

Christy Brown, Imbecile into Incredible

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Abstract:

Christy Brown, a distinguished writer and artist, suffers from severe disability that limits his entire body except the toes of his left foot. Yet he is fair and fearless in everything. Everyone except his dear mother thought him a vegetable but he turned out to be an extraordinary man. It is his mother who stands like a supporting pillar behind him in everything. She is his only teacher who encourages him always. She makes him to turn all the obstacles into opportunities and prove that his disability is not an inability but a different ability. She believes in Christy's ability while the people mock at his disability. His mother's love, affection and selfless service to the severe disabled son represent all mothers of the disabled in the society. She endures all the discriminations, humiliations and pressures resulted from her son's disability by putting her faith in her son's ability. His life history *My Left Foot* is a record of his personal experiences that reflect the power of mother's love that brings out his potential to make his place in the world. Unlike his brothers and sisters, he has best settlement in life because of his mother's support and his indomitable spirit. His life story delineates the heart of his mother who understands his sensitive needs and the insensitive attitude of the people in the society. This paper is an attempt to explore how his mother's love made him travel from a crippled body to a celebrated writer and artist with his potential.

Key Words: Mother's love, crippled body, disability, potential, infirmity, resilience, a living death, indomitable spirit

As is known to all a mother is an important person in everyone's life. She is the symbol of love and sacrifice. Every one longs to enjoy mother's unconditional love. Unfortunately, some people lose their mother in their childhood due to various reasons and causes. But mother is mother, no one replace her. Christy's mother becomes a best example of how mother's love transforms her children's fate. His mother loves him while all other people including his family members detest his severe disability. She gives up everything for the sake of Christy's future life. She is the person who makes him travel from a crippled body to a celebrated writer and artist in the world despite several hurdles. She struggles to prepare him to navigate his own life on par with his brothers and sisters. Ironically, Christy has better settlement than his siblings who become bricklayers despite their regular education and able-bodies. His mother has faith in his ability while all the people laugh at his crushed body.

In every family, mother is the primary caregiver who takes extra burden to assist the disabled child. Only mother can understand the sensitive needs of the children with disability than anyone else. In this context Farman Basha, a man with disability, remembers his mother's care, "Though all my family helped me a lot, it was basically my mother who was really behind me like an angel" (Sharma 155). The mother helps her family members find ways to cope up with the strain and stress added to their day-to-day lives. The mother bears every burden and depression for the sake of their disabled children's future because disability divides the responsibilities of the family members. The mother is likely to have higher levels of pressures and lower levels of support in the society. Sometimes the mothers give up their careers for the sake of the disabled children.

Christy Brown, despite his cerebral palsy, penned his life story *My Left Foot*, published in 1954. The autobiography became an international best-seller, translated into many languages like German, French, Dutch, Italian, Braille, Japanese etc. This amazing life story was transformed into a film of the same name in 1989 that won

an Academy Award for the actor who played his character and thus he was immortalized in this film. His life story begins with the circumstances of his birth and childhood. He was born to a poor Irish couple on June 5, 1932 in the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin in a huge family of twenty-two children of which only thirteen children survived. His birth itself was a difficult one. He was kept alone while his mother was sent to recuperate for weeks together due to her health problems. Almost the mother and baby went to the edge of death. Yet his mother cried for him. His family and relatives prayed with tears and finally they were saved out of danger by grace of God. Hence, his survival itself is a miracle.

The terse comment, “I had only my left foot” (Brown78) invokes an image of person endowed with enormous power to handle the life with his lone limb that too the left foot. It reveals the severity of the narrator’s disability called cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a term used to describe a set of neurological conditions that affect movements of body. It is the most common form of childhood disability across the world. The condition makes it hard to move certain parts of the body. He is left with only foot that he uses as a key to open the door of the prison of his isolation, while entire body is not ready to respond. He uses his left foot as other people use their hands. His disability turned him into a virtual prisoner within the four walls of home without communication with outer world until his mother made him break it. His aspiration is as strong as Sunil Desai’s determination, “I told myself that my physical body was crippled but my mind was alive and free and I would use it to live the rest of my life fruitfully” (Menon 228). His disability crushes his body but transforms his soul. His ability in disability silenced all the critics and haters of the disability.

