

I, Me, Myself

GENDER AND BODIES IN PICTURE BOOKS

Children are tremendously perceptive beings. When books reinforce gender binaries and gender stereotypes, it often colours their impressions of the world.

GENDER

One study revealed that children's aspirations appear to be shaped by gender-related stereotypes about who does certain jobs as early as age seven. Another study found that first graders who were given gender-fair books for the school year judged more activities as appropriate for both males and females than those children assigned gender-stereotyped books.



Across India, gender inequality & discrimination results in unequal opportunities for girls. In a global measure of gender inequality, India ranks **123rd out of 189**

countries on the United Nation's Development Program's Gender Inequality Index (GII).



Picture books introduce the young child about what children of different genders do, say and feel, and it is our responsibility as picture book makers to offer that in a manner that is balanced, nuanced, inspiring and multilingual. Exposure to gender-atypical storybooks can challenge children's perceptual stereotypes of gender-appropriate occupations and activities.

Young children don't have set notions about gender... They don't yet see gender as an obstacle or privilege, and are able to articulate their needs and aspirations without this identity holding them back. They're also quick to connect real-world observations with what they read in a text... The image of a young girl playing a sport, or a boy choosing to wear pink — it registers somewhere and becomes part of their subconscious, leading to acceptance...

Sowmya Rajendran,
award-winning author

The books we create make space for strong protagonists who:



Pursue passions often deemed unfit for their gender by society



Defy gender expectations through their strengths, their vulnerabilities, their professions and their dreams

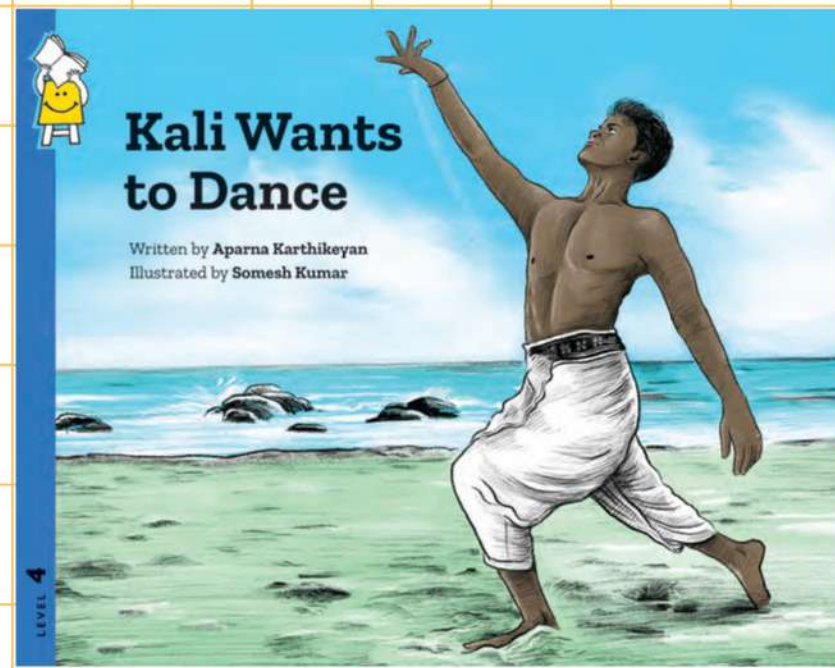


Are comfortable and accepted for their gender identities and choices, bodies and shapes

