

**Literary and Cultural Disability Studies: An Exploration**  
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**Lecture – 3**  
**Introduction to LCDS – Part 2**

Welcome back all of you. It is about LCDS part 2 an introduction. A moment ago, I was talking about literary criticism and the need for paying closer attention to the text, but now we also need to talk about context, text and context go together in literary criticism. When it comes to context in LCDS, what are the things one can talk about? Well, things such as discrimination, governmentality, problems such as debility and subalternity.

Let me give a taste of what these topics can do when it came to context. Discrimination; well disability is a matter of bodily effect, Carol Thomas calls it impairment effects, for example, I cannot see that that is a so obvious thing to say so it has some effects on my life, my professional mobility, social mobility, personal mobility and so on. But blindness also comes with context of discrimination.

For example, studying somebody's autobiography contextually for example autobiography of an acid attack survivor would give insights of discrimination based on gender, the specific workings of patriarchy in that part of the world where this person was attacked by an acid attack. The discriminations that thrive in the world of intimacy as much as public life and discrimination that can thrive within the family too, right.

So, discrimination is not a catch-all noisy term, it is specific. It can be specific to modes of self-expression such as poem and autobiography as much as specific to context where such literary forms thrive and flourish okay. What about a context a term such as governmentality? Well, this is a much-circulated term in humanities and social sciences scholarship which is by and large Foucauldian.

Now by governmentality, I mean the sets of instructions, procedures, arrangements, isms and discourses that make institutions possible and these institutions connected with governing people. And what are governing things? Governing things need not be just panchayat raj and so on, it could be anything that governs us from inside, not necessarily from outside which is an obvious thing to say.

The things that govern us from inside include our education, sense of body, sense of discipline, sense of parenting, sense of childhood, sense of good mannerism, politeness, many things okay. And studying governmentality as a context can reveal a lot about disability performance how one is required to perform in certain contexts say in the classroom where there is no support available.

In government under governmentality, one can study assistive technology because if I have recourse to certain kinds of assistive technology such as Braille. For example, I am performing with Braille now in my lecture. If not for the braille, I would not be having a constant reinforcement textual reinforcement to give a coherent talk in front of a huge audience, right. So there is this interesting word debility.

Debility is a structurally caused disability. In the previous course, I have mentioned about the ability where certain structures can cause disability. For example malnutrition, environmental toxicity, patriarchy. These are all environmentally caused disabilities. And most importantly for our reason, one cannot get into understanding literature and its link with a disability without having any understanding of things such as disable debility.

How can you for example teach a poem by women about their everyday life without necessarily talking about debilities that come to them because of environmental degradation because by and large women give care. They do hard work in collecting resources for the family. For example, many poor women go with you know kudam, utensils, to get water they can walk 10 kilometers in arid region to get water and to give care for children.

How can you read such a story and not pay any attention to a concept such as debility which is environmentally caused which is purposely made by humans to other humans. Similarly context such as subalternity, they are all not just abstract terms, they are lived realities, lived expressions and animated livelihoods. So in the literary criticism model, we will pay closer attention to texts and contexts.

So that many genres and literary forms animate in our classroom that involves creative tension that is my understanding in introducing this module. The third module which involves this course is the multilingual question, question of multilingualism. This is my most favourite section. Look multilingualism is not a hodgepodge of languages like I speak about. I speak n English, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and so on. So that is not multilingual but that is a truism, but multilingualism is an idea that is open to the idea that language is not the stuff that is merely spoken by word by vocally articulated. Multilingualism is a multivalent true expression, is a human expression that has come from all directions. For example in this lecture, my body language is involved. I articulate in a certain way in English.

I wear a kind of dress which may be a statement. My connect with my audience is mediated through the digital system marked by HTML language and so on. My audience may be eating coffee or dosa and listening in English. So multilingualism is not connected to a switch over between languages. It is the nature of human expression which involves different media, different registers, different modes of self-expression, different support systems and so on.

That is why disability is such a potent medium to understand multilingualism. For example, one may seek recourse to braille which is a tactile medium. One may recourse to sign language which is a manual medium. One may recourse to artificial speech, a speech synthesizer which is a digital medium. One may breathe through the support system. One may use an amanuensis or a scribe for dictation. So here dictation is a new modality of self-expression. One may use paid assistance to navigate the social world. One may express through some other person. Suppose I am critically unwell, my caregiver will be my voice. Here my will is belonging to one person and the voice belongs to some other person. I am just giving you examples so that you see the point about the idea of multilingualism being included as a module in itself.

At the end of the day, a condition such as disability is also a matter of translation. There is an edited volume on translating disability by Dr. Someshwar, I think I will revisit the volume, a couple of chapters to illustrate a point to two about the disability and the translation question okay. So whether you are a historian, anthropologist, literary critic, sociologist or simply a caregiver listening to this lecture.

You will appreciate the role of translating from one modality to another, from one medium to another, from one person to another that is happening a via disability. To illustrate in this introductory lecture the point about translation and the multilingual question, I am going to read a great poem on braille by Stephen Kuusisto, I will read for you. In the dark books are living things, quiescent as cats.