The children with disability bring extra challenges and demands to their families. The parents need to earn more money to meet the added financial burdens due to disabled family member’s medical needs. Sometimes other children’s needs in a family go unmet due to the disabled children’s special needs. His father, Patrick Brown, is a bricklayer. He works hard to earn bread and butter for his family. His mother, Bridget Brown, is a homemaker. She has some elementary education. Among his twenty-one siblings, Christy is ‘different’. His muscles are twisted. He does not move and play like remaining other kids. His kind heated mother is worried about defects in his moving head, neck, hands, opening his mouth and other organs of his body. His situation is as severe as Ben’s, whose sister Elizabeth Laird says, “Even learning the simplest things, like putting a chocolate bar in his mouth, are like climbing Mount Everest to him” (Laird 63). The condition remains the same until he reached twelve months without any progress in the development of his body. With broken heart, the concerned parents approach many doctors and clinics but their efforts prove futile. Their fear is intensified as the doctors declare that it is a neurological disorder-cerebral palsy and is an incurable disability. They call him mentally defective and a queer one. They also commented that he would remain imbecile in his entire life because of this deformity. Nevertheless, his success belied such fears.

Unlike his siblings, Christy is unable to stand on his own. His father failed to notice his son’s ability, loses hopes saying it is a curse upon him. Naturally, mothers are likely to play care-giving duties better than fathers. So, his mother notices that he is not developing in the way that most children do. He could not sit without support. She struggles to feed him as his head dropping every time. All the friends and relatives of the family are scared because they are not used to such severe disability. Nevertheless, his mother does not lose faith in him despite the doctors’ treatment and advice proved otherwise. Strongly, she decides to do something to make him normal because he is her child. As a responsible mother, she takes care of him. He writes, “She refused to accept this truth, the inevitable truth – as it then seemed that I was beyond cure, beyond saving, even beyond hope” (Brown 10).

Christy’s mother never trusts the doctors’ words of advice and enrages at the derogatory comments of her family members, friends and relatives on Christy’s disability. She is so confident of her son’s ability. She feels that he is physically crippled but mentally strong. The doctors are not sure of his mental ability. Although his mother is concerned more about his welfare, she treats all her children alike without discrimination. She never let Christy feel

that he was different or queer but one among his siblings. She inspires him every day with new words and strength despite there is no proper response from her son but she hopes for it. She does not care for how handicapped her son is but she believes that he will lead a great life like other people. She also believes that he will bring glory to their family. With her mountain like patience, she could make the best mother of the disabled child in the society by providing all day care and love to her disabled son. His mother took pains to keep him alive and help him lead a life of respect. Her determination is as strong as Elizabeth Laird's, "I don't care how handicapped you are," I whispered to him. 'I love you. I'll always love you. I'll protect you, and look after you. If anyone's going to be mean to you, they'll have to deal with me first'" (Laird 26).

The family members may feel exhausted in providing all day care and help because some children like Christy need all day care and help due to their severe disability. Such feelings create psychological and emotional strains among the family members. Their caretaking responsibilities may change the fate of their family. But his mother never grudges Christy as a burden or difficult to handle in spite of her minding household chores and other children. She is determined to bring him up on par with other children. Her efforts are laudable. She tells him to do anything with so much of love and affection. Christy observes keenly everything around him and his brothers Jim, Tony and Paddy, his sisters Lily and Mona, treat him with love and affection. He is not able to express them his feelings immediately because of his disability; they understand him. His mother begins showing him some pictures of animals, fruits, birds, vehicles, flowers etc and telling him their names, trying patiently to get him to repeat them but no use. His answer is his vague smile. Yet she does not give up her efforts in teaching him. He says,

while my father was out at bricklaying to earn our bread and butter for us, mother was slowly, patiently pulling down the wall, brick by brick that seemed to thrust itself between me and other children, slowly, patiently penetrating beyond the thick curtain that hung over my mind, separating from theirs. (Brown 12)

His mother is his only teacher with tremendous patience and in course of time, he matured into a good writer and famous artist.

Christy starts giving some kind of responses to his mother's words as he grows old. Psychologically he is sound to understand the prevailing situations around him but unable to express them due to his disability. He learns that he can make some movements with his toes of left foot. His mother's concern for him motivates everyone in the family to treat him with proper care and warm love. He becomes a special attraction of the family. Mother makes every effort to teach him to communicate with the people around him.