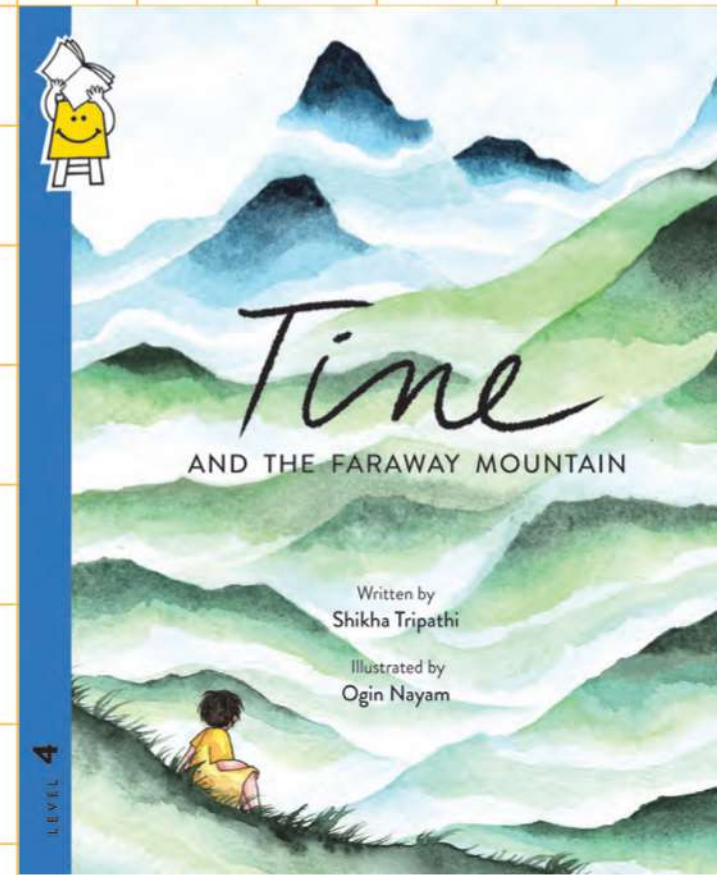


Fight to carve out their niche and have their voices heard on their own terms.

