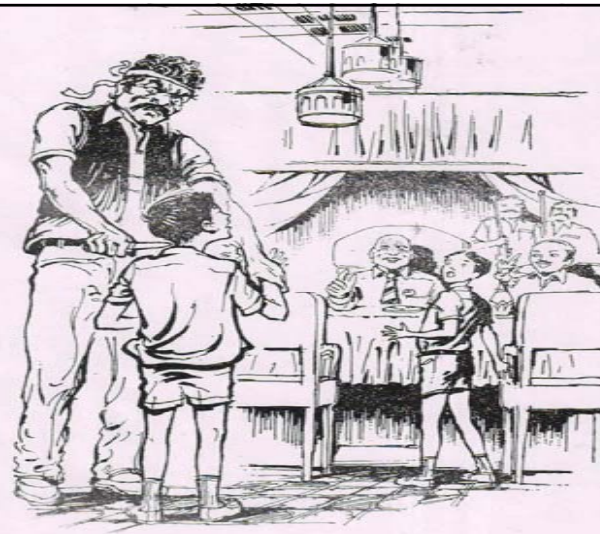
Pleased, his father blesses him.. Ashtavakra becomes cured of his deformity.



In *Blind Witness*, Ramu rests in his room with his stick before him when he hears noises in the staircase which suggest a murder taking place.



**Ramu goes to the police station  
with his friend to report what he had heard.**



**Ramu's life is threatened.**



**Ramu is held captive.**



**Once free, Ramu reads out clues  
the victim had left in Braille.**

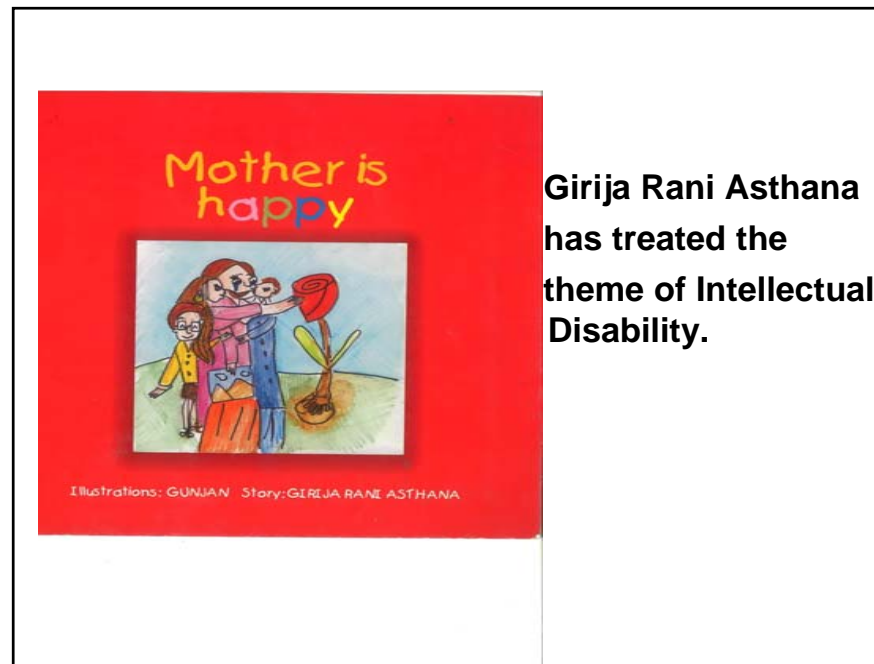
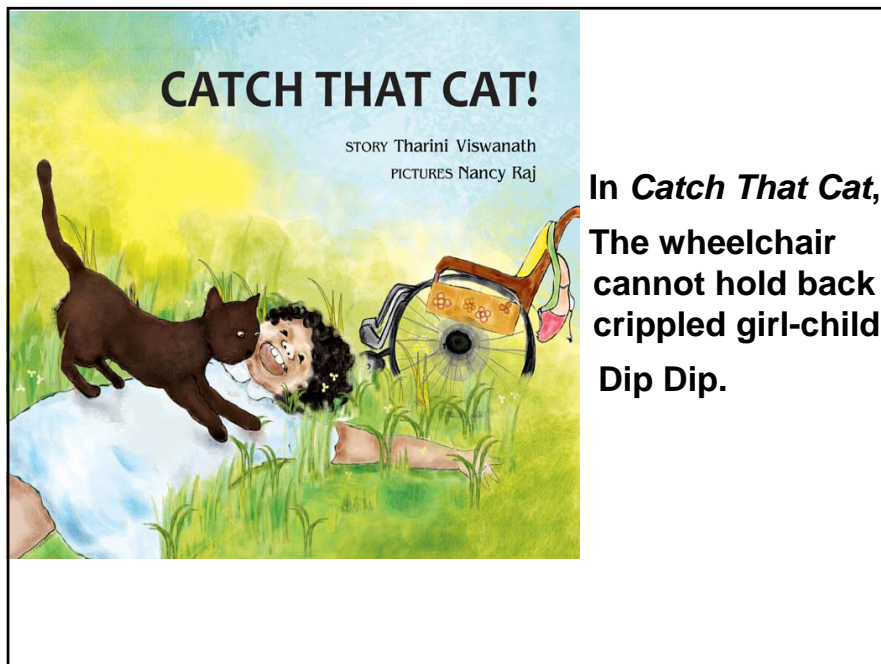


Ramu is happy in his room again.



**Shankar holds out his crutch to pull people out of the floodwaters.**

Can Anyone Do It?  
by Deepa Agarwal  
in *Lighthouse in the Storm*







Gunjan is 14 years old and was born with the Sierge Webers Syndrome. To put it simply, her brain is 'bruised'. She is also hemiplegic, which means the right side of her body is weak. In technical terms she is referred to as Intellectually Disabled.

But her art speaks for itself. Her colours are instinctive, lines bold and unpretentious, her subjects pure. Where in Gods' plan do such children fit... is for all of us to wonder, hope and pray. In dedication to all such flowers...

Shaloo's poem is a fine portrayal of Gunjan as a person and as a soul, ever so inspiring...

Her smile can light a million lamps  
Her heart can hold a million worlds  
She sees what you and I can't see  
She makes it all so good, this girl

She lends a hand without a fear  
She paints her soul for all to see  
For those who know and those who care  
She's an angel, most definitely.

Story: GIRIJA RANI ASTHANA  
Girija has written several short stories, biographies and won many awards. She writes for children in hindi & english languages and has done storywriting in India and abroad.

## Her book illustrator is Intellectually Disabled.

## Concluding Observation

In modern India, the attitude towards Disability is changing, becoming more sensitive and positive. This is getting reflected in Literature for the young. No longer is Disability portrayed as an evil or a curse.

But a lot more needs to be done to change the prevalent mind-set.