Christy has no opportunity of attending regular school like his brothers and sisters. He feels sad about his helpless situation. All of a sudden, on one cold December day, a miracle happened in his life. His brother Paddy and sister Mona were doing some little sums on their chopped slates with a bright piece of yellow chalk that attracted him more than anything around him did. He observed how his sister was using it on slate. He drew his body close to them and snatched the yellow chalk from his sister's hands, with it he tried to write. This incident happened unexpectedly and everyone looked at him with wonder. He started taking a curious interest in using his left foot toes. He took the chalk with left foot but did not know what to do with it. His father and siblings stood there with their mouths agape but mother happily approached him, drew a letter 'A' on the floor, and asked him to copy it. His mother inspired him much to write while holding the slate steady for him. After many trials and errors, he succeeded in writing letter 'A' on the floor. This was a turning point in his life. It was a new path leading him to the new world. His happiness was boundless for writing that letter. His family members understand that he could control his left foot and toes only. It has become a useful organ to express his ideas. He decided to use his left foot for his regular activities and his education that was a key to open his future life. He was always busy with learning something new within his reach.

Christy gradually succeeds in overcoming the barriers of learning. One day, while he was writing with the chalk between his toes, a doctor who visited his place to attend his brother was astonished at his writing with left foot. The doctor was impressed by Christy's will power to learn. Interestingly, he learnt more about Christy from his mother and provided medical advice and services to him. Later, he visited Christy several times and made him his good friend. He always searched for new methods of learning. It was a memorable moment in his life that he learnt the first word 'MOTHER'. It showed his love and affection for mother. He respected his mother more than he respected everyone else. She was the main reason for his success in everything. She had been behind him in all circumstances. If Christy learnt something new, she was the first person who would appreciate him. She was highly concerned for his career. Despite her busy household chores, she looked after him with love and affection. She taught him everything by reading motivational stories, autobiographies and made him learn with concentration. Having known his physical condition, she wanted to do something that could earn him a place in the society. Christy focused more on his studies than anything else.

As her maternal instinct dictates, Bridget is committed and dedicated to serve his lovely son with disability. His mother immensely feels happy and proud of his 'different ability'. Her faith in him grows stronger because he is able to learn to write. She never ceases any opportunity to teach him something new. She taught him motivational stories, vocabulary and all those things she thought would help him progress in learning. He also learns everything with keen interest. He becomes confident as he begins to learn new things day by day. He starts expressing his mind through writing instead of speaking. What Georgina says about his learning ability is true, "Christy was not a slow learner, as the doctors had told her. His appetite for knowledge was voracious" (Louise 37).

Therefore, Bridget teaches him more and more motivational life stories and some academic lessons. Unlike in the beginning, now he responds to his mother's teachings. Every day, she asks him to write small word and sentences by reading the books. His learning improves considerably. Gradually, he starts writing small stories from the newspapers and some books with his left foot. It is a big challenge to learn to read and write while his disability does not allow him. His mother with infinite patience teaches him all she can do. He wants to learn new things every time. His increased learning ability challenges his physical disability. He learns formation of sentences after mastering all the letters of alphabet and small words. She encourages him a lot though he made mistakes in punctuation. With solid hard work, he could overcome the punctuation problem. He is interested in writing and he made a habit of it. He made himself busy with writing different topics. He developed his writing skills reading the stories written by somebody else and he started writing stories on his own. His writings were creative and vivid. He also learnt to express his own ideas and thoughts. He says, "True, I could not speak with my lips, but now I would speak through something more lasting than spoken words--written words" (Brown 17).

Christy spends most of his time on self-learning. He does not have regular education like his brothers and sisters. He learns lessons from their books at home what they learnt in their school. His level of confidence increases gradually as he learns new things every day. In all his efforts, his mother stood behind him like a rock pole. She makes him realize the importance of education and use it as a weapon in the battlefield of life. The members of his household and the neighbors, taking note of his improvement, treat him with respect. He imbibes new things quickly. He decides to gain the best of knowledge by reading books in the world. He takes in every new lesson with a passion. He shows keen interest in studies. He comments, "My attention seldom wavered" (Brown 19).

