



**Technology as a Companion in Overcoming Disability in
MaliniChib's *One Little Finger***

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Abstract

This paper attempts to bring out the significance of technology in the life of a disabled person. *One Little Finger*, the novel taken for analysis, portrays how technology assists the author to lead a normal life. MaliniChib brings out her struggle to live a meaningful life despite lifelong disability of Cerebral Palsy. She narrates her experiences from childhood to adulthood and, her struggle with motor skill and speech. It also focuses on how MaliniChib establish her identity in this society. Eventhough she wishes to act on her own, technology is the only companion that helps her to overcome her disability. Malini might not have become an author today as she could type her book with just one finger.

Key words :

Cerebral Palsy, Technology, Disability.

Disability means the reduction of a person's ability and focusing his/her need for the support of somebody. The particular person may find difficult in communication with others and also in learning. In the olden days, they are considered as evil but the tendency has changed in the contemporary era and literature reflects this change at present. Disability literature focuses on this changing attitude in the present society. Nasrullah Mambrol says, "Like feminist, critical race, and queer approaches too literature and culture, disability studies relates to a specific group: in this case, disabled people, who make up approximately 15 percent of the world population and are among the most poor



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and disempowered groups globally.” In our society person with disability are considered as outcasts. Mostly the people were seen as beggars and most parents leave their disabled children in orphanages. Gradually the improvement in technology has enabled the betterment of disabled people. But the improvement of technology too did not survive them in a long way; it's too has its limitation of this society. The society separates the disabled person and treats him as secondary.

This paper is an autobiography of Malini Chib's *One Little Finger*, which author narrates from her birth to present day. Malini is affected with lifetime disability condition of cerebral palsy. Some Indian doctors have told her parents that she is going to be like a vegetable. Her parents spend a great deal with her. Malini can understand everything around her, but she cannot respond. Malini personally feels that she is not a handicapped person but it is the people around her that makes her so. While in India, she undergoes such difficulty but in England, she is convenient just as every other person. Malini feels imprisoned in her thoughts that she did not even get an opportunity to communicate. At the age of thirteen, she has been given a communication device to communicate with her listener but it is very slow. Her close circle of people considers her as a cat whisperer; she has no friend in school and finds it tough to mingle. But in recent times even people with poor speech interact easily with the development of technology. The family alone supports her to stay alive and enables her to face the challenges of life.

At the age of fifteen, Malini is put into a wheelchair. She hates wheelchair as it makes her feel as disabled. Then she is given an electric wheelchair. She is extremely happy, because she can move fast without anyone's help. While doing higher studies in St. Xavier's college at Bombay, she couldn't use library as the wheelchair cannot be taken in lift. As her hands are disabled she could neither take hold a pencil nor take notes on her own and so she uses a communication device. While she goes to party with friends, Malini wishes to dance but she cannot. At such time, she feels a kind of terrible emotion,



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I wondered if there would ever be a man in my life would a man see beyond my body? Would anyone put their arms around me and dance with me? Would anyone kiss me passionately? Would I ever be needed by a man emotionally or would I always be regarded as a burden for someone to take care of? (65)

When a disabled person uses an electric wheelchair, it gives a sense of freedom. Society has a stereotypical concept that disabled persons are always dependent on others to get help. Even the usage of a toilet is not accessible for the disabled person. They cannot go out on their own. Because of the misconception of society, disabled persons are not permitted inside restaurant, Libraries, offices etc.

Malini feels terrible that her speech cannot be understood by others. For her, “communication is like water, the essence of life” (110). She feels that communicating with other is independent, without a need of third party. So she wants to be exposed to more assistive technology. The electric wheelchair gives her a excellent feeling of change and she independently goes everywhere she wants. Everyone needs a time and space for their own thought and development. If a disabled is continuously under the care of a person, he will not establish his own personality.

She has learned how to access her email. The email technology changes her life a lot. And through this she is able to communicate easily on her own. The internet technology creates her a new world. And also she can communicate with whoever she wants without involving a third party. The internet and her light-writer has improved her skills of communication vastly and also boosted her confidence. In her social interactions she has become more independent and not dependent on other around her. She has done her master degree with the use of her one little finger.

Society views disabled people as being guided by their care takers. Without the support of care takers, disabled person may have to remain at home. And also society opinion that disabled women should not have sexual desires. But disabled persons also



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have their own expectations, feeling, love like normal persons. There is a professional life for disable people. Malini loves her friends as they are the first to accept her as a person and then her disability.

With the companion of technology, Malini interacts and communicates through the internet without speaking. Networking skills helps her to learn the quickest way for continuing contact with her friends and family easily. New information and communication technologies have changed the production, storage advancement and circulation of information. Malini has developed the new technique for using the mobile as a communicator. Technology as a companion has become a back support in everywhere and has enabled her to overcoming communication difficulties in her life time. Malini accepts her own identity as a disabled women, and she is proud of being one. And now, she is an author, the founder and co-chairperson of the ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together) Rights group.

I was now more adept on the computer. My power of communication had improved considerably. My one little finger was power house of strength. I used email all the time. To me, the email and the light writer boosted my confidence. (130,131)

Through this we come to know that technology has become a companion in overcoming the disability

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