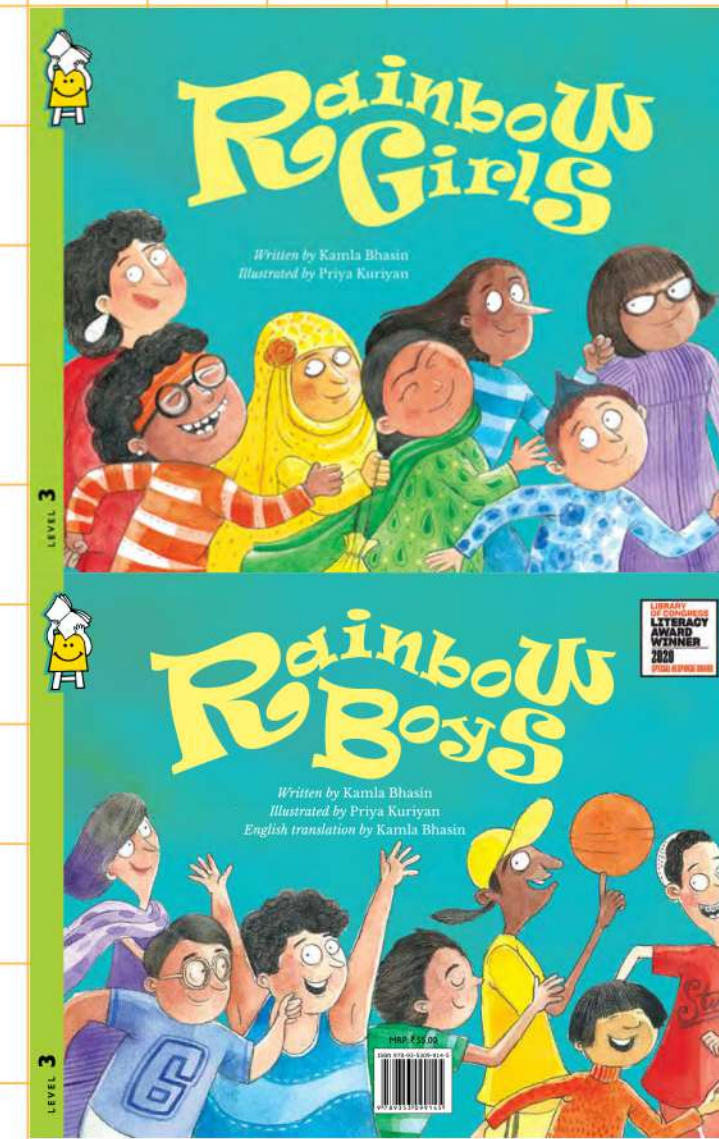




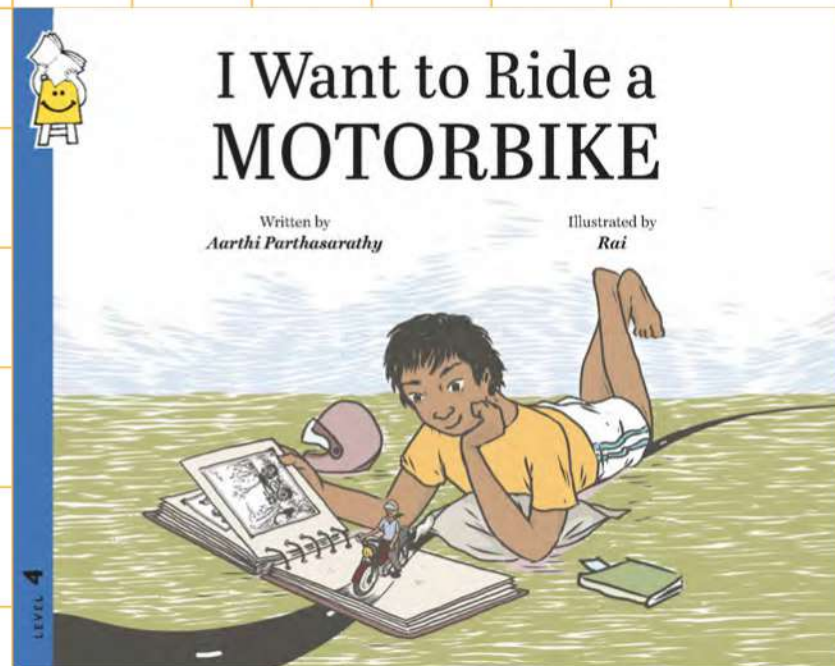
A young boy wants to dance but boys do not dance in his village, especially not Bharatanatyam. But Kali breaks all gender barriers and follows his dreams.



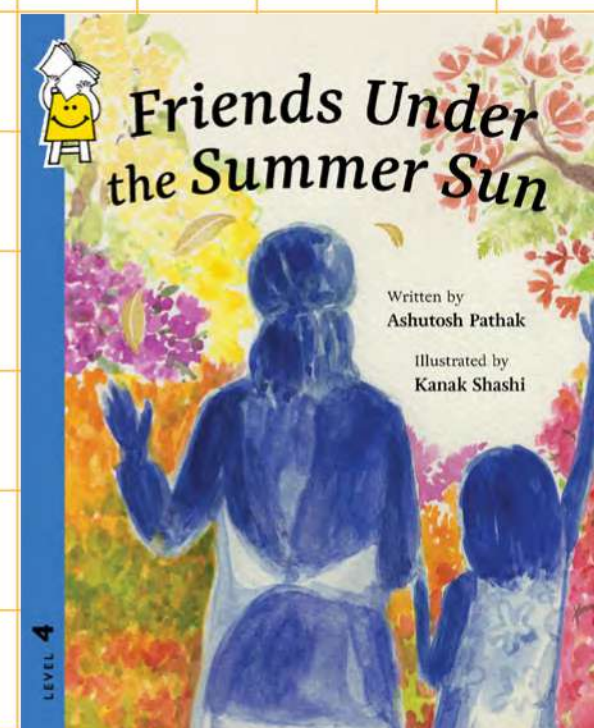
Based on a true story, this book, about a mountaineer who wins against all odds, celebrates the power of believing in yourself.



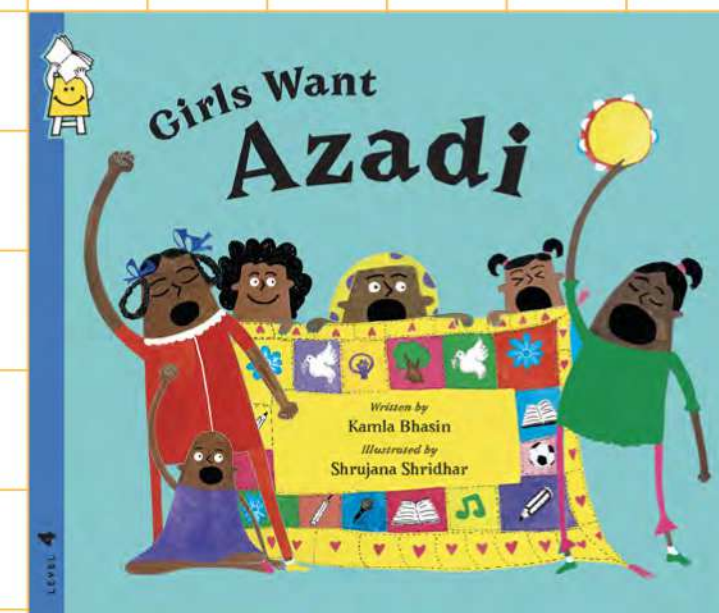
Fierce and vibrant manifestoes on how all girls and boys aren't alike and each human being deserves self-expression that feels true to them.



A young girl is fascinated by motorcycles and wants to ride one. When she learns that her aunt rides one, she is even more determined to convince those around her that girls can and do indeed ride motorcycles, fly planes and do whatever they set their minds to.