Bridget's efforts and teachings do not go in vain. He gradually starts mingling with other children and participates in their games. His inferiority complex slowly disappears. His friendship with his age group children make him forget his disability. His mother brings him a rusty old go-car; his pals named it his 'Chariot' but he calls it 'Henry'. This chariot is quite useful to him to move here and there instead of crawling. Friends always push his

chariot. His brothers take him even to the local cinemas every weekend. While going on it, the people stared at him with the question-marked faces and some children make loud noises with curiosity. He did not care for such heckling and meaningless shouts. His brothers took care of him while moving on the roads. They took him for long walks in the parks, whenever they went for recreation. Many times, he fell down from his chariot and sometimes suffered bruises and scrapes. Such happenings pained his lovely mother. With the grief heart, she allowed him play with his peer group. His friends and siblings listened to him for his clever words and foresight. Surprisingly, he had more friends than his brothers and sisters. His friends never treated him badly. They did not discriminate against him for his disability. They would carry him on their back for movies and other places where he could not go on his chariot. They never disappointed him in playing games. Luckily, the scholar, K. Sudhaker and his supervisor, Prof G. Damodar, who are orthopedically challenged with bent-legs and a crippled right hand respectively, have similar experience.

When the people consider Christy a vegetable, his mother believes in his ability because he starts communicating with the rest of the family members and other people outside in his own way. Unlike others, he does not feel ashamed of his deformity. He never attempts to conceal his crooked outlooks. He uses the left leg as his hand for everything. It becomes an indispensable organ to him. He says, "It was the only key to the door of the prison I was in" (Brown 21). As the days passed, he learnt to improve his capacity to control his organs. His mother always trains him and his siblings treat him as their equal one. His encourages him playing games like blind man's bluff and, hides and seek with his siblings. He cleverly catches them secretly by identifying their breath or giggle. Such participation in games increases his self-confidence and happiness.

Christy is helpful by nature despite his affliction. He starts helping his mother in doing small chores in the kitchen. His brother Tony and he become good friends. They both have good affection for each other. One day, his father locked the room keeping Tony inside for his mischief. No one opened the door for several hours, because the keys were in his mother's apron pocket. He wanted to unlock his brother, so he managed to get the key and handed it over to Tony who appreciated him highly. And the door was unlocked. Not only Tony, all his siblings and their friends liked him for his attitude. He says, "Indeed, many of them regarded my affliction as some queer sort of symbol of superiority, almost of godliness, so that they treated me with deference, respect in a strange childish way" (Brown 26).

His thoughts and feelings mirror the persons with disability in the society. He delineates the inner struggles resulted from external afflictions. In reality, the pains and sufferings caused by his physical condition are unimaginable and unspeakable. Many people laughed at his posture with hatred feelings. It is said, "His mother had succeeded so adeptly in immersing him in family life and treating him as normal that Christy had not known just how serious his condition was until he began to write" (Louise 42). Meanwhile he started taking interest in painting. His feeling of loneliness is replaced by his preoccupation with painting that changed his complete personality. He draws a picture beautifully with his left foot. His mother encourages him by giving water, paper and other necessary things for painting. He uses his left foot as other use their hands in painting beautiful pictures. When he paints an outline of a cross, his mother stands there with joy in her eyes. He feels triumphant. She always stands beside him as a great supporting pillar, providing constant inspiration. She buys him different drawing books, pencils, brushes and paints to boost him. He says, "I was changing. I didn't know it then but I had found a way to be happy again and to forget some of the things that had made me unhappy" (Brown 56).

Unexpectedly, some tragedy struck his family like a bolt from the blue. His mother falls sick severely after giving birth to his youngest brother. Christy feels alone and worried about her health for she is admitted in Rotunda Hospital. His home has become dark and gloomy after his mother's illness. Everything in the home was in disorder. Even he stops painting and starts praying for his mother's health and cure by simply sitting in the corner. His mother worries about him. While in the hospital, his mother shares her worry for Christy at home with Katrina Delahunt, a

young and lovely woman, who is an almoner in that hospital. This young woman is a compassionate person. Moreover, she is interested in social service activities. She was moved by the Christy's situation when his mother narrated his difficult birth, his disability and his ability in reading and painting. Moved by the pathetic state of Christy, young Katrina Delahunt decides to visit him. She is surprised to know how a person with cerebral palsy could paint and read with his left foot alone. She has a long talk with him to know his mind for his futurity. She is happy for his different ability that covered his disability. She takes a letter to his mother written by him "Dear mom. Don't worry. All okay. Lots of grub. Get well soon. Christy" (Brown 59). He earnestly waits for his mother's arrival from the hospital.

