

Disabled Women and Sexual Agency: A Reading of *Margarita with a Straw* and *One Little Finger*

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Abstract

Disability has been widely misunderstood by Indian society due to constant social marginalization and a lack of sensitization and awareness. Disabled people have been severely marginalised in Indian society. Though movies depicting disability are periodically made in Hindi, we rarely get to see movies where disability is realistically portrayed. My paper examines the refreshing and path-breaking departure from the norm in the representation of disability and sexual agency in the movie *Margarita with a Straw* (2015) and candid exploration of the topic in *One Little Finger* (2011), an autobiography written by Malini Chib. The movie is loosely based on the book, therefore, taken together, they present a powerful case for disabled women's sexual agency and assert their rights for inclusion and accessibility. I have argued that whereas major texts in disability studies, considered canonical in the field, do not discuss key aspects of sexual culture, often regarding sexuality and disability as incongruent identities, this movie highlights the importance of the vital role played by individual sexual urges in shaping one's personality and the overall sense of emotional wellbeing. The movie talks about accepting and normalising disability. It urges the need for enabling environment and giving space to the disabled person to spread her wings. This movie desists from portraying pitiable images of dependency. The frank articulation of the evolving sexual identities in the movie subtly challenges the misconstrued perception about the disabled as being asexual or hypersexual.

Keywords: Disability; Sexuality; Hindi films; Desire; Representation; Disabled Women's Autobiographies

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Introduction

Though movies depicting disability are periodically made in Hindi, we rarely get to see movies where disability is realistically portrayed. So far, *Margarita With A Straw* (2014) directed by Shonali Bose, is the only movie which focuses on gender, disability and sexuality in the most nuanced and realistic manner. It espouses a rights-based social model of disability which is only recently gaining some traction in India. In an interview given to NDTV on 10th April 2015 Filmmaker, Shonali Bose said that the film is loosely based on her cousin Malini Chib's life experiences. She told that besides being inspired by her cousin's life, her film *Margarita, With A Straw* also has bits and pieces of her own emotional journey. "I have opened up a lot and invested myself emotionally into the story. Telling your personal story is a very brave thing and it required a lot of courage for me and Malini to bare ourselves to the world". Chib's autobiography, *One Little Finger* (2011) describes how people with disabilities are excluded from education, employment or even a regular social life mainly because of the inaccessible environment and the social bias against them. Lack of access means discrimination due to which they had been humiliated, made to feel sorry for themselves and torn to pieces countless times. The book makes a powerful plea for the inclusion of the disabled in mainstream society on an equal basis.

My paper will examine the representation of disability and sexual agency in the movie *Margarita with a Straw* (2015) and candid exploration of the topic in *One Little Finger* (2011), an autobiography written by Malini Chib. The movie is loosely based on the book, therefore, taken together, they present a powerful case for disabled women's sexual agency and assert that sexuality and disability are not incongruent identities. In *One Little Finger*, Chib underscores the importance of the vital role played by individual sexual urges in shaping one's personality and the overall sense of emotional wellbeing. This paper will not throw up broad generalisations on sexuality and disability in India but hopes to initiate a discussion on how sexual perceptions, behaviours and attitudes are constructed in the experiential reality of a disabled women's autobiography and a movie based on it.

Disability studies is still an emerging discipline in India. There is very little research available on the lives of disabled women, their joys, sorrows, motivations,

anxieties, social pressures and individual manifestations. There has been very little effort made to study disabled people within their socio-cultural and economic context and to understand the experience of disablement from the perspectives of a disabled person. The thrust remained on normalization through medical or therapeutic interventions to enable disabled people to function as 'normally' as possible in society (Ghosh,2). However, in recent years many autobiographies and case studies have tried to address this imbalance. The disabled people, through the medium of life writing, have begun to challenge their marginalisation and inscribe themselves in the cultural mainstream. Disabled women's autobiographies offer us a chance to move beyond definitions that often provide fixity to the life of disabled people to evaluate/ understand how people live their lives through disability.

The Unrealistic and Misleading Portrayal of Disability in Bollywood Movies

The portrayal of disability in Bollywood movies has mostly been negative and characters can be seen to confirm popular stereotypes. They are also routinely introduced for comic effect. When lead characters with disabilities are male, they are often shown as engaging in heroic deeds and overcoming disabilities. Women rarely get lead roles and their depiction is often decided by the patriarchal frame of reference. Women with disability are frequently objects of a man's sympathy and protection and are seen as a liability/ burden for the family. They are often shown as vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and disabled women characters close to the protagonist are often threatened with some kind of violence or sexually abused.