A young girl who befriends her neighbour Akka, a baker, and spends a day baking cakes with him. A truly inclusive story that is as playful as it is informative about trans identities and embracing femininity.



A book on the azadi that girls want, from violence and harassment; to be able to choose, to exercise their rights and to be who they want to be.

One of the most common responses we received when creating
'I Wish' was, 'I wish to be as free as my brother'.



Books that allow people of all genders to take up space
in the world are the need of the hour.

BODIES

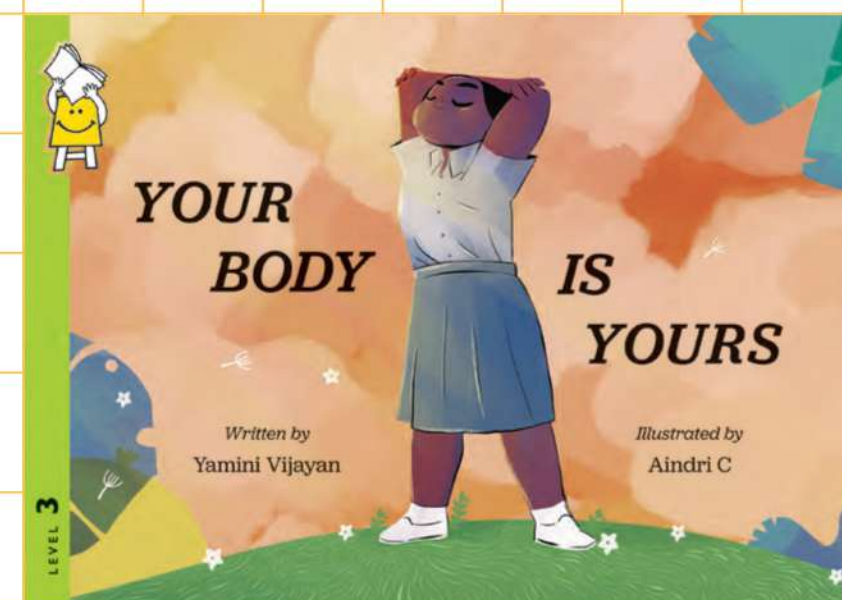
All bodies are unique

All bodies have power

Your body can be any gender you ascribe to it

Your body is yours to love and cherish

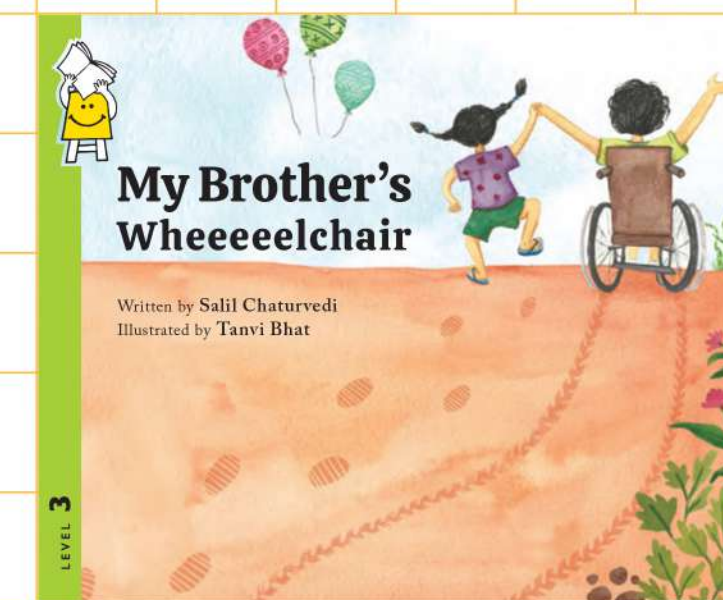
Our bodies tell stories about ourselves and our lives and we want to remind readers to love and accept themselves. Our books also tell stories of disabled bodies, not just as bodies to be celebrated but to be normalised in literature, accepted and made space for. They never other a body.