Each time we lift them we feel again the ache of amazement under summer stars. It is a dread thing to be lonely without reason. The poem continues, but I stop here. Let me explain the point about multilingualism teasing out meaning from these 4-5 lines. In the dark books are living things. It is a kind of teasing out the idea that braille books are dark things.

Well it is the idea that it is not something sight would like to entertain, it is the braille material is meant for blind people. Perhaps they are unaware of the living things that animate in braille. It is a kind of active language, active transcription, active mode of knowledge beyond the regular sight you see. Whatever is not seeable is dark but whatever can be touched may not be dark, they can be animated things.

The dark books are living things, gosh living things. When I touch this, some things animate in my head, they come alive, quiescent as cats, like what quiescent. They say cats own people and are quiescent. Each time we lift them we feel again, feel what? The ache of amazement. Lift them what? Perhaps lifting things in the mind or lift fingers when I go from one line to another. Again a reference to the medium of braille the way you read.

When you read regular print your eyes scan the lines. They mark one line when you read, you can also scan the next paragraph, you can scan horizontally, vertically. In some sense, you horizontally move like a ruler on the page using eyesight, but the braille requires a different bodily enunciation. It is a different medium. Understanding braille will not only require a political understanding that it is a medium of acquiring knowledge.

But a phenomenological understanding of how braille animates in a braille reader. Just like how you need to have a phenomenological understanding of regular print. For example, if you read n books and if you like reading on books you do not necessarily appreciate reading on Kindle or mobile app. I have heard many of my friends talk loudly about the smell of books, the feeling of books.

Some even touch a little bit to the point where they are reading. It is a truly immersive experience. Similarly braille reading is also a truly immersive hand juggling, finger play, finger mobility, finger scramble. Each finger does a different job, index finger to thumb. Thumb may hold the book while both the index fingers can move from one position to another positioning, grappling.

Thinking and animating all happen through the movement of fingers lifting, non-lifting, meditating and so on, right. So that is the phenomenology of the medium of braille, a text that Kuusisto is to give the ache of amazement because braille books are not plenty out there. The amount of knowledge is still lesser, so therefore one gets the ache. It is like the ache in the heart when something beautiful emanates under your fingertip which is so personal under the summer stars. It is a dread thing to be lonely without reason gosh. Because if there is no personal touch with knowledge you feel lonely and wretched. Many of us have been there in the classrooms where we do not connect to what is being lectured to. Suppose you and I do not connect with each other via this medium, then learning does not take place for both of us, right.

So therefore it is lonely to be without reason and the reason comes via braille okay. So what did I say so far? The multilingualism component is not about just putting things in different languages like a toolbox. It is the lived reality that involved multiple human expressions that come with

disability and disability care and that is the model we will be handling including the translation question okay.

Here, again we will be running through different modes of learning. We will be talking about dyslexia and the language question, braille and the language question, sign language and the language question, memory, philosophy of mind and the language question and the language contracts and many more. After all this course also shows different methods and approaches to doing things.

So therefore, I would like to develop the course in that sense. And the fourth module is about you know the moral politic, the problem of accommodation where I will talk about many things teaching literary disability studies interpreting with some interpretative ethics, ethics of care in teaching and learning literature with a disability component, the moral politics that go with it.

I sincerely feel the problem of accommodation is as much an important question as much as the literary question. I like to share an example and then close this lecture okay. I have cited this elsewhere but never mind, I can do this again with you. When I was doing Ph. D. my supervisor is Timoty Krib. So, I used to write as I always did for some time for the last 10-15 years with my screen reader and I used to make many mistakes in sentence construction.

For example, I used to fill my sentences with many commas wherever it is not necessarily also the comma needs to be there and my supervisor was surprised why do you have to place a comma here, I do not see the need. Then he came up with a great plan okay. I will come and sit with you while you read something, I want to know how you read. Then I opened a book on my laptop and made JAWS my screen reader to read some essays. And JAWS was making frequent pauses in reading the sentences. And it seems wherever JAWS made a pause I developed an impulse to place a comma there, Tim cracked the problem. It seems your screen reading habit is prompting you to insert a comma where there is a pause. Once I became familiar with my reading habit and its impact on my writing, I stopped making mistakes connected to punctuation that is it lesson learned for life.

Well, what is the comment I am trying to make? The importance of interpreting something making a very fine literary interpretation about disability is as important as the knowledge about how a knowledge is coming to be acquired by somebody with a specific condition say dyslexia, a left-hand person with visual impairment, the person learning a foreign language with some cognitive impairment and so on.

So in the accommodation module, I will talk about the literary and the literacy problems, the language questions and so on okay. So, these are the 4 modules that I will be working with you for 12 weeks, of course like the previous course I will have some interviews with performance artists, pedagogues and many people around and for the best part of it I will be sitting or literally standing with you and teasing out some problems connected to LCDS, Literary and Cultural Disability Studies. Welcome to the course. Thank you.