Bollywood movies rarely try to convey that people with disabilities are not any different from us, that they are ordinary individuals with stories to tell about normal emotions of happiness, sadness, achievements and frustrations, with an identity of their own. The conflicts and challenges in their lives could be portrayed with sensitivity as well as with humour and wit. The presence of disabled people is generally used to evoke an emotional reaction from the audience. These characters must overcome or compensate for their disability. They need to be killed or cured before the end of the film. Generally, stock characters and situations tend to oversimplify disability and there's an attempt to solve the issues in the charity/ philanthropy mould rather than normalise the experience of disability. Whether it is a textual representation of disability or the way it is understood in popular culture, the very construction of disability is negative in India. Needless to say, such conceptualisation is in direct contrast to those who believe in a rights-based approach to disability and seek reorganization of society to include

disabled people. Moreover, it also undermines the agency of the individual whose life is not restricted to such formulations (Mehrotra, 2013).

Representation of women characters with disability in Bollywood Movies

Women are often depicted in their relation to men as mothers, sisters or love interests, and never as single, unattached women and the depiction is meant to evoke sympathy, and pity and to add a dramatic twist at some crucial moment. In negative roles, disabled women are often shown as jealous, resentful and wicked, which only confirms the negative cultural stereotypes. The sympathetic, as well as the negative depiction of disabled women in the Bollywood movies, fail to throw light on what the disabled persons themselves feel about their lives. It is important to understand what disability means to people who are negotiating it in everyday life. There is no attempt to understand the kind of life they want to live.

Presenting disability solely as an individual tragedy or as a medical problem to be cured by surgery and 'overcome' by rehabilitation undermines an understanding of disability as a socio-cultural and political phenomenon. The lives of disabled people need to be presented beyond the 'oppressed', 'victimised' 'dependent' stereotypes. As people, disabled individuals go through multiple experiences that give way to different kinds of emotions. There has to be a more complex and nuanced understanding of disability in our movies. In this context, movies like *Black* (2005), *Margarita with a Straw* (2015) and *Hitchki* (2018) are very significant for showing how a woman can overcome formidable challenges and lead everyday life well by managing and incorporating disability into one's life. There are Some movies like *Koshish*(1972) *Sparsh*(1980), *Black* (2005), *Iqbal* (2005), *Tare Zameen Par* (2007),and *Barfi* (2012) that have helped in spreading awareness and enhancing understanding of the problems and challenges faced by disabled people and to some extent, break the stigma around disabilities in the country. However, these are exceptions. Most other movies with disabled characters simply fail to do much for the disabled community because the depiction of disability in them is often simplistic, incorrect, and misleading.

Representation of Sexuality and Disability in *One Little Finger*

One Little Finger (2011) is the autobiography of a woman with very severe cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a neurological condition that affects motor skills and makes walking, talking, and eating, difficult activities. Chib writes that cerebral palsy has also handicapped the right side of her brain permanently blurring her speech. As a consequence, she is confined to a wheelchair for life. However, as a result of continuous family support and encouragement and her own determination and constant challenge to move beyond her limitations she has

emerged as a source of inspiration for disabled people. After finishing graduation from St. Xavier's in Mumbai, she has done postgraduation in Women's studies from London University and Library Sciences and Information Management from the London Metropolitan University. Chib is a writer, disability activist and at the time of publishing the book, Senior Events Manager at the Oxford Book Store in Mumbai.

The discourse of sexuality and disability often includes themes of victimization, abuse, and exploitation of women, the pleasurable aspect and sense of well-being associated with sexuality seem to be missing. Whereas major texts in disability studies, considered canonical in the field, do not discuss key aspects of sexual culture, often regarding sexuality and disability as incongruent identities, Chib's autobiography underscores the importance of the vital role played by individual sexual urges in shaping one's personality and the overall sense of emotional wellbeing. While making us aware of and enhancing our understanding of the problems and challenges faced by disabled people, Chib makes a point that people with disabilities are not any different from us, that they are ordinary individuals with stories to tell about normal emotions of happiness, sadness, achievements and frustrations, with an identity of their own. As people, disabled individuals go through multiple experiences that give way to different kinds of emotions and the conflicts and challenges in their lives could be portrayed with sensitivity as well as humour and wit. The autobiography, while enhancing our understanding of how people live their lives through disability, makes a powerful plea for the inclusion of the disabled in mainstream society on an equal basis.