As time passes, his brothers and sisters become men and women respectively, they start their own life, some are married, and some are ready to enter into wedlock. He too grows up with biological feelings but cannot enjoy life like his siblings. He feels alienated in his own home unlike in the past because everyone is busy with his or her own life and work. He confines himself to painting in his bedroom. On Sundays, he paints in the kitchen while listening to mass on the radio.

Thinking about his plight makes him unhappy. Sometimes, he thinks of committing suicide but his heart does not allow him. He decides to express his thoughts in some other way if his paintings are insufficient. He makes up his mind to prove his ability to the world. His mother was a tremendous source of inspiration to him in all the circumstances. Katrina Delahunt encourages him every time she visits him. He often writes letters to her describing various issues. He becomes master in writing letters. One day he decides to write beautiful stories instead of letters always. In his family, no one had the habit of reading books. He started reading and writing the stories. He learns sentence arrangement with appropriate words after severe practice. He focuses on writing rather than painting because he is not able to present his growing thoughts through pictures. He speaks, "Still, I had lots of ideas crowding my mind which I couldn't express through my paints and brushes" (Brown 84).

Christy has become a professional writer. He writes on variety of themes like life in American Wild West, and a-boy-meet-a-girl themes and so on. He also writes some detective stories. The writing fiction is an escape route for him from worries caused by his disability. He tries to overcome the monotony of sedentary life by narrating tales consisting of strange characters embroiled in mundane activities. By this time, his siblings are married and become busy with their family life. He is left alone. He was still single because of his disability. His childhood friends also moved farther and farther in search for job and family life. Only his mother is there to look after him.

Christy is able to paint, write, draw and do everything with his left foot as a normal person can do with his hands, though the other parts of his body except his left foot are immobile. He does not like having it covered with shoes or stocking because he used it as his hand for everything. Everyone in and out of his family except his mother thought he is an invalid and a mere vegetable, but he turns out to be an extraordinary man despite his severe physical disability. With his talent, he proves everyone wrong in thinking that a disabled person will be a burden to the family and lead a life of parasite. His is an inspiring and a unique life story. Though the limitations pile up, he excels in his life by turning every struggle into an opportunity. All sorts of hurdles stand on his path, but he overcomes them with his unyielding fortitude. When we read his life story, we cannot but get amazed at his enormous resilience against all sorts of obstructions that made his life a living death. His triumph over disability amazes everyone. His victory as a great writer, painter, poet, an intellectual and an artist made the critics silent and salute to his will power. He may be physically weak but mentally strong. "His body was almost useless; his mind was perfect" (Louise 27).

Christy does not lose heart despite difficult situations and severe disability. Every incident in his life turns out to be a lesson teaching him how to cope with the antagonizing conditions and unkind humanity. He becomes brave bracing the odds like an abled-bodied individual in his efforts to find a respectable place in the society. He does not surrender to any circumstance challenged his situation. He never waits for other things to happen in his life. He is always optimistic. It is written about his fortitude, "Bravery was something Christy admired and he stuck to a lifelong policy of indifference to what anyone thought of him" (Louise 138). While his disability shut all the possible

ways of natural expression, he found art that gave him a way out. He enjoys being immersed in nature. He crawls out of his closet and sits under a tree enjoying the smell of flowers and twittering of birds. In this atmosphere, his imagination soars high and he would find himself writing a beautiful story. In his stories, he wonderfully describes the places and natural things. He himself wonders about his stories. He has no formal or regular education like brothers and sisters; experiences of his life prove him with wisdom. He wants to be free from all limitations that seem impossible. He makes the impossible possible with his ease of writing stories. He gets solace from the sorrows by writing different stories and letters. He says, “Finally I started to put thoughts behind what I wrote, so that in a little while they were not merely words but ideas, not merely discounted figures but thoughts” (Brown 84).