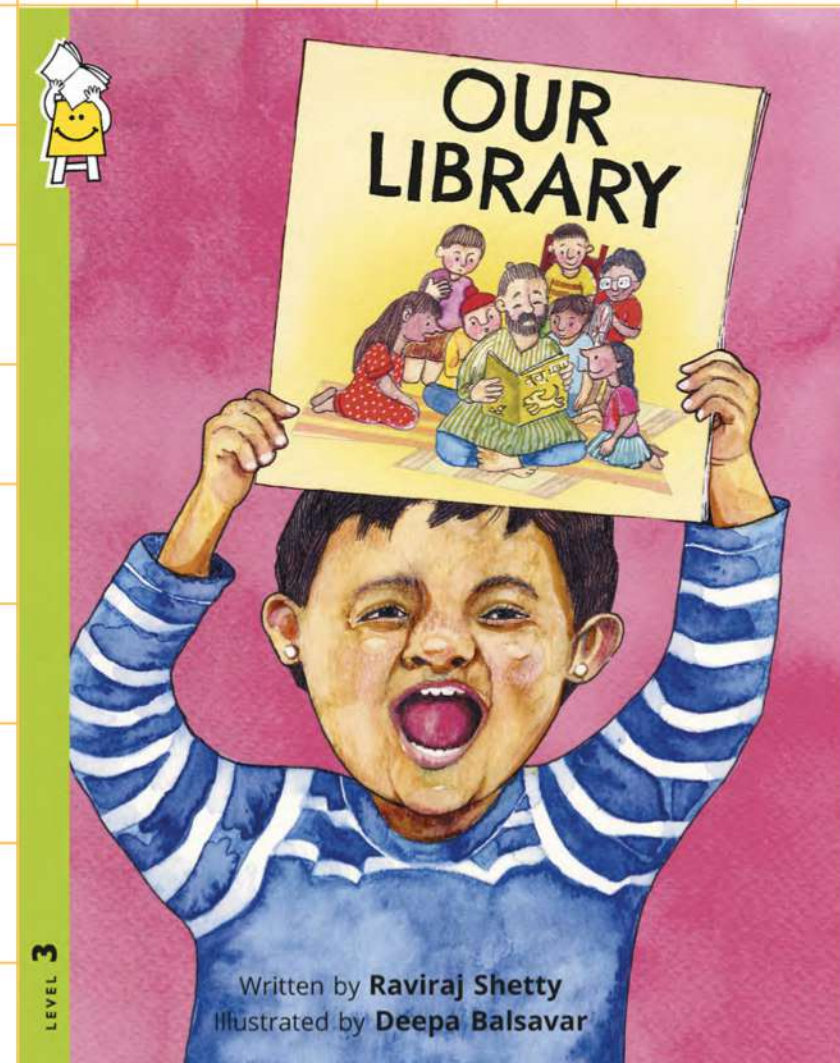
A book that ensures that all bodies and genders are included in important conversations such as bad touch and consent.



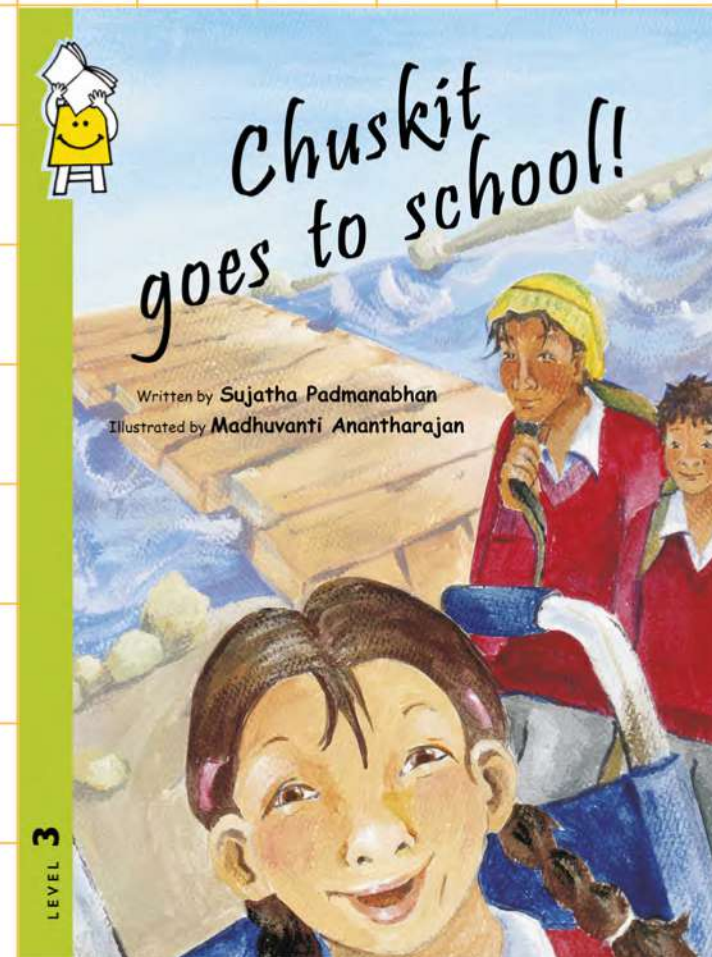
This story invites readers to explore nature in a new sensory way, by listening to the sounds of the forest just like the visually impaired students from Ananya Mavan Sai Samiti did.