Renu Adlakha notes that the social construction of the disabled identity is more often than not that of an asexual being precariously perched on the margins of society. Indeed, many disabled persons and their parents are convinced that sexual experience does not lie in their destiny. The situation is more complicated in societies like India where sex is a highly taboo subject. Even under normal circumstances, sexuality is considered socially threatening and more in need of control than encouragement and enhancement (Adlakha, *Gender, subjectivity and sexual identity*, 4). The social conditioning ensures that disabled women too shy away from the problem, thinking they are asexual, and usually hide behind a self-created brave front of denying that their sex and sexuality matter to them.

In a bold departure, Chib is quite forthcoming and direct about disabled women's sexuality, she writes, "The truth about disabled people is that disability does not hamper a person's emotional need to be touched and loved on an emotional and physical plane just like everyone else. Our sexual organs are not damaged or affected, and hence we do long for and are able to enjoy pleasurable sexual experiences" (2015, 105). She continues, "Sex is a basic

physiological need that even animals have. Like any other person of my age, I adore romances. Being in the mainstream of life, one sees a lot of images of a man and woman together. As I grew older, I naturally desired sex and relationship. Like most women sometimes I craved to be in the arms of a man, (but) most men look at me as asexual” (ibid).

Sharing her teenage angst and anxieties while studying in a co-ed college with regular students for the first time in life, she writes, “like most women of my age, I loved the company of men. I would try and seek them out and initiate a conversation... only a handful of men would make that extra bit of an effort to understand my atypical speech. But they never really went beyond superficial chatting” (64). Chib writes that most of the boys looked at her as if she was still a child. “It was a combination of their shyness as well as an unsurety about how to act and what to do. I think it also had to do with their macho image. For a typical boy, it was not acceptable to be seen with a disabled girlfriend. They all wanted a ‘normal girlfriend’ in their arms” (59).

Social events made Chib get into dregs of depression because she got the feeling that she was never really wanted. She writes, “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) and that “I have had a hard time accepting that I am trapped in a rejected body. A body that is not sexually attractive” (146). She writes that weddings were a reminder that she possibly would not share such an equation with someone. At times, attending weddings in the family seemed extremely painful and she collapsed into tears but she chose to cry at night, quietly. Once after such a bout of crying, she tried to verbalise her emotional outbursts of needing a partner, like most people around her. Her aunt and uncle agreed that she should satisfy her sexual needs, “but of course, no one knew how?” (148) With time and maturity, she has become more detached she writes. She no longer thinks that the only way forward is marriage.

Adolescence, Emotional Anxieties and Social Conflicts

The sexuality and sexual desires of people with disabilities mostly remain unaddressed and unacknowledged. The acknowledgement gets even more diminished when the person in question is a woman. Although women and men with disabilities share similar experiences of devaluation, isolation, marginalization, and discrimination, their fortunes diverge in important ways (Fischer,81). There are many factors that hinder sex opportunities for disabled persons, such as social attitudes around body image, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, social attitudes

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around body image and cultural ideals of attractiveness may hinder the sexual expression of disabled people.

Margarita ... showcases the life of a wheelchair-bound college girl Laila, who has cerebral palsy. The movie consciously avoids the trap of victimhood, and over-dramatization about the challenges of raising a daughter with cerebral palsy, instead, it chooses to speak about the challenges of cerebral palsy with optimism instead of apologising for it. The central character is shown as negotiating with the limitations imposed by disability. It tries to show the pain experienced because of mobility and speech impairment. It foregrounds the pain imposed on the disabled characters by society. But the narrative, in line with the breezy, upbeat approach of its teenage protagonist, is light-hearted and witty. Instead of projecting disability as a burden, the attempt is to show how it could be negotiated comfortably in everyday situations.