He starts taking interest in listening to music. He is fond of classical music that soothes his heart. He never leaves any opportunity of listening to music. With this new habit, he enters a new and beautiful world where he feels happy by forgetting all his worries. With the sloth being replaced on entering musical notes in his ears, he feels that life is not that hard to live and there will be a purpose behind and wants to achieve it. He realizes that thinking of status is more depressing than suffering his affliction. He determines to surmount them and lives happily. He is firm when he states, “I wanted to fight against their feeling of defeat; I hated to feel I was beaten” (Brown 91). These words mirror his indomitable spirit.

His mother still has hopes for his recovery from his disability. She collects funds from philanthropists with the help of Katrina Delahunt to send Christy to Shrine. She sends him to Shrine in Lourdes France believing he will be cured of his illness. Many people believe that if a person with any kind of problem visits Shrine and prays sincerely he or she will be free from it. After seeing the fellow passengers with different disabilities in the plane, he realizes that he is not only the person with severe disability but there are more persons with severe disabilities. Disability crushed their growth physically and tortured mentally. His troubles increase as he grows up. After his visit to the Shrine, he finds no change in his body. He feels upset. His mother consoles him with lots of messages from great personalities. She makes him realize the purpose of his life in order to be inspiration to others.

Dr. Collis, who has treated Christy from the beginning, proposes some physiotherapy exercises to strengthen his body. All the members of his family accept with excitement for they want to see him lead a ‘normal life’. Dr. Collis sends another doctor Louis Warrants who examined Christy patiently and affectionately. The doctors take special interest in Christy’s case. They visit him daily and make him do some physical exercises. For his physiotherapy exercises, there is no enough room in the house. Therefore, Christy’s mother gets an idea to build separate room to Christy’s personal life. It is an expensive task, so all the family members are afraid. Therefore, she puts efforts to raise some amount from the donors. With unyielding spirit, she starts the building work and completes it with the support of family members who initially did not like the idea. Christy is happy for it; here he could have complete solitude and freedom. It is his gymnasium to do exercises without disturbance. Comfortably, he could read more books and write more stories. He loves Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. He learnt about the world outside through the pages of books. Reading books helped him get in touch with the outside world. He realized the importance and meaning of life by reading more books. He admits, “My reading, small and narrow though it was, as yet, helped me to know something of a world beyond the four walls of my study” (Brown 116).

After several physiotherapy exercises, Dr. Collis advises his mother to take him to London to be examined by Mrs. Eirene Collis, a well-known specialist in cerebral palsy treatment. With great hope, his mother took him to London in January 1949. Dr. Mrs. Eirene and her team examined Christy; the group of doctors made him happy for coming to London. After several medical tests, Dr. Mrs. Eirene advises Christy not to use his left foot for everything. They advise him to use other organs to perform different functions. Christy thought it was a painful suggestion but it was useful; he decided to follow the suggestion of the doctors thereafter. He resolved to use whole body for doing things. Initially it was very difficult, Christy got used to this practice gradually. Christy and his mother returned

home after this medical examination. This was another kind of experience to him to learn about his deformity and its impact on his life in the world.

He spent his time on reading books and paintings. Yet, he has had no satisfaction in life because there is a burning desire inside him to become a complete man like his siblings and friends. He decides to control his body parts first and improve his physical shape by doing exercises daily. The physiotherapy exercises help him in this regard. His will-power becomes stronger after these physiotherapy classes. He could overcome all trial and tribulations resulted from his disability with his mother's help and support. His mother makes all the family members understand Christy's special needs and help him accordingly.

Christy enjoyed listening to music from the beginning. He often beat the rhythm with his left foot. When Burl Ives, a great musician, conducted a concert for the persons with cerebral palsy in Dublin on the request of Dr Collis, Christy was the centre of attraction in the programme for his unique talent in music. Dr. Collis read the first chapter of Christy's autobiography to introduce him to the audience. It let the whole audience understand the internal struggles of the person with cerebral palsy. They all stood and applauded him and his family members. They honored his mother with bouquet of red roses. His entire family felt proud of Christy who became a real hero. Bernard Share, *The Irish Times* reviewer, acclaimed his life story as 'the most important Irish novel since *Ulysses*.'

Thus, Christy's mother makes him prove his potential by turning down all the wrong beliefs about his disability. She could make the best mother to Christy and an example to all the mothers in the world. His life story is a great source of inspiration to the disabled and non-disabled. He makes possible the impossible with his gritty determination despite numerous obstacles.

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