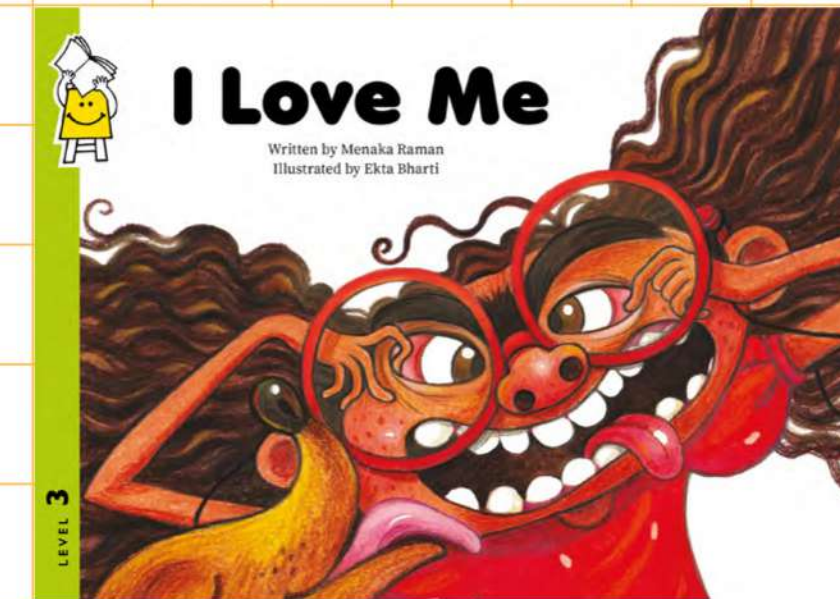
A poem about Durva, Dhruvo and Dhruvo's wheelchair, and all the fun and mischief the three get up to.



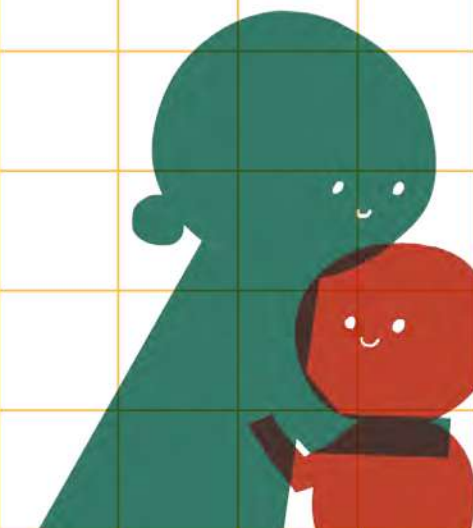
A book that makes disabled bodies and experiences seen by giving a glimpse into a day in a library where the Book Club of the Disabled Youth meets.



A tale that looks at what we can do to make communities and schools more inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities. Chuskit's path to school isn't wheelchair-friendly and this is the story of how her peers come together to help her get an education.



Meet a girl who loves and accepts herself despite people around her pointing out 'flaws' in her body. The story celebrates the body and individuality.



Books like these stimulate conversations, between readers from different genders, with different abilities and disabilities, which would simply fail to develop if they didn't exist. Accurate portrayals clarify misconceptions, which children often have, and books work to expel that.

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak.

John Berger,
cultural thinker and
essayist

Having the access to material that is relevant and in a language they are familiar with gives readers — especially those who are often invisibilised like dalits, queer, disabled, women and more — the chance to actively participate in and be included in conversations to learn effectively and impact change.

Illustrations

Your Body Is Yours

Written by Yamini Vijayan

Illustrated by Aindri C

Rainbow Girls and Rainbow Boys

Written by Kamla Bhasin

Illustrated by Priya Kuriyan

I Wish

Illustrated by Lavanya Naidu

Art directed by Priya Kuriyan

My Brother's Wheeeelchair

Written by Salil Chaturvedi

Illustrated by Tanvi Bhat



Pratham Books

For the last 18 years, Pratham Books has been creating engaging picture books in multiple languages and formats to help children discover the joy of reading — in mother tongue languages, set in locations they can recognise, featuring characters with whom they can identify, and telling stories that capture their attention and fuel their imagination.