Laila, the protagonist is a teenage student in a co-ed college. Chib's autobiography also primarily focuses on her college years while writing about her dreams, desires and insecurities as a woman with a disability. Adolescence is a period of crystallisation of adult sexual identity. Adolescents and young people with disabilities must cope with all physical changes, emotional anxieties and social conflicts of able-bodied adolescents, and those produced by their disabilities. Like all teenagers, Laila's, as well as Chib's college years, revolve around gossip, fashion, make-up, media, social events, and music festivals. These are formative years in the development of personal identity, a time of breaking away from parental values and beliefs and being influenced by peer groups and media. However, Chib's autobiography reveals the pain of being reduced to an invisible spectator on the sidelines than a participant in the flurry of socio-sexual activity in the college. She writes about her awkwardness, isolation in college and pain of being left out when friends planned movie dates or other social outings. She also writes about how she took initiative and proposed going to movies etc and her friends complied happily. She wanted to be included in everything. On the other hand, Laila is shown as a feisty college-going girl who has learnt to negotiate with disability and is fairly comfortable working and functioning independently without being seen as a burden, given she is provided with proper infrastructure and access. She doesn't hesitate to mingle with 'abled' people and her friends are also shown as helpful and supportive without any condescending or patronising grandstanding.

Both, the movie as well as the autobiography affirm the fact that disabled people can and do function independently if given proper infrastructure and access. The difference in attitude

towards disability in India and the West is a recurring theme in both, the autobiography as well as the movie. Chib writes, “In India, if you are disabled, you are simply not welcome”, and “Societal perceptions in India are as fractured and potholed as its infrastructure. Till today, I regularly catch people staring at me as if I were a monkey in a zoo. The polite amongst the masses whisper pointing at me. The rude ones talk disparagingly and pityingly about me right when I am there as if I don’t exist or I exist only for their amusement and ill-informed judgement” (Chib, 2015, 97). Moving around outdoors is not an easy task in India. The pavements are not rounded and hence not accessible to wheelchairs, the roads are full of potholes. Most shops, libraries, cinema halls, museums, book shops, and restaurants are inaccessible and she feels paralysed at home. Laila writes lyrics for her college band. She dares to refuse an award and show the middle finger to a patronizing celebrity guest, who implies that the ‘disability’ of the lyricist tilted the decision in their Band’s favour. This condescending attitude is contrasted with her experiences in New York where she beats everyone at chess and is praised for her intelligence and not sympathised with. Laila moves around in the college, cafeteria, library, and roams New York streets quite easily, whereas in India she needs to be dropped off and picked up quite regularly. Neither the autobiography, not the movie loosely based on it can be called a misery narrative, a tale of never-ending victimhood and exclusion. Despite the obvious limitations on their mobility, both protagonists want to live life on their terms, make mistakes, and follow their aspirations. In short, they want to live life to the fullest as any teenager would.

Disability and the Notion of Private Space

Disabled women are often considered asexual and childlike. Often well-meaning over-protective families can create ‘learned helplessness in the disabled person preventing him/ her from being autonomous (Ghai,2015,12). Middle-class families in India could be aspirational about their children with disabilities to become financially self-sufficient, yet fail to recognise key aspects of their sexuality and demand for privacy. The topic of sexuality, the need for personal space, is usually never discussed or even acknowledged. Chib asserts, “People with disabilities are no children. We have thoughts too. Which could be adult thoughts, desires, feelings, passions and expectations like any non-disabled person” (Chib, 2011,147).

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In the movie, Laila belongs to an urban, middle-class family where it's not a big deal for the mother to be the driving force. Often, she's the one who takes the last call in family matters. It shows an inter-faith marriage where there is no discrimination between their children (a disabled girl child as opposed to an able-bodied son). In depicting a father who is content to play a supportive role the movie bravely breaks the patriarchal notions of family. Laila shares an intimate bond with her mother, she is largely dependent on her as her caregiver and shares her crushes and rejections with her. The middle-class, modern mother is sensitive to her daughter's emotions and supports her ambition to study in New York. But Laila's desire for sexual privacy is simply incomprehensible to her. The film thus exposes the limits of our liberal and progressive ethos that quite willingly accepts independence as far as professional competence and financial security of a disabled daughter is concerned but ignores the importance of emotional well-being and need for companionship. *Margarita* is not a film about disability alone. It explores the feminine desire and longing for the companionship of a woman with a disability (Sinha, 2020). Though close to her mother, Laila feels suffocated by her mother's constant surveillance. Once, Laila's mother comes across porn on her laptop. Instead of empathising with her daughter's anxiety, she expresses her disappointment about her daughter engaging in morally incorrect and disgraceful activities. The shrillness and annoyance in her voice indicate the mother's inhibitions and lopsided perception often mired by stigma. The film allows Laila to assert her independence and adulthood as she gets angry with her mother for invading her privacy by finding her surfing porn. The pleasurable aspect of sex in our culture has been largely ignored, vilified, or exploited but the movie subtly expresses the desires of a differently-abled woman in such a way that doesn't feel contrived or over the top. There's an element of self-reflexivity in Laila's perception of her sexual identity as it evolves with time. The mental inhibition, even among urban, cosmopolitan middle-class Indian families, to address issues pertinent to the sexual culture of the disabled is depicted in quite a realistic manner.

Chib writes that in London, she would go out frequently but was always accompanied by either her carer or her parents. She had to nag her parents to let her be on her own for some time. "I desired solitude sometimes. At the age of 28, it was too stifling to be accompanied by someone constantly. I wanted a bit of freedom, to be on my own for a while" (Chib, 2011, 112). In the Indian cultural context, there is pervasive othering of the disabled woman and her infantilization. People often assume that she needs to be in constant protection of the family with few prospects of autonomy and independence. In fact, there's nothing unusual about the

constant surveillance of unmarried women in our culture. Against this background, the movie and the autobiography assert their need for privacy, separate space of their own, and demands to be treated as adults. One of the most fascinating things about the movie is the boldness with which the notion of private space for a disabled woman is discussed and held forth.

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Usually, even the so-called 'progressive' Bollywood movies that deal with the subject of disability, focus on the struggles and aspirations of the protagonists to find identity, self-respect and acceptance in society. If they explore the theme of sexuality of disabled people at all, as in movies like *Sadma* (1983) or *Omkara* (2006), the theme of repressed sexuality is explored, it is only one strand in the multi-layered narrative. The moment a disabled person expresses his/ her sexual desires, there is a rupture in the plot. *Margarita with A Straw*, on the other hand, handles intimacy without any romantic illusions, in the sense that it demonstrates how 'normal' desire is, even for the disabled. In this sense, it is a coming-of-age movie that breaks all boundaries of heteronormativity, patriarchy and the 'normal' (Pasricha, 2015).

The film portrays three disabled individuals, Laila, Khanum and Dhruv. In the main, it focuses on the frank articulation of their evolving sexual identities. Thus, it not only desists from portraying pitiable images of dependency but also challenges the misconstrued perception about the disabled as being asexual or hypersexual. In managing life on her own, Laila discovers herself and her sexuality in New York. It had to happen that way because in India that kind of personal space is hardly available for unmarried women living with their families. At a protest march there, she meets a blind Bangladeshi-Pakistani activist, Khanum. She offers to familiarise Laila with the new country. While accompanying each other everywhere and living together, Laila falls in love with her. Her relationship with Khanum is rather sensual and they both share a deep emotional bond of being viewed as 'abnormal' due to their disability and to some extent also their sexuality (Pasricha, 2015). This, an alternative reading of female bonding beyond friendship, and the sensitivity with which it is done, elucidates, "how disability and sexuality are journeys of self-discovery which need not have to be portrayed only as comic-relief characters" (Sinha, 2020).

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Laila is flirtatious, fun and confident. The film is sensitive to Laila as a woman and her sexual desires and not Laila as a sexless disabled person. She is a young independent woman who doesn't hesitate in buying a vibrator at a local sex shop, make out with her close friend to 'try it out or while professing her love to another. The movie's aim is not to make the audience strain themselves into sympathising with Laila. It is about giving her the space to grow and spread her wings (Pasricha, 2015). Laila, Khanum, and Dhruv, just like anyone of us, make choices that are irrational or arbitrary. The movie subtly suggests that all of us will make choices, sometimes intuitive, sometimes flawed. Love and sexuality are adaptable and not defined by our physical limitations. Whether able-bodied or disabled, we are all worthy of our own beautiful love stories. The movie tells us that like everyone else, love and intimacy matter a lot to those restricted to wheelchairs.

While *Margarita with a Straw* drew praise for its frank depiction of the sexual journey of a young woman with cerebral palsy, it was also critiqued as an elitist film which glossed over the real and present dangers of sexual objectification and exploitation of vulnerable women with disabilities (Vaidya, 142). Nobody can deny the huge chasm between the DRM in the West and the ground conditions and priorities of the people with disabilities in India. In India, disability is largely seen as a product of cultural impediments such as "beliefs and stereotypes as well as structural impediments like poverty, lack of development, illiteracy, unemployment and caste, class and gender barriers, and are marginalised in education, employment, mobility and other significant life areas. The meaning of disability in India is embedded in this basic struggle for survival and cultural understanding...prevention and rehabilitation model continue to be relevant (Mehrotra,66). Disabled feminist critics have critiqued the DRM in India for its urban, elitist agenda. Nandini Ghosh also feels that the issues raised by urban, middle-class Disability rights activists do not resonate in the lives of the majority of disabled who are further marginalised by virtue of their class, caste, rural-urban residence, and most strikingly, gender (26). What is and should be more significant for them are the issues of education, employment, residence, technological aids, and accessibility, to name a few.

However, the issues of education, residence and employment are important not only for people with disabilities but for all sections of society in India. By labelling the foregrounding of the sexual agency of a woman from an urban middle-class cosmopolitan background as elitist and therefore, irrelevant, these critics seem to be repeating similar

assumptions about priorities and importance that they censored in the women's movement in India. For instance, Ghai, in a well-known critique of the feminist movement's exclusion of disabled women's concerns, writes that the feminist movement excluded the disabled women's experiential realities of discrimination, ignorance and neglect on the grounds that poverty, class, caste, and violence against women are more dominant concerns for Indian women and the issues of women with disabilities are relatively less important (Ghai,2002,). Therefore, when the issue of sexuality and sexual agency of disabled women is raised in mainstream media for the first time, it should not be dismissed as 'elitist' or less relevant to the majority of disabled women in India. As we know, one of the most pervasive types of exclusions faced by people with disabilities is sexual exclusion. The discourse of sexuality and disability often includes themes of victimization, abuse, and exploitation of women, the pleasurable aspect and sense of well-being associated with sexuality seem to be missing. However, many autobiographies written by Indian women with disabilities underscore the importance of the vital role played by individual sexual urges in shaping one's personality and the overall sense of emotional wellbeing¹. Their needs for human contact, affection and intimacy should not be dismissed as less important or irrelevant just because for a large majority, education, employment, accessibility issues and thereby prevention and rehabilitation model continues to be more relevant in our context

Conclusions

One often chooses to disassociate from discussions pertinent to sexual urges and identity in India and undermine the role it plays in shaping our personality. Sexuality as a source of pleasure and as an expression of love is not readily recognized by populations that have been traditionally marginalized in society. Sexual portrayals of people who are mentally or physically disabled, or who just do not fit the targeted market profile have been conspicuously absent in mainstream media. *Margarita...* is the first of its kind, a story of the disabled suffering from cerebral palsy, a coming-of-age movie of a young girl, that has lively portrayed the issue of sexual urges, dreams and desires of disabled women. In this sense, it also marks a paradigm shift in representing female disabled characters in Bollywood movies. It marks a transition from the pity, charity or medical model to the social and rights model of disability.

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Questioning the denial of sexuality and sexual access to women with disability is not to forget that although gender is a major defining element of the disability experience in general and of the self as a sexual being in particular, it does not operate in isolation but intersects closely with other equally important variables such as social class (and caste in the case of India), family composition and dynamics and geographical location. Chib's autobiography and the movie based on it, depict a personality and goals that strongly contest widely prevalent views of women with disabilities. In the face of multiple challenges, she emerges as an independent, autonomous, ambitious and sexually active woman. Although there are some enabling features in her social environment like family support, it is her grit, intelligence and enthusiasm for life firmly embedded in self-respect and confidence that contribute to her sense of wellbeing. Though both texts raise pertinent questions about the urges and desires of disabled women and make one question the denial of sexuality and sexual access to women with disability, they are basically focused on self-discovery. The protagonists experience joy, fear, disillusionment, and emotional turmoil in the course of that journey. Many women with disabilities in different corners of the world continue to fight discrimination and exclusion. They face psychological, physical and emotional trauma in their everyday interactions as they embark on the journeys of self-assertion, inclusion and accessibility. The struggles and aspirations of the protagonists as discussed above, definitely help in giving voice and visibility to the experiences of many such women

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